

## Agenda

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### **Culture, Tourism & Sport Board: Supplemental Agenda**

Wednesday 20 January 2021

1.00 pm

Online via Microsoft Teams

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## **Reach and Impact of Lobbying and Communications Work**

### **Purpose of report**

For direction.

### **Summary**

This report responds to members requests to further understand the reach and impact of the lobbying and communications work undertaken on behalf of the Board. The report outlines the significant areas of lobbying and communications work undertaken in 2020 to support the sector's response to COVID. It goes on to further seek direction from members around the key lobbying and communications messages the Board would like officers to focus on over the coming months.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Members note the programme of lobbying and communications activity delivered during 2020
2. Members are asked to provide a steer around the key messages outlined in paragraph 15

### **Actions:**

1. Officers to deliver a programme of lobbying around the key messages for 2021.
2. Regular updates around progress to be provided to the CTS Board.

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### **Background**

1. To support the needs of our membership we promote the role of local government in culture, tourism and sport as this helps to build support for our policy agenda. This is delivered through a comprehensive communication offer that includes public affairs, media, marketing and digital engagement. At previous board meetings members have requested the opportunity to review the reach and impact of the LGA's lobbying and communications work.
2. 2020 was a challenging year for the LGA's lobbying work. The predominant focus was around delivering on the funding and policy asks councils were making in order for them to be able to respond effectively to the pandemic. The CTS board's lobbying work focussed around a number of key areas:
  - Securing funding for leisure services
  - Providing access to libraries during lockdown, and safe operation of CTS-services at appropriate moments in the year
  - Facilitating safe opening and operation of parks, beaches and events
  - Seeking financial support for culture and tourism services impacted by closures due to COVID
  - Communicating the longer-term role of culture, tourism and sport in the delivery of economic recovery
  - Promoting best practice of councils across the sector

#### **Reach of our lobbying and communication work**

3. Our key lobbying themes were supported through a comprehensive communications offer which enabled us to land our messages and have impact at a time when Government was facing a huge level of lobbying requests from a broad range of sectors. Part of our lobbying work was delivered through publication of reports, parliamentary committees and debates, press and media coverage and an events programme. There was also a range of member and officer level meetings with Government to push our key messages on behalf of the sector.
4. **Publication of reports:** Reports are regularly used to provide the basis of broader media campaigns. They help us to generate case studies and key pieces of analysis which we are then able to build media lines around with regards to additional investment. Key reports in 2020 were "Creative places", "Leisure under lockdown" and "Parks fit for the Future". These reports led to broader coverage of our key lines on BBC, Sky News and in the LGC.
5. The figures below provide an indication of the views and downloads of the Board's most recent publications and parliamentary briefings. Please note that following a change in legislation in September 2020, the LGA is now required to provide its digital content in an accessible format and have moved towards providing publications in html, (page views) rather than pdf (downloads):

### Publications

- 5.1. [Leisure under lockdown](#) (November 2020) 1,551 page views
- 5.2. [Parks fit for the future](#) (November 2020) 2,707 page views
- 5.3. [Managing public parks during Covid](#), joint publication with CFP and NHLF (November 2020) – 10 215 downloads
- 5.4. [Creative Places: Supporting your local creative economy](#) (August 2020) 3,371 views and 376 downloads
- 5.5. [The impact of Covid-19 on culture, tourism, leisure and sport services](#) (July 2020) 2,211 pageviews and 674 downloads
- 5.6. [Supporting leisure providers through Covid-19](#) (April 2020) 4,673 page views and 2,672 downloads

### Parliamentary briefings

- 5.7. [Supporting museums, galleries and historic buildings to open to the public, affected by COVID-19 restrictions](#) (May 2020) 47 page views, 43 downloads
- 5.8. Debate on ensuring seaside resorts can respond to any increased demand [for holidays](#) (June 2020) 646 page views, 37 downloads
- 5.9. [Support for the tourism industry after COVID-19 lockdown](#) (September 2020) 652 page views and 112 downloads
- 5.10. [DCMS support measures for DCMS sectors during COVID-19](#) (October 2020) 207 page views
- 5.11. [COVID-19 restrictions on gyms and sport](#) (November 2020) 883 page views

6. **Social media:** In 2020, the campaigns team continuously supported all proactive CTS media releases, publications and lobbying priorities with social media content across Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook corporate channels, out of which the majority performed well compared to average engagement rates.

