

18 July 2012

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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:

- Superfast Broadband
- Live Music and Regulated Entertainment
- Heritage
- Visitor Economy

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the update.

Action

Secretariat / CLOA Advisory Panel as appropriate.

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Update on current issues

Superfast Broadband

1. Suppliers have signed the Broadband Delivery Framework and the first tranche of rural broadband projects have entered procurement. However, the European Commission has not yet granted state aid clearance. Councils are clearly very concerned about the impact of further delay on their ability to bring superfast broadband to communities and businesses within the expected timeframe. Cllr Rea has written to Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP to express councils' concerns and the letter is attached at **Annex A**.

Libraries

2. Arts Council England (ACE) has announced £6 million of additional funding for public libraries through the Grants for the Arts Scheme. The funding will run from September 2012 until March 2015 and will support projects that stimulate ambitious and innovative partnerships between libraries and artists and/or arts organisations, encouraging communities to participate in cultural activities. The LGA welcomes extra funding for public libraries and is calling on ACE to ensure that the application process is as straightforward as possible, that councils have the flexibility to use the funding to meet local priorities and that ACE works with LGA to share the innovation that the funding supports across local government.

Live Music and Regulated Entertainment

3. The LGA is working with Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to finalise the Live Music and Entertainment Act's statutory guidance which will help councils to implement the Act. The Act is expected to commence on 1st October 2012, although the Guidance is not expected to be ready before 31st October 2012.

The LGA has expressed concern over the delay in issuing the Guidance, which is due to Home Office amendments on alcohol licenses. Officials advise that the delay is not long enough for formal proceedings to start, so that the delay is inconvenient rather than damaging. The LGA will continue to work closely with DCMS in producing the guidance.

Heritage

4. Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) launched its Strategic Framework 2013-18 including plans for investing £375m a year of lottery money over the next five years including through new funding streams and initiatives.

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5. Through the HLF consultation process, the sector strongly called on HLF to stimulate new ideas and approaches, share good practice and to act as a strong voice for heritage. The LGA support HLF being a strong voice to champion the profile of heritage with central government and partners, especially the role heritage can play in local growth and economic recovery. We ask HLF to recognise the vital role that local government play in preserving our historic environment and are keen to work with them in sharing good practice, such as through our Knowledge Hub online community.
6. The key plans from their Strategic Framework for 2013-2018 are:
 - 6.1 to offer support for building organisational resilience in the heritage sector, through running a further round of the Skills for the Future programme and introducing further development funding and transition funding.
 - 6.2 a new Heritage Enterprise scheme is designed to stimulate local economic through funding partnerships including social and private enterprises to develop sustainable new uses for the most challenging historic sites.
 - 6.3 A simplified small grants programme and increased the maximum amount and geographical area of the Landscape Partnerships Programme.
7. You can read the HLF press release here:
<http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/Risingtothechallenge.aspx>

Tourism

Visit England's Strategic Framework update

8. Visit England have published their Annual Review of the Strategic Framework. The key messages are that the sector is performing well against the Strategic Framework's target of 5% year on year increase in the value of tourism and the creation of an additional 225,000 jobs. Tourism spend in England in 2011 increased by 7% to £76 billion. This increase in spend supported a 5% increase in tourism jobs which beats the norm of many of this country's most important industries.
9. Alongside the Annual Review, Visit England launched a series of supporting case studies and the three remaining Action Plans – skills, quality and transport. All the documents can be accessed at www.englandtourismframework.co.uk.
10. The LGA responded to the consultation for the Skills and Transport actions plans, stating that whilst we support the overarching theme behind the action plans of greater partnership working to grow the UK tourism and hospitality sector, there is no one size fits all solution or process for achieving a better transport and skills sector as local areas vary widely. The LGA believe that Visit England would be best placed to focus on championing and increasing the

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profile of the importance and economic benefits of tourism, both with central government such as the Department for Transport and wider stakeholders, at the same time as recognising and promoting local government's self-determination and working with councils and the industry to improve regulations and support of tourism businesses locally.

The LGA Local Growth Campaign

11. At the LGA annual conference on 27th June 2012, the LGA kicked started their Local Growth Campaign by publishing "Local leadership, local growth" publication. This report sets out our conclusions and proposes new work and lobbying for the LGA, councils and partners to support national economic recovery.
12. The LGA local growth campaign aims to re-examine the economic development role of councils and partners after two years of recession, and establish to overcome the barriers to local growth that remain as localism and devolution became reality. The visitor economy and communication infrastructure are recognised as playing an important role in local growth, and are embedded into this campaign. The LGA will continue to prioritise our work with councils on economic development over the next year.

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Annex A

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
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SW1Y 5DH

9 July 2012

Dear Jeremy

I am writing regarding the progress of the superfast broadband programme. It is good news that suppliers have signed the Broadband Delivery Framework and that the first tranche of projects have entered procurement. However, councils are very concerned that the European Commission has not yet granted state aid clearance.

Councils are as keen as you are to ensure that their communities and businesses can start to benefit from superfast broadband as soon as possible. They are understandably frustrated that having pulled out all the stops to get local broadband plans signed off progress is now faltering.

The programme timetable was already ambitious. I am very concerned that further delay and any consequent bunching up of call-offs will bring into question the ability of councils to deliver the projects by 2015. Whilst I understand that suppliers are starting work in good faith, clearly all involved need the certainty of state aid clearance as soon as possible.

I know that you understand how concerned councils are about possible delays to the programme and the impact this may have on their projects and I am very grateful to you and colleagues at Broadband Delivery UK for your work with the European Commission to achieve a resolution. Please do let me know if there is anything else LGA can do to assist you in your dialogue with the Commission.

Once we enter the call-off period, I urge you to encourage suppliers to work through projects as quickly as possible so that we stand the best possible chance of keeping the programme on track.

I am copying this letter to David Lidington, Mark Prisk and to Sir Jon Cunliffe.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Flick Rea
Chair LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board