

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board - Report from Councillor Flick Rea MBE - July 2014

The Arts

1. Arts Council England (ACE) announced on 1 July its three-year investment plan. Funding for the 670 arts organisations in the new National Portfolio will fall from £341.4 million in 2014/15 to £339.5 million in 2015/16. This is a relatively small reduction thanks to the better than expected arts funding settlement, which the LGA's arts and growth campaign helped to achieve, and also greater use of lottery funding. The number of Major Partner Museums has increased from 21 to 46 and the budget has increased from £21.5 million in 2014/15 to £22.6 million in 2015/16. 60% of grant in aid funding and 70% of lottery funding is spent outside London. A new £15 million strategic fund has been created to invest in talent and boost production outside London.
2. ACE has highlighted local government funding pressures as a significant risk to the continued financial sustainability of arts organisations. The LGA and ACE work in partnership to support strong local political leadership of the arts and new delivery and funding models within the very challenging fiscal climate for councils. We have also consistently highlighted to ACE the importance of working closely with councils in managing a reduction in co-funded arts organisations and spreading the benefits from arts investment across the whole country.

Magna Carta

3. At the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board on 1 July, Members asked officers to urgently progress a number of actions to ensure that local government is central to plans to mark the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta. This was to counter the risk that the plethora of national events and projects are taken forward in isolation from local government meaning that places might miss out on the potential economic boost and other benefits from strong local government involvement with the anniversary.
4. The anniversary is highly relevant to local government for a number of reasons. First, it provides an opportunity to reflect on civic life, and to explore the civic underpinnings of places. Second, there is economic growth potential for places to benefit from a boost in overseas and domestic tourists. Third, there is an educational opportunity to engage young people to learn about how the Magna Carta gave rise to the individual liberties they enjoy, basic principles of fairness and the root of British democracy.
5. Building upon the LGA's extensive work to date, both to represent councils' interests to Ministers and the organising committee, and to promote and support local government and Local Enterprise Partnership involvement, the Chair of the CTS Board has written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Chairman of the Magna

800 Committee to press the urgent need for national plans to be coordinated effectively with a coherent narrative and that fully engage local government.

CTS Board 1 July

6. Other items discussed at the CTS Board included a presentation from Sue Wilkinson MBE, the new Chief Executive of The Reading Agency. This was an early opportunity to strengthen further the already strong relationship with TRA and an opportunity for the Board to influence TRA's future direction. Members highlighted the opportunity to build upon TRA's tremendous success of engaging young people to promote how reading can help to combat social isolation. Members also influenced the next stage of the LGA-led Betting Commission and made a number of suggestions that will be taken on board as the Commission starts to develop its recommendations.

Libraries

7. Building on CTS Lead Members positive meeting with William Sieghart, Chair of the Independent Libraries Panel, Mr. Sieghart has penned an article for the LGA's First magazine, in which he outlined early thoughts for a national digital network. The Board is aiming to secure recommendations that recognise the local accountability of public libraries, emphasise the importance of supporting libraries to be as relevant as possible to as many people as possible, and build on existing good practice. CTS Lead Members are giving oral evidence to the Sieghart Review on 7 July, where they will press the above key messages, as well as probe further the suggested national digital network, and we are delighted that Mr. Sieghart is speaking at LGA annual conference on 8 July.

CTS Annual Conference

8. I am delighted to confirm that the 2015 CTS annual conference will be in Durham 3 – 4 March. This is extremely fitting given that Durham is home to three copies of the Magna Carta, as well as able to offer a range of study tours covering the Board's full remit.

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