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**Thursday 30th November 2023, 10.00am at Ballyscullion Park**

**Minutes**

**In attendance**

Richard Mulholland, Rosalind Mulholland, Cathy O’Neill, Sean McEvoy, Jamese McCloy, Brendan Adams, Kathleen McBride, Aoife O’Neill, Dermot O’Kane, Kimberley Madden, Kieran Bradley, Charmain Bell, Rachael Harriott, Lara Goodall

**Apologies**

Dermot Friel, Bronagh Duffin, Damien Houlahan, Linda Jamison, Laura Shannon, Brian McCormick

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| Agenda Item | Detail | Action |
| 1 | **Apologies, Minutes of last meeting & Actions / Matters Arising**  Richard Mulholland welcomed everyone to the meeting. |  |
| 2 | **Update on Business Development Activities**  **Trade Shows**  Lara updated the members on recent activities at World Travel Market and ITOA. Both events were positive with 18 meetings at World Travel Market and 10 meetings at ITOA. Lara noted that at the events there was interest in the cluster and both had generated leads to pursue.  Cathy noted that she had found ITOA to be positive, this was reiterated by Charmain. Richard asked if there was interest from small group tour operators, as Ballyscullion is keen to pursue opportunities with them. Lara noted that there was interest from both large and small group operators.  Lara also noted that she had made a useful contact with Patrice Lavery, Business Development Manager for the Hastings Group.  LG noted that the cluster’s applications to Celtic Connections and Holiday World had also been successful. She highlighted a number of upcoming opportunities through TNI / TI in the monthly report that members may want to consider (see November report)  **Networking Events**  Lara updated on the networking events and the meeting with Tourism Ireland to try and secure support for a networking event in Westminster. Following the meeting, Tourism Ireland noted that they believe the best opportunities to bring GB travel trade and NI industry together are at Meet the Buyer in NI and Celtic Connections in Glasgow and they would like to review potential to showcase Loughinsholin at Celtic Connections.  It was agreed that a Westminster event with a focus on both sales and marketing opportunities would be best pre St Patrick’s day and that it will also be important to not clash with other marketing events at this time. LG will follow up with Council to discuss how to progress this.  LG noted that work has not progressed on the Breakfast Networking event in Dublin due to other current business development activities. This will commence asap.  **Incoming FAM Visits**  LG updated on progress of the incoming FAMs with CIE (16th & 17th Jan 24) and Abbey Tours (24th & 25th Jan 24). Final details will be agreed at the next cluster meeting. She also noted that dates were still being finalised with Wilderness Ireland for early Feb 24, Visit Belfast – Business Tourism Team and Hastings Sales Team.  **Operators Factsheets**  For ongoing business development activities, Lara noted that the factsheets that Council has developed are very useful, she is keen to replicate these for all of the cluster members. Charmain added that these prove useful tools and encouraged the cluster to develop these fully. LG will work with members to develop these. Kimberly noted that she would like updated information on experience providers offerings. She would also like copies of Loughinsholin branding. | Team to continue to follow up with recent trade shows.  LG to follow up on the potential to showcase the cluster at Celtic Connections and Westminster.  Team to continue to progress the FAM trips.  LG to work with members to develop factsheets. |
| 3 | **Festival Update**  Rosalind gave an update on the festival programme and noted highlights as Celtic Grace and Martin Enwright. Whilst the draft programme is in place, Rosalind is continuing to develop this. Dermot welcomed the work to date and noted that it is important to set the right tone with the festival from the outset.  Rosalind noted that she needs information from members to add to the website. There is a template to complete in the shared folder.  Cathy highlighted to Rosalind that Emma Heatherington could possibly add value to the programme, Rosalind will follow up.  Rachael highlighted approach that will be adopted with PR plan. | RM to contact Emma Heatherington  RH to progress comms plan for launch of festival.  Cluster members to forward details of supporting events / accommodation packages / menus |
| 4 | **Recruitment**  LG highlighted that the Governance group need to meet to finalise the recruitment process. LG will arrange a meeting with the group post-Christmas to agree process and approval process. She has proposed that when recruitment closes, the Governance sub-group should meet and assess applications received, develop a proposed shortlist and present to cluster for approval. | LG to arrange a meeting with the Governance group |
| 5 | **Update on Marketing Activities**  Cathy highlighted feedback from B2B customers that there is a need to increase awareness of the product offering across the consumer market. Work will commence this Spring on an B2C awareness raising campaign targeting ROI, GB & North America. | RH to progress comms strategy |
| 6. | **Upcoming Training Dates, Support & Funding Opportunities** – to be reviewed at next meeting. | n/a |
| 7 | **Lobbying** LG noted that Department of Economy has issued its draft Tourism Strategy for consultation. Loughinsholin needs to submit a response. Response is to be submitted for Jan 12th. | LG to arrange a strategy response session |
| 8 | **A.O.B -**  Kieran Bradley noted that he had been approached about the current state of fishing / environmental issues in the local area and noted that this will have an impact on future opportunities. Charmain noted that Lough Neagh Partnership are developing a new management approach which will try and address part of this. Kathleen noted the complexity of the situation and noted there are a number of organisations who might be able to provide background information / statistics. It was agreed to monitor the situation.  As a result of Charmain moving to a new role in Council, Richard thanked Charmain for her hard work and commitment to the cluster. | Cluster to monitor the evolving situation at Lough Neagh. |