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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:

- a. Superfast broadband
- b. The visitor economy
- c. Ash Tree Dieback
- d. Libraries
- e. Museums
- f. The Arts and growth
- g. Arts Council England

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the update.

Action

CLOA Advisory Panel / Secretariat to action as directed by members

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Update on current issues

Superfast broadband

1. The Government's proposals to relax planning restrictions over the installation of broadband infrastructure take the right away from people to have a say over six-foot high junction boxes outside their windows and gardens or poles and wires festooning their streets. Clause 7 of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill potentially opens the way to removing all democratic planning control from any telecoms infrastructure. We are urging Ministers to re-think their proposals, and to make a firm statement that they are not opening the door to uncontrolled building of mobile masts in beauty spots and beside schools, and to explain how that statement of intent will be given effect.
2. The real barrier to the roll out remains the failure to secure state aid clearance, and resolving this must be the Government's priority.
3. To deliver a real impact, the Growth and Infrastructure Bill should focus on initiatives that can tackle the actual barriers to growth, of which planning is not one. The LGA proposed amendments to the Bill that will have a significant impact on growth by, for example, removing the unnecessary borrowing cap which prevents local authorities investing to their full capacity in affordable housing, devolving skills funding and allowing councils to set local policies on permitted development to tailor to local growth opportunities. Any amendments to local planning rules must ensure councils retain enough powers to maintain and improve the character and integrity of local areas.

Visitor economy

4. Last month we held a very successful Visitor Economy Leadership Seminar at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire which kick started the Board's year of focus on the visitor economy. The visitor economy plays a key role in the LGA's Local Growth Campaign which is making the case for reform that will enable councils to unlock the full economic potential of local areas. We are feeding in the key messages which came out of the visitor economy seminar into this campaign, such as continuing to make the case for greater devolution of the necessary levers over finance, skills and transport, as well as incentivising inward investment in tourism and providing strong local leadership. We will also work with VisitEngland to support councils on the key issues raised during this seminar.
5. In response to VisitBritain's consultation on their tourism strategy we wrote to the Chair of VisitBritain highlighting that local government is committed to driving local growth through the visitor economy. It is encouraging that we share common interests around promoting inward investment and travel trade, connecting up international marketing campaigns with local destinations and harnessing local areas' brand through a rich cultural and heritage offer, increasing quality and productivity, and simplifying the visa regime.
6. To help share good practice and learning on the visitor economy we have set up a new 'Visitor Economy – Boosting Local Growth' Knowledge Hub group for members and officers where we will be sharing further good practice and useful tools to support local areas in growing the visitor economy.

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7. In a keynote speech on 6 November, the Secretary of State for Culture highlighted the role of tourism in boosting economic growth and committed Government to reducing perceived barriers.

Ash Tree Dieback

8. The Government has now held two COBR meetings to discuss the issue of ash tree dieback. The LGA has been present at, and contributed to, both of these meetings. The Government is committed to producing an action plan to combat the spread of the disease. This will involve further monitoring of trees by owners and managers of land, and the destruction of (only) diseased trees that have been recently planted. Councils will want to consider their role in this. The LGA will be working to ensure that the views of those responsible for combating Ash tree dieback in council-owned parks, woodland and roadsides are taken into account in shaping the Government's action plan and we will keep councils updated.

Libraries

9. The Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee published the report on their recent inquiry into library closures at the beginning of this month. The LGA gave written and oral evidence at the inquiry. The final report stressed that councils are under tough funding pressures yet there is a great deal of innovation by councils in re-designing and delivering their library services and delivering wider community outcomes such as health and employment. They recognised that these are local decisions which need to be made and that closure of libraries does not automatically contravene the council's statutory duty. However they said that some councils are failing in their statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service as they do not understand their duty correctly and that guidance by Arts Council England (ACE) and the LGA on this would be useful. They also said that the Secretary of State should play a role sharing improvement and only intervene as a last resort.
10. The LGA press release stressed that the LGA and ACE are already working together to share best practice and guidance to councils on re-designing their library services and will continue to do so through our strong self-improvement offer. This includes sharing learning from Libraries Development Initiative, peer reviews, member leadership seminars, check and challenge tool and our good practice publication 'Local solutions for future local library services' which we launched at this year's LGA annual conference. Our full press release can be found at: http://www.local.gov.uk/web/quest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10171/3773300/NEWS-TEMPLATE.

Museums

11. The LGA, in partnership with Arts Council England (ACE), have launched a new museums self-improvement offer to add to the strong libraries improvement programme we already run with ACE. A 'Transforming the delivery of museum services in local communities' two day leadership academy will be held in Coventry on 23 and 24 January to develop and strengthen political leadership skills amongst cabinet members or portfolio holders with responsibility for museums. To book a free place email grace.collins@local.gov.uk. We are also testing a new museum peer offer with ACE and inviting expressions of interest from councils.

