

Culture Tourism and Sport Board Workplan

Purpose of report

For information, discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper outlines proposals for future work in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the reopening and recovery period, culminating in a business as normal approach.

It includes recommendations for spending the Culture Tourism and Sport policy budget, and for parliamentary activity.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to discuss the priorities in paragraph 14 and proposals in paragraphs 17-25, and to provide a steer. Members are also asked to comment on the media and public affairs plan in **Annex A**.

Action

Officers will allocate time and resources as directed.

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Culture Tourism and Sport Board Workplan

Background

1. Covid-19 and the related recovery period will impact on priorities for the culture, tourism and sport sectors for a significant period. We propose that our related work becomes business as normal.
2. Funding and financial viability is expected to be the main concern for both council services, and the stakeholders they rely on to provide a leisure and tourism offer within their communities.
3. Experience over the past ten years suggests that discretionary services are the forefront of budget reductions when budgets are constrained. For instance, a number of parks services saw budgets reduced to zero over the past few years. All culture, tourism and leisure services are discretionary, with the exception of providing a comprehensive library service, and some aspects of archives services.
4. While services like parks and online cultural provision have assumed a very visible and important profile during the period of lockdown, it is unclear that this will translate to an increased recognition of the need to fund them.
5. If social distancing remains in place, or there are repeated occurrences of Covid-19 outbreaks, then many leisure facilities and tourism destinations will be unable to operate at levels that make them financially viable.
6. For council services, such as libraries and leisure centres, this will potentially result in asset consolidation, with lower reach or ageing facilities closed and disposed of. There will also be a need for transformation of service approach. For instance, library services may continue their shift online. However, it is clear this would also come at a cost of some of the benefits of physical assets, such as tackling loneliness.
7. Current economic projections suggest a recession is likely, although projections differ on the extent and duration. In this instance, there will be a clear role for councils' cultural and leisure provision in supporting mental wellbeing and skills retraining.
8. Services with a clear offer in terms of economic regeneration and growth, skills retraining, and supporting mental health will be of more value and sustainable during the expected financially constrained period.
9. In this context, the previous work of the Board means we are well placed to support local and central government to understand the contribution of CTS sectors, having recently published:

- 9.1. [Cultural strategy in a box](#) – outlining how to take a strategic approach to cultural provision and the cultural ecology,
 - 9.2. [Culture-led regeneration](#) – setting out the economic contribution and social benefits from taking a cultural approach to regeneration,
 - 9.3. [Revitalising town centres](#) – including the contribution of culture and leisure to reviving town centres. This guide is being refreshed in light of Covid-19 and will include additional elements related to creative shared spaces and studios, and cultural innovation hubs,
 - 9.4. [Making the most of your museums](#) – outlining how museums can contribute to corporate objectives, and become more creative and commercial.
10. The following pieces of work are also reaching publication stage:
- 10.1. **Creative industries guide** – creative industries are expected to be one of the fastest industries to recover post-Covid, and this guide will help councils understand how they can use existing levers to help them grow.
 - 10.2. **Social prescribing guide** – the publication of this guide was planned for April but has been postponed as most service referrals have ceased during lockdown. However, new practice has also emerged, and we will incorporate this prior to publication, which is now likely to be in the Autumn.
11. Over the past few months, the team has also provided support to the sector in the form of:
- 11.1. [Advice note on supporting leisure providers](#) alongside parliamentary and media lobbying, and commissioning Local Partnerships to provide contract support to councils who commission with one of four providers – over 40 councils are benefiting from this work,
 - 11.2. [Guidance on parks management during the Covid-19 period](#),
 - 11.3. [Response to DCMS select committee into the impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors](#),
 - 11.4. [Developed a think piece on the future of CTS services for First magazine](#).
 - 11.5. Worked with local government partners and Sport England to produce a [thinkpiece on the future of public leisure provision](#),

