

## **Update on current issues**

### **Purpose of report**

For information / noting.

### **Summary**

This report updates Members on current issues of interest to the Board which are not covered elsewhere in the agenda. Updates are included on:

- 1 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- 2 Heritage
- 3 Gambling
- 4 Superfast broadband
- 5 The Regional Growth Fund
- 6 The National Planning Policy Framework

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the update.

### **Action**

Secretariat / CLOA Advisory Panel as appropriate.

**Contact officer:** Laura Caton  
**Position:** Senior Adviser - CTS  
**Phone no:** 020 7664 3154  
**E-mail:** [laura.caton@local.gov.uk](mailto:laura.caton@local.gov.uk)

## **Update on current issues**

### **2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**

- 1 Olympic Torch relay route  
The London 2012 Olympic organising Committee has announced details of the 1,018 villages, towns and cities on the Olympic Torch Relay route. Every county in England will host the Olympic Flame and the aspiration of taking the Olympic Flame to within an hour's journey time of 95% of the population has been realised. The street by street detail of the route will be confirmed next year. The LGA has welcomed the announcement and highlighted the vital role that a wide range of council services will play. The LGA has also worked closely with LOCOG to ensure that councils have been fully involved in consultations on the route. A list of the UK wide host communities announced is available to view at the interactive map on [www.london2012.com/olympictorchrelaymap](http://www.london2012.com/olympictorchrelaymap). The LGA also issued a press release: [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/10161/media-releases/-/journal\\_content/56/10161/3019854/NEWS-TEMPLATE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/10161/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10161/3019854/NEWS-TEMPLATE)
- 2 Local Leaders initiative  
LOCOG has also announced the 'Local Leaders' initiative, an invitation to people across the UK to take the 2012 Games into their community and create their own celebrations next year. In response, the LGA said that councils were ready to help people celebrate. Councils across the country pulled out all the stops earlier this year to make organising royal wedding street parties as easy as possible. The LGA will continue to work with LOCOG to ensure that councils are fully consulted and engaged in the roll out of Local Leaders. [www.london2012.com/localleaders](http://www.london2012.com/localleaders).

### **Heritage**

- 3 The LGA and English Heritage are working with partners to help local historic environment services adapt, modernise and continue to improve at a time of budget reductions and a new approach to planning. Through the Historic Environment: Local Authority Capacity (HELAC) project, we are working with five councils to improve and learn from each other, with an emphasis on protecting conservation outcomes through reducing processes, bureaucracy and overheads, and working better together in partnership. Case studies are now available on the Historic Environment Local Management website <http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.21740>. We are working with English Heritage on a joint publication to share the learning more widely.

## **Gambling**

- 4 Cllr David Parsons (Chair of the LGA's Environment and Housing Programme Board) and Mike Holmes (LGA adviser, President of Planning Officers Society, and Director of Planning & Transport Services at Bournemouth Borough Council) gave oral evidence on behalf of the LGA to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee as part of the Committee's ongoing inquiry into gambling. Specifically, the Committee had invited the LGA to discuss the interrelation between planning and the clustering of betting shops. The LGA is calling on Government to give councils new powers to stop betting shops setting up if they are likely to cause a public nuisance and to reform complicated and costly planning rules that are stopping councils taking control of their high streets.

## **Superfast Broadband**

- 5 BT has announced that it will supply fibre broadband to two thirds of UK premises by the end of 2014 – a year ahead of its original target. The firm is bringing forward about £300 million of investment over the next few years and recruiting an extra 520 engineers to enable the accelerated roll-out. The move will support Government's ambition to have the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015.

## **The Regional Growth Fund**

- 6 On 31 October the government announced that VisitEngland's bid for additional funding from the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) was successful. The money will be used on a three-year project entitled, 'Growing Tourism Locally'. A key part of the project will be a national campaign aimed at inspiring Britons to take more short breaks and holidays at home and in doing so grow jobs in the tourism sector.
- 7 The campaign will capitalise on next year's once-in-a-generation events like London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, The Diamond Jubilee, the Cultural Olympiad, and the Torch Relay that will act as a catalyst to showcase the whole of the country.
- 8 The funding will be allocated to a number of destination partners in England that will work closely with VisitEngland to design and implement local campaigns. Some of those partners have already been confirmed and include Marketing Manchester, Marketing Birmingham, Bath Tourism Plus, Visit Peak District and Derbyshire, Cumbria Tourism and Visit York. In addition to targeted activity in these areas there will be a series of thematic campaigns focusing on countryside, heritage, coastal and business tourism.

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 9 The LGA has responded to the Government's draft national planning policy framework (NPPF). Overall, the draft NPPF moves away from complex national policy and guidance to focus on key principles that will support councils to develop strong local plans. We are, however, arguing for a more equal balance between economic, environmental and social issues.
- 10 There are potential implications for playing fields, with the proposed removal of Policy Planning Guidance 17 (PPG 17) that dictates the need for a replacement site, if the 'need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss'. The LGA's position is that councillors should have the freedom to take planning decisions about playing fields that reflect local needs and priorities. Sport England remain a statutory consultee in the planning process and, whatever the outcome of the NPPF consultation, we will work with them to ensure that the planning system enables councils to achieve the level of sports facilities and access to playing fields that is right for their communities.
- 11 The LGA's full response is available on the website:  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=790c7357-b3d3-4aba-b658-7777ffef8069&groupId=10161](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=790c7357-b3d3-4aba-b658-7777ffef8069&groupId=10161).