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12. The LGA has responded to the Museums Association consultation on the future of museums. We set out a vision for how local political leaders, museums professionals and communities, supported by ministers and ACE, can best work together to give museums the best possible chance of thriving in 2020. We also highlighted the importance of supporting museums, whatever the delivery model, to maximise and articulate their contribution to other political priorities, especially economic growth. You can read the full response on the LGA website at http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/culture/-/journal_content/56/10171/3768494/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE.

The Arts and growth

13. Arts Development UK, the professional body for arts officers in all sectors, has published its annual survey on council arts spend. The survey shows that arts spending this year has been protected and is roughly flat, and that within that staff spending has reduced. The survey also reveals that the argument used by most arts departments to persuade elected members to maintain arts spend has been its role in promoting the local economy. Arts spending by councils levers in spending from elsewhere by a ratio of 4 to 1, according to the survey.

Arts Council England

14. Arts Council England has announced details of its new structure, which comes into operation on 1 July 2013, and will impact upon how the organisation works with local government. The key changes include:
- 14.1 an overall reduction in staff numbers across the organisation of 21 per cent from 559.5 full time posts to 442 (117.5 posts);
 - 14.2 four Executive Directors, reducing from eight, accountable for delivering the Arts Council's overall strategy, with the Chief Executive;
 - 14.3 leadership of artform and cultural policy expertise distributed geographically across the organisation - everyone will have a local and national focus;
 - 14.4 property costs will come down by 50 per cent through reductions in the size of offices;
 - 14.5 major offices will be located in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, plus some smaller local offices to keep the Arts Council close to the arts and cultural sector, and to local government and
 - 14.6 five areas covering London, the South East, the South West, the Midlands and the North replace the Arts Council's current regions and areas.
15. The Chair of the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board represented local government on an external advisory group to ACE and emphasised the importance of ACE's priorities and ways of working reflecting the fact ACE and councils are, together, this country's biggest public investors in the arts, libraries and museums. The LGA and ACE jointly deliver improvement support to councils on libraries and museums, and we have agreed a practical statement of purpose that commits us to supporting national and local

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collaboration and helping councils to boost economic growth through culture. The statement of purpose and letter from Cllr Rea to Alan Davey is attached at Annex A.

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Annex A

Alan Davey
Arts Council England – Head Office
14 Great Peter Street
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9 November 2012

Dear Alan

We wanted to thank you and Andrea for an extremely useful meeting.

It was clear that we share a commitment to driving economic growth through culture and encouraging greater collaboration between libraries, museums and the arts through the single cultural conversation.

To achieve this we are delighted to agree the enclosed joint statement of purpose. This is a practical summary of how Arts Council England and the LGA will replicate local collaboration nationally. Together we will aim to ensure that national cultural policy and our joint support helps places to boost growth through culture and offer the best possible cultural opportunities in tough financial times for everyone.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Flick Rea

Chair LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

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**Enabling great art, libraries and museums in all of our communities
– a partnership between Arts Council England and local
government**

Summary

This framework sets out how Arts Council England, as the national strategic development body for the arts, libraries and museums and the Local Government Association (LGA), as the national representative body for local councils will work together to support local cultural offers that make life better for people in all of our communities.

We do this by setting out how national collaboration will support the local collaboration that already exists to unlock fully the benefits of closer working between libraries, museums, culture and the arts.

LGA and Arts Council England will commit to working together in a way that strengthens the national single cultural conversation. We will maintain a joint understanding about shared priorities, key issues and local government investment in culture to inform national conversations and our joint improvement offer.

Our collaboration will be underpinned by the following commitments about how our own organisations will work.

Arts Council England will:

- Apply the principles and framework of the single conversation to our engagement with individual local authorities and work with those who offer the best partnership opportunities.
- Continue to make a comprehensive offer to local government, which will include: access to funding through Grants for the Arts; support for schools through Artsmark; support for young people through Arts award; support for young people to enjoy a wide ranging music education; and maintaining an overview of the public library network across England, sharing best practice.
- Provide investment to our National portfolio of arts organisations and regional museums.
- Continue to work with the LGA on joint improvement activity, investing where appropriate.
- Maximise the potential for relationships with local government to strengthen our work, for instance, Bridge organisations, the Libraries Development Initiative, and our strategic funding – particularly where local government is a co-investor.

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The Local Government Association will:

- Apply the principles and framework of the single conversation to our engagement with individual local authorities and Arts Council England.
- Support Arts Council England to understand the broader context within which council funded and supported culture operates in.
- Maintain networks of councillors and officers to help identify and share good practice.
- Continue to work with Arts Council England on joint improvement activity, investing where appropriate.
- Embed the single cultural conversation across the work of the LGA and in other relevant improvement offers to councils.

Together we will:

- Reinforce the value of culture across other sectors; emphasising the contribution our sector makes to growth, community cohesion, engaging young people and health and well being.
- Ensure that national cultural policy supports a single cultural conversation.
- Provide practical support to councils to unlock fully the benefits of collaboration and the contribution of culture to growth.

The chair of the LGA's culture, tourism and sport board, and the Chair of the Arts Council, will meet annually and a responsible officer will be appointed in each organisation to lead engagement with the other.

