

# Candidate Brief

## Chair of the Board





## Introduction



### VisitAberdeenshire

The tourism sector in North East Scotland has seen significant growth in recent years, contributing over £1 billion to the regional economy in 2023, recovering strongly from the stark impact of the pandemic upon the sector. The launch of a refreshed tourism strategy in autumn 2022; “Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire, Framework for Growth 2022-2030” - aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy - provides a basis on which to build upon recent success and to meet new market opportunities and challenges.

The bedrock of the sector are the hundreds of compelling tourism experiences on offer to our visitors, delivered by a workforce of over 11,000 FTE in a range of businesses from 263 castles to 55 golf courses, a host of museums, an emerging adventure tourism offer, our unique preserved fishing villages, and a local larder rich in flavours and diversity, to name but a few.

VisitAberdeenshire plays an essential role in this diverse ecosystem. As the recognised destination organisation and lead body for tourism serving Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. VisitAberdeenshire’s core purpose is to drive demand to visit Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and support businesses to develop and to meet that demand, reflected in a remit that embraces both destination marketing and destination development. VisitAberdeenshire’s vision is to be the leading destination organisation in Scotland, increasingly recognised for growing the visitor economy through bold, dynamic initiatives. The ultimate goal is to lift the economic impact of tourism in the region.

VisitAberdeenshire is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee; transparent, accountable to its stakeholders and reinvesting any trading surplus in the destination tourism offer. There is a public/private Board of Directors and organisational structure with Opportunity North East (ONE), Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council being significant contributors. Local and national stakeholders including Aberdeen Inspired, AGCC, Cairngorms Business Partnership, and VisitScotland are invited to board meetings.

VisitAberdeenshire is open and inclusive in its approach, inviting all those with an interest in tourism to be part of their activities and communications network. It is engaged with all parts of the industry and across the region. Where it is of clear value, VisitAberdeenshire will work productively with neighbouring destinations and other industry sectors.

VisitAberdeenshire's activity is shaped around three core areas, all of which are informed by customer, market and industry insight.

- Local business and destination focus - to support recovery and development through business engagement programmes that address business challenges, and support sector opportunities.
- Short term market focus - to drive demand for local tourism experiences through promotion to targeted consumer audiences.
- Mid to long term market focus - to secure a pipeline of new business for future years from travel trade intermediaries and business event organisers.

In support of these disciplines VisitAberdeenshire has established a flexible, knowledgeable and professional team, and continues to evolve and pivot to meet new challenges, not least to secure sustainable future funding streams from the public sector and from the private sector.



## The Position

VisitAberdeenshire now seeks to appoint a successor to its current Chair, Claire Bruce.

This is a great opportunity for someone who is passionate about local tourism and who has a track record of Board leadership.

The overall purpose of the role is to:

- Lead the Board ensuring that there is a clear strategic direction and vision.
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to agree and set the Company's overall direction, aims and objectives.
- Ensure that the Board performs effectively and efficiently to drive forward the vision and strategic development of the Company.





The role of Chair with VisitAberdeenshire will offer the successful candidate a number of benefits, including:

**Strategic Influence / Leadership:** The Chair will have the opportunity to help shape the strategic direction of a leading destination management organisation, enhancing the region's global profile and contributing to its economic growth through tourism.

**Networking Opportunities:** The role will allow the successful candidate to build relationships with influential stakeholders across the tourism sector, local government, and business communities, both locally, nationally and internationally.

**Professional Development:** This leadership position provides an excellent opportunity to work on corporate governance, leadership / management, and stakeholder engagement skills, which may enhance the Chair's own career and professional development opportunities.

**Enhanced Visibility / Profile:** Being associated with a prominent organisation like VisitAberdeenshire will elevate the Chair's profile within the tourism industry, local community and beyond, showcasing their expertise in leadership, strategic planning and corporate governance.

**Regional Impact:** The Chair will play a pivotal role in driving tourism development, directly benefiting Aberdeenshire's communities, businesses, and environment through boosting visitor numbers and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

**Economic Growth:** The Chair will be in a position to help drive initiative that generate revenue and create jobs, leaving a lasting positive impact on the region's economy.