- 11.6. Developed a [joint statement with ACE and local government partners on how we will work together during Covid-19](#),
 - 11.7. Written to the Secretary of State for DCMS about the support needed for the cultural and creative sector,
 - 11.8. Interviewed 20 councils about the financial impact of Covid-19 on their cultural, tourism and leisure provision,
 - 11.9. Collated and published [innovative practice developed by CTS services](#) during lockdown,
 - 11.10. Held over 10 webinars for councillors and officers on all aspects of CTS, with a further 16 planned,
 - 11.11. [Represented councils in the media](#), particularly around parks provision,
 - 11.12. Regotiated an extension to our Sport England improvement contract worth £279,120,
 - 11.13. [Briefed on a museums debate in Parliament](#)
 - 11.14. Contributed to DCMS working groups that are drawing up reopening guidance for libraries, museums, and leisure centres.
12. In developing our future workplan, we will need to be conscious that the pace for a business as normal approach will be more considered, and the levels of activity above cannot be sustained beyond July.
13. Our contributions will therefore need to be targeted at the areas where the LGA can make the biggest difference, which are:
- 13.1. Lobbying parliamentarians and influencing national budgets and policy, including through the media,
 - 13.2. Convening officers and councillors to develop thinking and share best practice about service developments and contributions,
 - 13.3. Identifying trends within local government and our CTS partners,
 - 13.4. Targeted influence and support at issues that affect a large number of authorities, defined as one third of councils and above.

Team responsibilities

14. Our key priorities are:

14.1. Build the evidence base and identify immediate common issues, gaps in support, and advice needs

14.2. Work with partners to communicate national advice and, where appropriate, develop advice with specialist bodies for situations like facility closures

14.3. Feed in issues to colleagues within the LGA, including:

14.3.1. Core briefing for ministerial meetings

14.3.2. Issues log

14.3.3. Programme Management Team

14.3.4. CEX/Leaders bulletins

14.4. Feed up information to DCMS (CTS Team), MHCLG and HMT (via LGA programme team) about key issues affecting CTS sectors and possible forms of solution/support.

15. Our core responsibilities will be:

15.1. Sonika Sidhu – strategic oversight and liaison with LGA senior team

15.2. Ian Leete – strategic coordination and stakeholder management; tourism policy

15.3. Lauren Lucas/Samantha Ramanah – developing the evidence base and mapping; culture policy

15.4. Samantha Ramanah/Lauren Lucas – coordinating with funders and identifying funding solutions; sport and physical activity policy, including parks

15.5. Maria Collinge – delivering our improvement offer; communications with the sector

15.6. Nathan Parton – press and media

15.7. Laura Johnson – public affairs and parliamentary business.

16. Our principles will be:

16.1. We will collaborate wherever possible with partners on joint-statements and communications

16.2. We will minimise our asks of the sector during this time, and coordinate requests with partners wherever possible

16.3. We will recognise the challenges our frontline colleagues are facing and provide constructive opportunities for shared dialogue and support.

Emerging issues and proposed CTS response

17. **Service adaptation** – services have already changed some of their offer online in response to Covid-19. However, it is expected that there will also be changes to consumer behaviour as lockdown ends, including a reluctance in some audiences to attend formerly crowded venues, such as leisure centres and theatres. Feedback from the sector is that leisure provision is the largest area that will need to adapt, and need support to do so.
18. **Proposal 1** – Develop a vision for the future of leisure provision, reflecting changed patterns of consumer behaviour and demand, and connections to the climate change, active travel, and obesity agendas. Contribute to thinking by specialist sector bodies like Libraries Connected, CLOA, and Museums Association about the direction of their sectors, including communicating and securing input from senior decision makers to their thinking. We will continue our work with Local Partnerships to provide collective support on leisure contracts. £10 000.
19. **Proposal 2** – Extend and enhance our webinar and online events offer to facilitate sharing of ideas and practice between councils, and provide support for officers and councillors as they develop local visions for their provision. This will complement the Sport England Improvement Contract. £5 000.
20. **Provider and partner failure** – a number of leisure providers are on the verge of failure. In these instances, councils will in many cases be responsible for the assets and may have to TUPE staff over. Some key organisations, such as theatres, may also cease trading and councils will need to consider options for the assets. There is existing, but localised, expertise in bringing assets and services back in house. Some councils may also consider community transfers as ways to retain a facility for community use where it is no longer appropriate or the most financially effective way for the council to provide the service.
21. **Proposal 3:** Work with the LGA commissioning and procurement team to either revise existing guidance on bringing assets back in house, developed following the collapse of Carillion, or develop new guidance aimed at the cultural and sporting sectors. This will include linkages with the LGA's guidance on community assets, which will also be reviewed to meet a post-Covid context. £10 000.