- 6.1. The [digital promotion of 'Parks fit for the future'](#), which included an animation, stands out as a particularly engaging with followers – something also reflected in the high number of page views of that digital publication.
- 6.2. The campaigns team reinforced our broader messaging with bespoke social media content aimed directly at the general public and managing council reputation, [including messaging on the importance of parks for community wellbeing](#) and [explainers on why certain leisure centres were unable to reopen](#). The latter was among the top performing posts of 2020 – reaching over 17,000 people on Facebook alone (for context, the LGA Facebook page has about 2,000 followers).
- 6.3. Social media was also used to promote the Government COVID-19 CTS related funding available to local authorities (including the Cultural Recovery Fund and the National Leisure Recovery Fund).
- 6.4. The CTS team also maintain their own dedicated account @LGAculturesport which has 2,441 followers. In the past 28 days, there have been 15 tweets achieving 24, 000 impressions, 395 profile visits and 23 mentions. Top tweets over December/January have been related to the National Leisure Recovery Fund.

7. **COVID-hub:** The LGA's COVID-19 information hub for councils was set up as a response to the pandemic in early March 2020, collating useful information in one place,

divided up by policy area, including of course culture, tourism, leisure and sports. To date, the [CTS COVID-19 information page](#) has had 14,350 page views.

8. **Parliamentary committees:** the LGA uses these to influence parliamentary thinking and build cross-party support. We do this by providing written evidence and appearing before their hearings as this helps inform the Committee's thinking and shape their recommendations. In the last year we submitted evidence to the [Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee inquiry on sport in our communities](#). We are waiting for the Committee to finalise their report and publish it. This will provide an opportunity for us to respond and reinforce our messages around investment in ageing facilities and rebuilding the health of the nation.
9. We also submitted evidence to the DCMS Committee inquiry on the impact of coronavirus on the DMCS sector. [In the Committee' final report](#), it was positive to see them recommend that DCMS's Sport Working Group must work with local councils to ensure necessary funding is in place to preserve leisure centre facilities.
10. In December the Board chair Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson appeared before the [House of Lords Committee on the National Plan for Sport and Recreation](#). To deliver the Government's priorities of reducing obesity and tackling physical inactivity, Cllr Vernon-Jackson called on the Committee to recommend that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport establish a strategic partnership with local government. We will be following up Cllr Vernon-Jackson's evidence with a formal written memorandum as we help shape the inquiries thinking.
11. **Parliamentary debates:** Another important channel for our messaging is parliamentary debates and questions in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. These are opportunities for us to work with MPs and Peers to ensure our points are on the official Hansard record and the Government respond officially to most of the activity in Parliament. We work with our network of parliamentary supporters, including our Vice-Presidents, to brief them on key local government issues so that they can raise points for us (a report summarising our work in Parliament is available on our website).
12. Recent examples include:
  - Briefed Steve Double (Conservative, St Austell and Newquay) ahead of his [debate on domestic tourism](#). In the debate, Mr Double called on the Government to provide further funding for the tourism industry. Responding, the Minister, Nigel Huddleston MP, pointed to the VAT cut and highlighted several campaigns the Government had run to encourage domestic tourism over the summer.
  - We [briefed MPs ahead of a Westminster Hall debate on COVID-19 restrictions on gyms and sport](#). In the debate, [MPs recongised the importance of gyms and leisure centres on mental and physical health](#). LGA Vice-President Catherine McKinnell MP (Labour, Newcastle Upon Tyne North) highlighted that while the £100 million for

leisure centres is welcome, there are questions around whether councils will have the freedom to provide help where it is needed most.