**Key responsibilities include: -****Leadership**

- Provide strategic direction and strong leadership to the Board, ensuring integrity and compliance with the Company's Rules, Code of Conduct and the VA Code of Governance, collectively and individually.
- Chair Board meetings, encouraging a high standard of open discussion and constructive debate to ensure transparent and effective decision making.
- Lead the appointment of the Chairs of Committees and any sub groups, in consultation with other Board members.
- Lead the selection process alongside the Appointments Committee for the Chief Executive when a vacancy arises.
- Encourage Board Members to take on tasks and roles that enable them to fully participate in Board activities and facilitate development opportunities for all Members.
- Ensure the Board fulfils any statutory duties and complies with all relevant regulatory requirements.

**Working with the Chief Executive**

- Act as a trusted advisor to the Chief Executive as they develop and implement VA's strategic plan.
- Foster a good working relationship by meeting regularly with the Chief Executive, including planning and preparation for Board and other formal meetings, and briefing on relevant strategic issues and risks.
- Formally agree objectives and review and conduct annual performance evaluations of the Chief Executive.
- Through the Audit and Remuneration Committee, ensure the CEO's salary, benefits and terms of employment are approved.
- Lead any disciplinary action in relation to the Chief Executive in accordance with VisitAberdeenshire policies.



## Governance

- Ensure the Board maintains a strategic focus in all its activities.
- Plan, preside over and facilitate Board and Committee meetings.
- Agree the agendas and ensure the efficient conduct of Board Meetings, and that the timing and frequency is appropriate to meet business needs.
- Ensure Board Members receive appropriate regulatory or governance advice, when needed, from senior staff or external sources.
- Ensure the Board and Audit and Remuneration Committee, support, monitor and, where necessary, approve financial planning, audit reports and decision making.

## Working with Stakeholders

- Develop an effective working relationship between the Board and the Executive Team, based on openness and mutual respect.
- Build and nurture positive and effective relationships with all key stakeholders of VisitAberdeenshire, both internally and externally, locally and nationally.
- Develop and manage positive relations with key stakeholders and partners.
- Support the CEO, as required, in initiating commercial partnerships with the private sector.
- Serve as an Ambassador, representing VisitAberdeenshire at key national and local events to maintain a positive, high-profile presence for the Organisation

## Board Performance

- Recruit and develop an inclusive and empowered Board, valuing a mix of skills, experience and diversity.
- Review and evaluate the performance and contribution of each Board Member and collaboratively agree on personal development plans when needed.
- Ensure new Board Members experience an effective induction, identifying their development needs at an early stage, and incorporate these into the Board's development programme.





## Person Specification

### Experience

- A minimum of 5 years in a non-executive Board role.
- A proven track record in a strategic leadership role which has included transformation and growth.

### Knowledge, skills and abilities

#### Essential

- A passion for the local tourism industry
- Financial acumen with the ability to provide constructive challenge.
- A strategic thinker with excellent communication and diplomacy skills.
- Strong networks both locally and nationally.
- Excellent public speaker.
- A positive and confident presence, with the ability to support the Chief Executive and Board Members effectively.
- Highly refined listening and facilitation skills, and the ability to observe, interpret and draw meaningful conclusions.

#### Desirable

- Knowledge of tourism industry locally and nationally.

### Additional Requirements

- Residing within easy reach of Aberdeenshire, with knowledge and affinity for the area.
- To be able to commit time and enthusiasm to the role.
- To have a strong commitment to quality customer service.
- Willing to join the Opportunity North East (ONE) main Board.

### Terms

Approximately **16-20** days per year.

This includes approximately 14 Board meetings which include:

- VisitAberdeenshire Board meetings,
- ONE Board Meetings,
- ONE Chair meetings

Plus, formal, and informal meetings with CEO, other members of the Board and on occasion acting as an Ambassador at events.