22. **Digital skills** – services have developed a strong online offer during the period of lockdown, including streaming rhymetimes, online classes and clubs, and podcasting. As we move towards mainstreaming this work, there is a need to develop greater consistency and provide training support for the officers who are delivering this.
23. **Proposal 4** – work with the LGA's improvement team to develop a digital offer that is relevant to culture, tourism and sport officers, making use of ACE's digital champions network. Additionally, work with professional bodies to support their delivery of continuous professional development and sector-specific skills strategies.
24. **Low recognition and understanding by national government** – while there has been constructive engagement on the libraries, arts and culture parts of DCMS, including ministerial level, there has been very limited or no engagement on the sport and visitor economy sides. Similarly, local government has not yet been called to give evidence to the DCMS select committee, although we are pursuing this. This has led to delays in government recognising critical threats to local government services, and limiting councils' ability to maximise their contribution to reopening and recovery, which they should be leading.
25. **Proposal 5** – work with public affairs and media colleagues to further develop and deliver the parliamentary and media engagement work proposed in Annex A, and respond to emerging opportunities such as future debates and select committee inquiries.

Implications for Wales

26. We are liaising with cross border partners about the implications for Wales. While many of the issues are the same, the Welsh Assembly have different structures in place and are offering different support packages. The WLGA and Culture and Leisure Officers Wales are best placed to provide immediate responses on this, and the LGA will provide targeted support where needed.

Financial Implications

27. The CTS Board has £40 000 to spend on policy and/or improvement work between April 2020 and March 2021. £5 000 has already been allocated to producing guidance on reopening parks facilities, and another £5 000 on facilitating the webinars for councillors and officers. Between £3-5 000 is allocated for a best practice publication, collating how services and individuals have responded during the pandemic, illustrating their contribution to local areas.
28. As outlined above in paragraphs 17-25, we propose the remaining budget of £25 000 is spent in the following ways:

- 28.1. Proposal 1: £10 000 to develop a vision for the future of leisure provision
- 28.2. Proposal 2: £5 000 to extend our planned webinar and events programme
- 28.3. Proposal 3: £10 000 to support development of advice on asset management

Next steps

- 29. Officers will adapt the workplan and commission work as directed by the Board.
- 30. The situation regarding Covid-19, and the landscape of surviving culture, tourism and sport organisations, are continuously shifting. We therefore propose that this workplan is reviewed at each future board, to ensure it is responding effectively to the latest needs and developments.

Annex A CTS Media/Public Affairs plan

Key messages and facts

1. The coronavirus lockdown has shown how essential cultural services are for our communities physical and mental wellbeing, including museums, galleries and theatre productions.
2. As the country moves into the recovery stage, forecasts are predicting that we will enter a recession with spending on public services reducing. Cultural services are already close to breaking point and without guaranteed support and investment from central government many institutions such as theatres, museums and galleries risk permanent closure.
3. Green spaces have proven to be some of the most valued local assets for our communities and it is essential that councils have funding to maintain these.
4. Library memberships have increased by more than 600 per cent. Libraries will play a key role in the UK's recovery, including through their business and intellectual property centres supporting new business start ups and advice offer, computer access for skills training and research, and coding clubs.
5. Local libraries are key for bringing communities together, providing access to reading material and resources, and for helping councils improve their digital inclusion offer for residents. Many residents do not have access to Wi-Fi so libraries will be key in helping residents to apply for jobs and access emails, internet etc.
6. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of personal health and resilience. Leisure centres will be vital in helping the nation beat the obesity pandemic and tackle the health costs of inactivity, which are projected to rise to £9.5 billion by 2025.
7. Cultural services have been squeezed for the past decade as councils have been forced to focus on statutory services such as adult social care, children's care and homelessness services.
8. Councils currently spend over £1.1 billion on museums, theatres and libraries, as well as investing over £1 billion a year on sport, leisure and green spaces.
9. Councils run over 3,000 libraries, and more than 350 museums, public archives, numerous theatres and galleries, and are responsible for many monuments and historic buildings.
10. Councils have had to halve direct funding for tourism between 2008 and 2018 and reduce spending on cultural services by 45 per cent in the last decade.