- [Briefed MPs ahead of a debate on spending of DCMS on support measures for the DCMS sectors during and after the COVID-19 pandemic](#). In the debate, DCMS Select Committee member Damian Hinds MP (Conservative, East Hampshire) highlighted the work of his council supporting local cultural and sporting assets, including Grayshott Concerts, the Phoenix theatre and Petersfield rugby club.
- We briefed ahead of a House of Commons debate on the contribution of theatres, live music venues and other cultural attractions to the local economy. LGA Vice-President, Andrew Lewer MP (Conservative, Northampton South) [quoted our briefing and called on the Government to “adopt a place-based approach to recovery](#) by ensuring that councils are at the table for discussions”. Mr Lewer added that councils are one of the biggest investors in cultural activity, spending around £1.1 billion a year, so they should be part of future discussions.
- We have also briefed Baroness Morgan of Cotes, the former Secretary of State, as she has been raising points around the resumption of sporting facilities and fixtures. Since then Baroness Morgan has held a debate on leisure facilities and LGA Vice-President Baroness Grey-Thomson (Crossbench) asked what provisions the Government made for opening up leisure facilities. In response the Minister, Baroness Barran, said she is “constantly in conversation with other parts of the sport and leisure sector” and highlighted the £100 million support package for local authority leisure centres.

**13. Parliamentary questions:** We work with parliamentarians to ask questions in both Houses related to LGA lobbying issues. During 2020 this has included 7 questions covering: libraries, support for leisure centres, parks and green spaces and their role in tackling obesity, and membership of the taskforce on Recreation and Leisure. These were asked in June and September 2020 by Lord Porter of Spalding and Baroness Eaton.

**14. Letters to Secretaries of State and Ministers:** We have supported the Board to write to Ministers at DCMS and MHCLG in support of economic recovery proposals and to outline issues facing the sector, including:

14.1. Letter from Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP on Future Survival of Leisure Services – 14 April 2020

14.2. Letter to from Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP on Recreation and Leisure Taskforce – 14 May 2020

14.3. Letter from Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson to Rt Hon Caroline Dinenage MP on data collection on the impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors – 1 June 2020

- 14.4. Letter from Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP on recovery plan for the culture and tourism sectors – 1 June 2020
- 14.5. Letter from Cllr James Jamieson, National Trust and HLF to Prime Minister on future funding of parks – 16 June 2020
- 14.6. [Letter from Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP on Future survival of leisure services - 10 July 2020](#)
- 14.7. Letter from Cllr James Jamieson to Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP on Cultural Recovery Taskforce – 24 July 2020
- 14.8. Letter from Physical Activity Sector to Prime Minister on sector renewal – 21 September 2020.
15. **Commissioner for Cultural Recovery:** On 18 June Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson wrote to Neil Mendoza to congratulate him on his appointment as commissioner. A meeting subsequently took place in July 2020. Regular follow up meetings with CTS lead members are now being arranged.
16. **Ministerial working groups:** Ministers established and chaired sector specific working groups to support the operational response and recovery to Covid-19. The LGA secured regular places on the working groups for Museums, Libraries, and Sport. A briefing on tourism and the visitor economy was also provided for the MHCLG-chaired Ministerial Working Group on Economic Recovery.
17. **Media:** The LGA continues to deliver a comprehensive programme of media engagement for the Board to raise the profile of our issues on behalf of councils. We do this both as part of stories that directly relate to the Board's work but also through engagement that may be about the wider work of the LGA but includes a culture, tourism and sports angle.
18. In 2020 we ran 24 CTS media stories on a broad range of issues including funding for leisure providers, library and park usage in lockdown, museums, and music venues. In addition to this we have also responded to individual media queries and have provided lines and briefings as required. A list of media stories and responses is available in the appendix. Our stories have achieved close to 10,000 page views on the corporate website and have been picked up by a range of media outlets covering television, online and radio, with the most popular stories being picked up by over 10 different outlets, for example:
- 18.1. Our [press release](#), highlighting how libraries across the country have seen an increase in newly registered users of more than 600 per cent since lockdown measures were introduced, featured on [ITV Online](#), **Independent Online**, **Mail Online**, **Sky News Radio**, **LBC Radio**, the **Telegraph**, **Mirror**, **i paper**, **Sun** and the **Sunday Times**.
- 18.2. Our [press release](#) which called for the Government to ensure leisure trusts have access to key funding to safeguard services featured on [Sky Sports News](#), **Sky Sports News channel** and **the Sun**.

19. Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, was interviewed by the [Guardian](#) about culture services. Cllr Vernon-Jackson said: “Local government provides thousands of libraries, music venues and community cultural hubs – all an incredibly important part of our society after the virus.”
20. [Localgov](#) reported the LGA’s response to the Sport England Active Children Survey while [FE Week](#) ran a piece on the LGA’s report on creative industries.
21. **Events:** To support the communications around our work on culture, tourism and sport and to promote ideas, the LGA holds a wide ranging events programme. Our programme had to be adapted for delivery online once the impact of the pandemic became clear. We have been able to deliver 6 events from April 2020 onwards which have had over 894 attendees; we have a further 4 events to deliver before the end of March 2021. This has included events covering sports, creative places and the future of public leisure.
22. This does not include the events delivered as part of the ACE or Sport England improvement contracts, or the 4 subject specific workshops run directly by the CTS team.
23. **First Magazine:** We have also included a number of comment pieces, features and news stories in first magazine in recent months, including:
- 23.1. **first 655** (dated Jan 2021) Feature – [Fit for the future](#) – on parks and lost income, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson
- 23.2. **first 653** (dated Nov 2020) Comment – [Thinking inside the box](#) – on the opening of Plymouth’s The Box (arts/culture/history centre), byline Cllr Tudor Evans OBE, Leader of Plymouth City Council
- 23.3. **first 652** (dated Oct 2020) News – [Call for sports recovery fund](#); Feature – [Just do it](#) – on the role of sport and physical activity on helping people through the pandemic, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson; Feature – [Supporting economic recovery](#) – on libraries acting as innovation hubs for entrepreneurs, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson; Comment – [Repurposing historic buildings](#) – restoring historic buildings to use in Great Yarmouth, byline Cllr Bernard Williamson (Lab), Chair of Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust
- 23.4. **first 651** (dated Sept 2020) Feature – [The show must go on](#) – on the creative industries helping drive economic recovery, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson
- 23.5. **first 650** (dated Aug 2020) News in brief – Tourism funding – on £10m kickstarting tourism package; News – [Leisure facilities ‘could disappear’](#) – on leisure centres on the brink of collapse
- 23.6. **first 649** (dated July 2020) News – [Leisure ‘in a crisis’](#) – closed centres may never open, says DCN
- 23.7. **first 648** (dated June 2020) News – [Act to help leisure providers](#) – many gyms and leisure centres not eligible for government support; Feature – [Creativity](#)

[under lockdown](#) – role of culture and leisure services in pandemic recovery, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson

23.8. **first 647** (dated May 2020) News – [Boom in digital library usage](#); News – [Support for arts and culture](#) – on support partnership with Arts Council England; News in brief – Open spaces – on keeping parks open; Feature – Ask a librarian – case study on Kingston library service, part of a feature on [Communicating with our communities](#)

23.9. **first 645** (dated March 2020) News – [Public support for tourism levy](#)

23.10. **first 644** (dated Feb 2020) News – [Two-thirds of leisure centres 'outdated'](#); Feature – [Making the most of your heritage](#) – benefits of cultural activity, byline Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson

### **Impact of our lobbying and communication work**

24. Our lobbying and communications work around culture, tourism and sport has had significant impact for our membership in 2020. On behalf of the sector we were directly able to influence the following:

24.1. Secured £100m National Leisure Recovery Fund to support council leisure centres

24.2. Ensured an extension of the timeframe for councils to apply for the National Recovery Fund, and an expansion of what the money can be used for

24.3. Lobbied for the Cultural recovery fund, alongside sector partners and helped resolve issues with the terms and conditions that inadvertently prevented councils from accepting the grants

24.4. Secured £1000 for each library service in England to expand their e-book provision, and brought forward Government reliefs on VAT

24.5. Invited to join a range of ministerially chaired recovery groups (see para. 16)

24.6. Negotiated guidance for safe park openings and changed the Government's narrative

24.7. Secured local discretion for councils to keep elements of library services open, such as PC access, where safe and suitable to do so

24.8. The Spending Review announcement included positive recognition of the importance of culture and the creative industries, tourism and sport services, including their explicit inclusion in the objectives for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Funds.