Where joint activity is planned both the LGA and the Arts Council will be represented on appropriate programme boards and steering groups (in 2012/13 this will include the Library Development Initiative and community libraries research).

Background

Arts Council England brings an expert national overview and local reach; local government has the democratic legitimacy and depth of understanding of the communities that they serve. Together we are the biggest public investors in culture.

We recognise and value the distinctiveness of place and the role of culture in shaping and reflecting communities and community identities. Libraries, museums, and the arts are some of the most highly used and valued of all local services.

Communities value the sector because it enables people to realise their potential, and helps make the places where they live healthier, sustainable and successful. The arts and culture

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can help change the story of a place for the better, raising aspirations and belief in what is possible, while also offering tangible opportunities to boost economic growth – whether through tourism, the creative industries or in improving skills and educational attainment.

However, at a time of unprecedented budget pressures current levels of investment are facing serious challenge everywhere and efficiency savings alone are not enough. Against this backdrop, we propose how Arts Council England and the LGA can help councils and local cultural partners to ensure their cultural offer is excellent, sustainable and accessible. We do this by setting out how national collaboration will support the local collaboration that already exists to unlock fully the benefits of closer working between libraries, museums, culture and the arts.

Ultimately this will lead to more efficient allocation of resources and a greater recognition of the overall contribution of culture to local communities and the quality of life in all places.

A single conversation about culture

Arts Council England's additional responsibilities for museums and libraries take their partnership with LGA and local government into new territory, building on many years of joint working nationally and locally to develop this country's exciting and rich cultural offer.

We share an ambition to create a strong cultural offer comprising excellence in arts, libraries and museums with greater collaboration between these sectors. We will seek to realise this ambition through a single conversation about culture between ourselves and also with local authorities about the cultural offer in particular places – how it can be strengthened, the partners involved in delivering it, and how it can best fit with local communities' aspirations. In turn, this will inform the single conversation at the national level between Arts Council England and the LGA regarding national policy that affects culture at the local level.

Shared principles

This partnership is underpinned by a shared commitment to the following principles which underpin everything that we do:

- A recognition of the wider political and financial context within which local government and Arts Council England operate and the need for culture to position itself as central to local commissioning conversations on issues ranging from the economy to health and young people.
- A place-based approach to investing in and supporting culture which aligns publicly funded cultural provision with the needs of that place.
- The role of strong local political leadership in driving partnerships, understanding local need and aspiration and articulating the value of culture to local communities.

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- Driving excellence and participation in culture through imaginative solutions that are locally appropriate and owned and driven by councils themselves.

What could a national single cultural conversation look like?

Integrated national cultural policy – Arts Council England and LGA will engage regularly and frequently to ensure that national cultural policy supports a single cultural conversation. In 2012/13 this is focussing on:

- Regular senior dialogue between Arts Council England and LGA over matters of mutual interest to inform policy development, to advocate jointly and to share information that will support collaboration locally.
- Being a unified strategic voice for culture to Government, Non Departmental Public Bodies and others about how libraries, museums, culture and the arts are working together to adapt and innovate in tough financial times. In particular we will work closely with The National Archives to support collaboration between archives and culture, which often sit within the same council directorate, and with Sport England and English Heritage, as appropriate.
- Championing national policies that reinforce local collaboration and advocating the removal of barriers that can get in the way of that collaboration.
- Maximising the alignment of processes for national cultural funding.

Joined-up national improvement offer for councils – Arts Council England and the LGA will undertake shared programmes that develop and reinforce collaboration locally. In 2012/13 this is focussing on:

- Strengthening local political and professional leadership to break down silos and lead transformational change of cultural services.
- Supporting places to facilitate new and developing partnerships between libraries, museums, culture and the arts and other bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Encouraging collaboration across cultural services through peer support.
- Identifying and sharing good practice examples and stimulating new thinking about how collaboration between libraries, museums, culture and the arts has helped places to improve efficiency and achieve better local outcomes.

Taking the single cultural conversation beyond culture – in the current environment it is essential that culture positions itself at the heart of local commissioning conversations about the allocation of resources. In 2012/13 this is focussing on:

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- Building capacity in the sector to help it fully exploit the opportunities of strategic commissioning and improving the positioning of culture in commissioning conversations through practical tools and sharing good practice examples.
- Developing a shared narrative about culture's vital contribution to economic growth and how collaboration between libraries, museums, culture and the arts can help to create jobs and boost growth.
- Demonstrating how wider public sector reform, such as Community Budgets and local government's new responsibilities for public health, will present opportunities for cultural services and local collaboration.
- Supporting wider networks of portfolio holders, such as those leading economic growth, public health and children's services, to understand and value the contribution of culture to local political priorities.

We hope this framework will also reinforce collaboration at a local level between Arts Council England and individual local authorities and we welcome comments on it.

Appendix

Joint LGA and Arts Council activity, 2012-15

- Libraries Development Initiative
- Community libraries research
- Leadership development for executive members with responsibility for libraries and museums
- Strategic Commissioning support
- Outcomes framework