

Item 3(c)

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Flick Rea (Chair)

Visitor Economy

1. I have written to the Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy to highlight coastal councils' serious concerns about changes to the Blue Flag Scheme. The Blue Flag scheme plays an important role giving people information about the quality of bathing water and helping to attract visitors who make a vital contribution to local economies. However, tougher EU water quality standard criteria are being introduced two years earlier than planned, meaning councils and their partners have less time to get ready for the changes. This is compounded by the fact this summer's unusually high levels of rainfall is already making it more difficult for councils to obtain and retain Blue Flag status for their beaches. I have urged Keep Britain Tidy to postpone the introduction of the tougher water quality standard to allow councils and their partners the full time they had scheduled for making water quality improvements and to help support the economic recovery of local businesses and communities.
2. Following the Government's reshuffle, Rt Hon Hugh Robertson MP adds tourism to his portfolio, and I have written to highlight both councils' vital leadership role in the visitor economy (one of the few sectors experiencing economic growth) and their commitment to using the legacy of the 2012 Games to make a long-term difference to participation in physical activity.

The Night-Time Economy

3. I led a workshop about the role of culture in the night-time economy at the LGA's Managing the Night-Time Economy conference on 26 September. I highlighted the contribution of festivals, the use of museums and libraries as evening entertainment spaces, and the potential of the Live Music Act to help create a vibrant, locally appropriate and safe night-time economy. Delegates shared the role of culture in their own night-time economies and highlighted the importance of close working between councils, communities, cultural organisations and local businesses.

Arts Council England

4. I have written to Sir Peter Bazalgette, the new Chair of Arts Council England from February 2013. I highlighted that together councils and the Arts Council are this country's biggest public investors in culture, and that a strong national and local partnership between the Arts Council and councils is essential if publicly funded culture is going to thrive in tough financial times.

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