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**River Bann Boats**

**Thursday 30th May 2024, 10.00am**

**Minutes**

**In attendance**

Richard Mulholland, Rosalind Mulholland, Jim Barr, Cathy O’Neill, Brendan Adams, Vanessa Postle, Lara Goodall, Maria McCann Russell, Nicola McCloskey, Jamese McCloy, Kimberly Madden,

**Apologies**

Dermot Friel, Bronagh Duffin, Kathleen McBride, Shauna McElhone, Jim Quinn, Damien Houlahan, Sean McEvoy, Rosalyn Halferty, Lindsey Johnston, Linda Jamison

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| Agenda Item | Detail | Action |
| Apologies, Previous Minutes & Actions | Richard opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and noted apologies.  Vanessa Postle noted that she had sent her apologies for the April meeting, but this had not been included in the minutes. LG to update. Brendan Adams proposed the previous minutes and these were seconded by Rosalind Mulholland | LG to update April minutes. |
| Update on Business Development Activities / MTB / Incoming FAMs | LG gave an update on Business Development activities:  Application to the BeNe show in September in the Netherlands was successful. Kathleen McBride will be attending the show on behalf of the cluster.  Cost to have a space at World Travel Market in 2025 will be £2k, LG has therefore expressed interest to Council for space on their stand at the show, rather than independently.  Applications have also been submitted to Flavours and US Shoulder Season webinar and are pending.  The Visit Belfast FAM is scheduled for Tuesday 25th June. This will mainly comprise of members of the business tourism team, focusing on experiences available in the cluster. LG to liaise with Visit Belfast to finalise the itinerary for the FAM  MTB follow up is ongoing: Tour Partner have agreed to come on a FAM in September. | LG to work with Kathleen re prep for BeNe visit.  LG to finalise itinerary with Visit Belfast.  Business Development work to continue. |
| Update on Outcomes from Festival | Rosalind gave an update on the outcomes from the inaugural book festival held. She has received positive feedback from attendees and the speakers and has been encouraged by this. Vanessa and Brendan both noted that they both had positive feedback about the festival. Rosalind has begun work on the programme for 2025. Rosalind is keen to get all of the cluster members involved in the activities. The dates for the 2025 festival are May 10th and 11th. Key to next year’s event will be securing sponsorship. This will be helped by the content captured during this year’s festival.  Rachael has produced a report on comms activities for the festival, initial statistics on the comms campaign are Advertising Equivalent (AVE): £88k and campaign reach was 2,714,189. | Rosalind to progress programme for 2025.  LG to link with Rosalind regarding sponsorship packages and potential sponsors. |
| **Recruitment** | LG noted that three application were received. Cathy updated on the outcome from the Governance sub-group meeting. The applications were scored, the outcome of which is a recommendation that Lough Neagh Stories be given associate membership in line with Governance guidelines. LG noted that the recruitment process had flagged up a number of areas that could be updated / strengthened, eg, the application form needs to explicitly ask for details of existing products that are bookable and sellable. The sub-group group will meet in the coming months to agree potential amendments to the Governance structures and processes and bring these back to the group for approval.  LG is to develop an online vote for member to vote if they agree with the Governance committee recommendations. Brendan noted that this needed to be a majority vote.  If there is an agreement on associate membership status for Lough Neagh Stories, they will be invited to the next meeting. | LG to design an online questionnaire for members to vote for new members.  Cluster members to vote if they agree with Governance committee’s recommendations on new members. |
| **Annual Fees 2024 - 2025** | LG noted that following the last meeting she has reviewed these with Dermot and he is happy for these to be set at £125 for one person companies and £250 for 2+ companies. These will be issued in coming month.  Richard flagged up that the Invest NI funding will finish in January 2025 and the cluster needs to consider future funding options. LG noted that she has raised this with Council and Invest NI, however the cluster needs to lobby elected members for funding to continue the ongoing work. | LG to issue membership fees invoices. |
| **Marketing Activities** | LG provided an update on marketing and comms. In Q1 these have focused on the festival. Detailed activities for Q2 and Q3 need to be planned. Strategic objective for the activities will primarily focus on NI / ROI, GB and North American campaigns. LG asked members to consider campaign ideas they would like to progress. Vanessa suggested that RH and LG speak to TI and TNI about potential support.  The newsletter content has been mapped and once the mailchimp template is completed.  Kimberly noted that it would be good to have a professional video for the cluster and asked if it would be possible to get it funded. | LG to follow up with McCadden  Cluster members to consider marketing campaigns to progress.  LG & RH to arrange meetings with Tourism Ireland and TNI business solutions teams  LG will contact Council to ask about a funded video / content. |
| **Training & Skills Development** | LG proposed a number of skills development workshops to the group and asked if these would be of interest to members.   * **Explore Your Route to Market Options** – Get Your Guide with Phil Thomas – is this of interest? * **Media Training** – Develop your media skills – TV and radio interviews. Is this of interest?   It was agreed to proceed with these. Members also suggested training around using TikTok. It was also suggested to have a session on developing an education package. LG will research these.  Rosalind asked if anyone had a contact for Forest schools. Vanessa has a contact and will forward to Rosalind. | LG to research potential trainer for TikTok training.  LG to contact trainers re securing dates.  Vanessa to send Forest School contact to Rosalind. |
| **Upcoming Dates, Support & Funding Opportunities** | LG asked members to hold the 5th September 2024 as Friels will be launching their new Famine Centre.  LG highlighted the range of Invest NI funding and support and asked if members would be applying for the Energy Support grants. Cathy asked if the information could be sent again.  LG also noted that Go Succeed offers a small grant to help with business growth. | Members to hold 5th September for Friels launch event  LG to forward Invest NI funding details |
| **Lobbying** | LG asked the members to consider, what is the ask from local reps at lobbying event in September?She noted that the membersneed to consider and prepare for this.  Rosalind asked if there was an update on the ESA visa application. No-one within the group had any updates on this.  LG noted that the project funding finishes in January 25 and the cluster needs to lobby for ongoing support. LG has been working in the background re future funding, but we need as a group to ask elected representatives to lobby on behalf of the cluster. | LG to link with cluster members to consider lobbying agenda. |
| **A.O.B** | Vanessa noted that Council are working towards a number of events in Autumn. Council will be organising a FAM visit to Newry, Mourne and Down in Autumn. Cluster members will be invited to participate on this.  She also noted that they are planning a meet the expert day and will link with LG to ensure dates do not clash. | Vanessa to link with LG re best practice and Meet the Expert dates. |