

Minutes from UKVIA Board Meeting 20 July 2023

Attendees:

In Person: Matt Gillow (JBP), Grahame Woods (JBP), Robin O’Kelly (JBP), Chris Lawrance (JBP), Robert Sidebottom (Arcus Compliance), Mohammad Agrabawi (ANDS), Marina Murphy (ANDS), Michael Mason (Vapo), Stephen Little (BAT), John Dunne (UKVIA), Andrej Kuttruf (Evapo), Matt Crann (Riot Labs), Dan Marchant (Vape Club) Eoin Dardis (Juul), Gurdeep Landa (Tidal Vape), Stephen Rooney (Imperial Brands), Victoria Hancock (Imperial Brands)

Online: Patrick Griffin (JBP), Pete Cheema (Scottish Grocers Federation), Dan Greenall (Oxford Vapours), Oliver (Electric Tobacconist), Luke McGarty (Scottish Grocers Federation), Phil Glyn, Doug Mutter (VPZ), Katie Hughes (PMI), Paul Hunt (V2), Eyad, Brett Heaps (Eco-Vape), Majid Khan (Tynant), Victoria Hancock (Imperial)

Apologies: Chris Aiken, Rob Brooker, Tao Cui, Ana Petrosyan

Welcome

Chris Lawrance welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Moved: Robert Sidebottom Seconded: John Dunne

Item One: Admin and Membership

Membership Overview

John Dunne noted that the association currently has 109 members, comprising 36 full members, 19 associate members, 21 business-classified members, and 23 retail members.

It was noted that JTI recently resigned from the UKVIA.

Membership is presently growing through the business-classified membership category, and John's key focus is now on growing the retailer section.

There is talk about a 'World Vapers Alliance', funded by the Chinese, being created, and John will continue to inform the members about its developments.

Financial Update

Asjdah Lawrance noted that there was a healthy bank balance, but there are still a large number of outstanding invoices.

John added that the UKVIA needs to address their bad debt situation and wondered if an interest penalty could be applied to members who paid their fees late. He also noted that the membership fees have not increased since the UKVIA was founded seven years ago, and it may be worth having a discussion on increasing membership fees.

Item Two: General Updates

Policy and Regulatory Committee

Matt Gillow informed the Board of the Committee's recent activities, which include John's appearance at the Health and Social Care Select Committee, COP 10 support, engagement with House of Commons debates, consultation with members on Labour strategy, meeting with MHRA, development of positioning documents, and supporting the youth vaping call for evidence.

Matt thanked Imperial, BAT, and others who provided support for the opposition day debate and COP 10 support.

John noted that the meeting with MHRA was positive and that MHRA is in the process of hiring additional staff. Currently, MHRA's intention is to reply to queries and approve products within four to six weeks.

Robert Sidebottom noted that while MHRA aims to approve products within four to six weeks, they are entitled to take up to six months and may do so from time to time. MHRA has no sympathy for organizations that import their products before they are approved.

Youth Access Prevention

Matt Gillow informed the Board that Ben Croft has left the UKVIA.

There is a lot happening with test purchasing; however, there were significant issues with the recent round of test purchasing that was completed by ServeLegal.

John and Matt recently met with the RSPCA as dogs are chewing vapes and dying. Robert noted that you could put 'keep out of reach of pets/animals' on vape products.

John asked that a section of the UKVIA website be created quickly where stores can get age verification materials.

Standards Committee

Grahame Woods opened the discussion on Standards, noting recent activities such as the tank capacity survey and sharing the results on the screen.

In particular, Grahame highlighted that 86% of respondents did not believe the 2ml limit was optimal. The Committee had previously agreed to hold off on making a major push on this matter while ongoing environmental discussions were taking place within the public debate.

Robert Sidebottom raised the idea of re-running the survey with consumer groups, and most attendees agreed that it was a good idea.

Robert also requested that members become more active in helping drive and repost UKVIA content.

Media Update

Robin O'Kelly outlined that it has been a very busy time in the media recently, with a lot of interest in the sector. It is very positive that John is continually being asked to take part.

John asked that a digital phone number be created that rings five different phone numbers in turn to ensure that all media queries are answered.

It was requested that if the media reaches out to a member, they let Robin know so that they can provide universal messaging.

Item Three: Discussion Areas

UKVIA Forum

The 2023 UKVIA Forum is scheduled to take place on the 10th of November at the QEII Centre in London.

The headline sponsor for this event will be announced soon, along with other sponsors. The agenda outline has already been circulated, and we are currently in the process of approaching potential panelists.

Similar to last year, there will be an awards dinner featuring 16 different categories. The awards section of the UKVIA website is now live, providing more information about the awards and how to participate.

COP 10 Update

Grahame discussed the ongoing COP10 activity, starting by encouraging members to make the most of the template letters provided by BAT, PMI, and Jeannie Cameron. Grahame and Matt also offered their support to any members who are looking to engage and require advice in this matter.

Proposed Disposable Ban in Scotland

Grahame outlined the MSPs that John and Doug had met with.

A broader discussion took place regarding creating a campaign in Scotland with a unique identity. The letter that the UKVIA is planning to send to the Scottish Government was also discussed, and it was agreed to include the line: "We cannot ignore the fact that smoking causes 200 deaths per day in the UK and remains the most littered item worldwide."

John noted that the Scottish Wholesalers Association is going to hold a roundtable discussion in August on the proposed disposable vape ban. Doug Mutter mentioned that there are three or four wholesalers flooding the market with illicit products.

It was brought to attention that the Germans have a model where bringing in 10 vapes gets you one for free, which significantly drives recycling.

Mo highlighted the importance of providing consumers with strong incentives to recycle e-cigarettes and emphasized that the industry needs to lead this effort and show initiative.

During the meeting, members also discussed the possibility of implementing a £1 deposit return scheme, exploring its viability as a potential UKVIA policy. Chris Lawrance raised the need to engage with the hospitality sector in this regard.

UKVIA Strategy Discussion

Chris Lawrance presented a series of slides, which are included as Appendix One to these minutes.

Robin discussed the UKVIA's proposed new narrative style and emphasized the importance of taking back control of the conversation.

Tobacco Membership Discussion

Following a motion brought forward to the UKVIA Board, a discussion was held regarding the possibility of having a wider conversation about whether companies primarily operating in the tobacco industry should remain as members of the UKVIA.

Various points were raised during this debate, which are summarized below:

- When the UKVIA was established, it aimed to be inclusive of all parts of the vaping industry.
- Over time, the UKVIA has faced challenges in engaging with Government and Ministers due to Article 5.3 of the FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control).
- Removing tobacco membership from the UKVIA might not necessarily solve the problem the discussion is trying to address.
- Tobacco members have actively contributed to the UKVIA and supported its discussions and activities.
- Despite having tobacco members, the UKVIA has still been able to engage with MPs and government departments.

It was decided that a further meeting would be scheduled for the week commencing 24 July to delve deeper into the role of the tobacco industry in the UKVIA. This meeting would be open to all full members, who would have the opportunity to submit written submissions before the meeting takes place.

The meeting was adjourned and closed at 4:08 pm.