

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Ian Stephens (Chair)

Spending Review

1. It was encouraging that the Government recognised the important economic and social benefits of our nation's cultural and heritage offer in the Spending Review. The LGA has long argued that culture and heritage boosts growth, attracts visitors and can help to reduce and prevent costly health and social care expenditure. The welcome settlement for national arts, tourism, sport, archives and heritage funding will help to relieve some of the pressure on councils, although the 24 per cent cut to local government funding will of course impact on valued frontline services. I will be discussing with Ministers and partners how we can work together to keep supporting local culture, tourism, sport and heritage and take advantage of opportunities from the devolution agenda.
2. The visitor economy is one of this country's strongest performing economic sectors and we look forward to working with the Government to understand how the new £40 million Discover England Fund will build upon locally-led activity to increase tourism. I have also written to the Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to express concern at the proposed closer working between VisitEngland and VisitBritain. This risks diminishing the voice of the English regions in decisions about tourism investment and goes against the devolutionary direction of travel.

Sport and Physical Activity

3. The Government has published its new sports strategy and I was delighted that many of the LGA's recommendations have been taken on board. The strategy provides a good framework to further our call to Sport England to rebalance funding away from national interventions through to councils which already have the facilities, partnerships and expertise in place to best reach the most people, of all ages and abilities.
4. The extension of Sport England's remit to focus on children aged 5 and upwards is in line with councils' new public health responsibilities for this age group and offers great opportunities for joined-up work on tackling inactivity and driving up participation. Our calls for the Premier League to contribute more of its huge profits towards football grassroots have also been acknowledged by the Government and we look forward to seeing this directly benefit the country's sports pitches and facilities, the majority of which are still owned by councils.
5. I was pleased to speak at the latest of our very popular Sport Leadership Essentials Programme 21-22 October, in partnership with Sport England. The event supported 15 portfolio holders and sessions included different delivery models for leisure services, closer working with health, improving local commissioning relationships and partnerships with National Governing Bodies to increase participation.
6. With Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chair of the People and Places Board, I met Jesse Norman MP, Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, on 7 December to discuss sport and broadband. I highlighted the CTS Board's campaign for the Premier League to re-invest a greater proportion of its profits into the grassroots game and the LGA's view that

national sports funding should be re-balanced through Sport England towards councils and local partners. I also spoke about local government's ambition to use devolutionary powers and funding to procure new solutions to achieving better broadband and mobile connectivity coverage, in particular the Three Southern Counties. We will keep in touch with the Committee on their work programme and ensure that the LGA contributes to relevant inquiries.

Libraries and Culture

7. I have written to Ed Vaizey MP, Culture Minister, and Tracey Crouch MP, Sport and Tourism Minister, about the forthcoming Culture White Paper. I emphasised that much of this country's cultural offer is funded and supported locally and that continued budget pressures mean it is vital central and local government work together to ensure the total public subsidy for culture is spent efficiently and in accordance with local need. I also highlighted opportunities for culture from devolution, how culture can add value to other priorities and the LGA's and Arts Council England's partnership to support effective local political leadership.
8. The LGA/Department for Culture, Media and Sport Leadership for Libraries Taskforce has published its first 6-month report on progress against the priorities agreed by LGA Members and Ministers. In particular, the Taskforce secured £2.6 million funding to rollout free WiFi to over 98% of public libraries by end of March 2016. 68 councils will benefit from the funding and I wrote about how libraries are using digital to enhance their offer in the December edition of [first](#).
9. I was pleased to speak at the Leadership Essentials Culture programmes on 3-4 November and 2-3 December. These events, organised in partnership with Arts Council England, supported 25 portfolio holders and sessions included different delivery models for library services and how cultural services can be commissioned to deliver wider council priorities.

Archives and Archaeology

10. I met Jeff James, Chief Executive of The National Archives, on 3 December to discuss key issues for local archive services. This included the importance of sharing innovative practice, moving to the 20-year rule and plans to mark this year's 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.
11. I met Quinton Carroll, Chair of the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGO) in England, on 24 November. We talked about the important role of archaeology in preserving what makes places special, the capacity issues facing the sector, different delivery models for archive services and opportunities presented by devolution.

Culture Tourism and Sport Board 1 December

12. Viscountess Penelope Cobham, Chairman of Visit England, and Mike Diaper, Executive Director of Sport England, updated the Board on their organisation's respective priorities.

LGA members reinforced the important role councils play boosting growth through tourism and increasing sport and physical activity participation.

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