### **Looking Ahead**

25. Already in 2021, we are seeing that councils are continuing to prioritise their response to the pandemic. Our conversations with Government are also focussed around the management of the pandemic and the current media agenda is predominantly driven by the vaccination roll out and the impact of the lockdown. We anticipate this being the pattern for the next few months. It is therefore timely for the board to review the key messages officers should be focussing on landing with Government.

26. Over the next few months there will be some key opportunities to communicate some of the Board's main messages. The Budget will be announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, the CTS Conference will also take place in early March and Sport England will be launching its new strategy on 26 January. The detail of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund are also being launched soon, which includes potential investment in culture and sporting facilities.

**Within this framework board members are asked to consider what should be the key messages we focus on?**

26.1. The LGA Budget submission was submitted by the LGA Executive Advisory over the Christmas period. It highlighted the continued ask around support for leisure services and the need for Government to **extend the £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund**. This remains the primary ask our member councils are seeking the LGA to lobby the Government on.

26.2. As councils look to renew and rebuild their communities in the future, public health will be high on everyone's agenda. Physical activity and sport have a critical role in building individual resilience to the immediate challenge of COVID-19, but also in tackling the loneliness and obesity epidemics that pose a longer-term threat to our nation's health. We are therefore calling for **a strategic investment of £500 million for councils to invest in leisure facilities, pitches, and parks** to reduce obesity; ensure a healthier, more active nation in the future; reduce our carbon footprint; and prepare our communities for the inspiration provided by the Commonwealth Games.

26.3. Cultural services are integral to the social fabric of the UK and can deliver against some of our most pressing agendas. They can improve public health and educational outcomes. They can contribute to community cohesion. They attract tourists and other visitors, boosting our economies; a cultural institution can be a key anchor for a regeneration programme, and a major draw for businesses. Arts and culture add more than £10.8 billion to the UK economy every year. **Councils continue to ask for a dialogue with Government about how these services can be best used to support the recovery of the nation and help to deliver the "place based" approach communities are seeking.**

26.4. The coronavirus pandemic has hit those from more deprived backgrounds and the black, Asian and minority ethnic community hardest, whether that be through deaths, digital poverty or a lack of accessibility to parks, private gardens and green spaces to exercise. Research by Public Health England has revealed that the most vulnerable do not have equal access to green space. People facing the greatest deprivation are experiencing a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 and existing poor health puts them at risk of more severe outcomes if they contract the virus. If we are to improve the health and mental wellbeing of those communities who experience health and social inequalities the most, **we need a national cross-**

**departmental health and social inequalities strategy that recognises the value of parks, leisure centres and cultural venues backed up with sustainable funding.**

- 26.5. **Members are asked to consider if these are the key strategic messages for taking forward over the next few months.**

### **Implications for Wales**

27. Culture, tourism and sport services are devolved to the Welsh Assembly, although there remains significant cross-over in practice and need.

### **Financial Implications**

28. None

### **Next Steps**

29. Following on from member feedback officers will refine the programme of lobbying and communications work discussed at previous boards in order to focus further on key lines.
30. Responsive work will also continue on the broader range of issues falling outside the key lines.
31. Officers will bring regular updates to the board outlining the reach and impact of the lobbying and communications work undertaken.

## APPENDIX A

### Further background

Set out below are the links to our media stories and responses for members reference.

- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-sport-england-children-and-young-people-survey>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-covid-19-has-devastated-councils-park-services>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-councils-one-top-investors-culture-sport-and-leisure>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-further-details-around-ps1-billion-covid-19-funding-councils>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-physical-activity-sector-letter-prime-minister>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/creative-industries-can-play-key-role-covid-19-recovery>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-culture-funding-announcement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-dcms-report-impact-covid-19-culture-and-sport>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-park-litter-campaign-keep-britain-tidy>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/leisure-providers-rescue-package-vital-fight-against-obesity>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-gyms-and-leisure-centres-reopen-lga-statement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-governments-arts-funding-announcement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-tourism-funding-announcement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-museums-and-galleries-reopening-announcement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-new-cultural-taskforce-risks-losing-local-voice-renewal>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-arts-council-england-libraries-funding>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-lga-responds-minister-park-closures-guidance>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-government-and-arts-council-england-launch-collaboration-support-cultural>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-heritage-lottery-fund-announcement>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-sport-england-funding-support-package>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-arts-council-england-funding>