Second wave narrative

11. A second spike of coronavirus outbreak will bring the cultural sector to its knees. Leisure facilities are still paying utility and maintenance costs on buildings despite loss of income. With more than a third of leisure facilities already outdated and in need of regeneration, a further lockdown would lead to closures.
12. Many theatres are preparing to reopen for winter and for productions in the new year, but further lockdown measures would put these productions at risk. Social distancing measures mean that venues would not be able to sell out capacity. Theatres operate on the basis that they will sell-out seats to cover staffing and production costs. This scenario would see them lose revenue and go bust.
13. Parks and green spaces have been an essential space for communities to escape their homes during lockdown, improving physical and mental wellbeing. Local parks need regular maintenance and in the event of a second lockdown, the government should maintain funding to ensure councils can keep these open.
14. Many regional and rural destinations have faced significant reductions in income during the lockdown. If the Government's scientific advice does not reassure people in England that it is safe to begin visiting English towns, cities and sea sides, many tourism businesses will shut their doors for good.
15. Many councils run festivals throughout the year bringing people from all over the country to invest money into the local economy. Business closures, social distancing and reduced capacity on public transport will likely have an impact on ability to run these.

Planned releases

16. The services that have sustained us through the lockdown will be the first to go post-COVID-19 if council budgets are not put on a sustainable footing.
17. Leisure facilities funding is in crisis, highlighting the continuing financial pressures on leisure providers and in-house services.
18. Efforts to tackle the national obesity and inactivity crises will fail if facilities close.
19. Failure to regenerate tourism in regional and rural regions of England threatens to close tourism businesses for good, and devastate local economies.

Ideas for political debates

20. The following proposals could be developed with LGA Vice Presidents to stimulate debate about council services:

20.1. Council run leisure facilities and services and their importance to tackling the obesity crisis.

20.2. Council investment in culture and the role of these services in post-pandemic recovery.

20.3. The contribution of public parks to communities during Covid-19 and implications for future funding and provision of public parks.

Possible Parliamentary Questions (PQs)

21. To ask Her Majesty's Government how the membership of the main leisure and recreation taskforce set up by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport was decided.
22. To ask Her Majesty's Government why they chose not to include councils on the main leisure and recreation taskforce, given local government spends over £1.1 billion on museums, theatres and libraries, and over £1 billion a year on sport, leisure and green spaces.
23. To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they agree that council-run recreational facilities such as leisure centres are crucial to tackling the obesity crisis; and whether they will ensure these services, which are facing financial collapse due to loss of income during the covid-19 pandemic are sufficiently funded so they can reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.
24. To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they agree that council-run recreational facilities such as leisure centres are crucial to tackling health inequalities in communities that have been exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic; and whether they will ensure these services, which are more affordable and accessible to communities from deprived backgrounds are sufficiently funded to avoid their financial collapse due to their loss of income during the pandemic so they can reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.
25. To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will aim to support council-run tourism services through the recovery stages of the pandemic given that it will be one of the last sectors to reopen; and given that councils have had to halve direct funding for tourism between 2008 and 2018.
26. To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they recognise the positive impact of parks and green space on physical and mental wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic; and whether they will ensure that these highly valued local assets will be regularly maintained and sufficiently funded to ensure councils can keep them open in the event of potential future lockdowns.
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