Term: Initially a **3-year term** and eligible for Reappointment

**The Chair position is remunerated and expensed.**



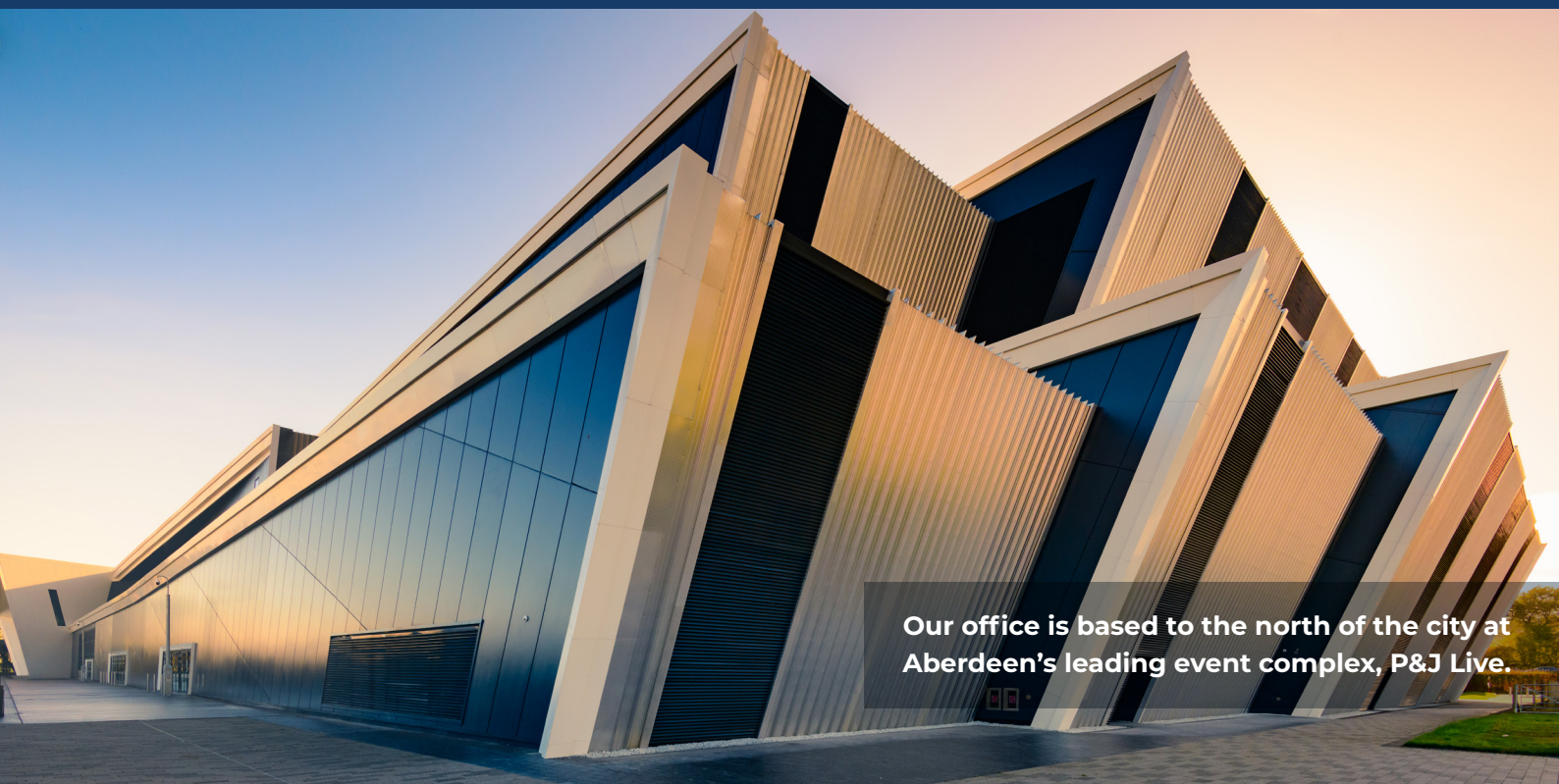
## Recruitment Process

Applications (in the form of short CV and covering letter) should be sent to **Campbell Urquhart, White Cube Consulting** [Campbell@whitecubeconsulting.com](mailto:Campbell@whitecubeconsulting.com) by **Friday 10 January 2025**

It is anticipated interviews for the post of Chair will take place in early 2025.

Interviews will take place in person in Aberdeen with a panel of Directors from the VisitAberdeenshire Board.

Informal enquiries and questions should be directed to Campbell Urquhart, White Cube Consulting on [Campbell@whitecubeconsulting.com](mailto:Campbell@whitecubeconsulting.com)



Our office is based to the north of the city at Aberdeen's leading event complex, P&J Live.

VisitAberdeenshire is funded by:



Visit**Aberdeenshire**  
c/o P&J Live  
East Burn Road  
Aberdeen  
AB21 9FX

T **01224 531 524**  
E **Campbell@whitecubeconsulting.com**  
W **visitabdn.com/about-us/vacancies**