

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

Heritage, the visitor economy and growth

1. I was delighted that 25 councillors attended a joint LGA / English Heritage seminar on 10 July at Old Sessions House, London, at which we also launched a new good practice publication. Councillor Andrew Lewer and I spoke about how heritage has the ability to help councils achieve a range of local priorities – from boosting economic growth through tourism, jobs and attracting businesses, to improving the attractiveness of places and engaging communities. The case studies in our new publication also show that in the context of severe budget pressures, councils are finding new ways of working that brings together specialist conservation, planning and archaeological advice in a coordinated, place-based approach to heritage and planning.
2. I met Kate Pugh, Chief Executive of the Heritage Alliance, on 24 July. The Alliance represents some 90 members – from larger bodies such as the National Trust, to many smaller organisations, such as the Association of Building Preservation Trusts – which are in turn supported by over five million members, thousands of local groups and over 450,000 volunteers. We discussed how councils are working in partnership with local heritage bodies to drive growth and the importance of supporting heritage organisations to be clear about how they are helping to achieve local outcomes.
3. I attended the second Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Stakeholder Event in St Albans on 2 August. The event was an opportunity to hear about the latest national plans to mark the anniversary and to highlight the role of councils across the country in engaging communities in the anniversary events and activities and the potential to boost tourism. The CTS Board will be considering a further update and the role of the LGA at their meeting on 9 September.

The Arts

4. I had an extremely positive meeting with Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England (ACE), on 30 July. I said that LGA was very encouraged by the Spending Review outcome for the arts, which was testament to our joint advocacy on the links between the arts and growth. The five per cent cut to arts funding is a good result for councils because as so many organisations are co-funded, less pressure from the ACE side means less knock-on pressure on councils.
5. Of course there are still tough spending decisions ahead and we agreed the importance of ACE working in partnership with councils to ensure that difficult investment decisions are taken in the context of a place's wider approach to public investment and growth. We also confirmed our strong support for our joint improvement activity which so far has supported over 100 councillors to lead transformational change of libraries and cultural services. We are very pleased to be jointly running two new Cultural Leadership Academies in 2013/14 and already 16 councillors are signed-up for the 22/23 October Academy, as well as offering a further two libraries leadership seminars. We also agreed to take stock of local government representation on ACE's new hubs next year.

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