

Culture Tourism and Sport Workplan 2020/21

Purpose of report

For information, discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper outlines the Board's workplan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as agreed at the June 2020 Board. It also updates the Board on progress since June.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to review the workplan, note progress, and identify any changed priorities. Any proposed changes will have resourcing implications and the Board will also need to identify what work is deprioritised.

Action

Officers will allocate time and resources as directed.

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Culture Tourism and Sport 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.
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.
 - 9.5. [Creative industries guide](#) – creative industries are expected to be one of the fastest industries to recover post-Covid, and this guide helps councils understand how they can use existing levers to help them grow.
10. The Board has also developed a 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 or Spring 2021, depending on the timeline for most of the best practice activities being able to resume.
11. Over the past six 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. Conducted 30 interviews with councils published summary [findings 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. Negotiated 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 sport.
12. Our contributions will be targeted at the areas where the LGA can make the biggest difference, which are:
- 12.1. Lobbying parliamentarians and influencing national budgets and policy, including through the media,
 - 12.2. Convening officers and councillors to develop thinking and share best practice about service developments and contributions,
 - 12.3. Identifying trends within local government and our CTS partners,
 - 12.4. Targeted influence and support at issues that affect a large number of authorities, defined as one third of councils and above.

Team responsibilities

13. Our key priorities are:

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

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

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

13.3.1. Core briefing for ministerial meetings

13.3.2. Issues log

13.3.3. Programme Management Team

13.3.4. CEX/Leaders bulletins

13.4. 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.

14. Our core responsibilities will be:

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

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

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

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

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

14.6. Nathan Parton – press and media

14.7. Laura Johnson – public affairs and parliamentary business.

Sector issues and agreed CTS response

15. **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.

16. **Action 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.

17. **Progress on Action 1** – Scoping work is being undertaken in discussion with partners, and a conference on the future of public leisure is being planned for 20 October. Officers have included proposals for connecting leisure provision with active travel and climate change in the LGA’s Comprehensive Spending Review submission. Officers have commissioned and conducted a further 10 interviews with councils on progress made with reopening leisure centres, and the divergence between the pre- and post-covid offer.
18. **Action 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.
19. **Progress on Action 2** – A webinar on the role of cultural services in skills development and retraining took place on 18 September. The future of public leisure conference (See para. 17) is being developed, and we are in discussion on a football-focussed event, connected to a Government grant fund, with the Football Foundation. Arts Council England have confirmed funding for a series of improvement events on culture and libraries, and these are being developed, and will be covered in the accompanying improvement paper.
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. **Action 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. **Progress on Action 3** – Scoping discussions are underway with partners, with officers interviewing councils who have experience of this scenario. The final product is expected to now take the form of a series of web-based resources launched over a period of time,

with the first product being an immediate checklist to work through when notification of closure is received from the provider.

23. **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.
24. **Action 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.
25. **Progress on Action 4** – This work has not yet begun.
26. **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.
27. **Action 5** – work with public affairs and media colleagues to further develop and deliver the parliamentary and media engagement work, and respond to emerging opportunities such as future debates and select committee inquiries.
28. **Progress on Action 6** – We continue to represent the LGA on working groups on libraries, museums, and sport; and on the Ministerial Economic Recovery Group and associated rural and visitor economy sub-group. We have worked with MPs and Peers to submit parliamentary questions on leisure provision, and have submitted evidence to the DCMS select committee, Treasury committee enquiry into the impact of Covid. We have also briefed on debates on [supporting seaside resorts cope with increased domestic visitors](#), and [support for the tourism industry post Covid-19](#).
29. Since the last Board, we have also issued press responses on [the government’s arts funding announcement](#), [the reopening of gyms and leisure centres](#), [the importance of investing in leisure to achieve obesity goals](#), [the DCMS select committee inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors](#) (which included a recommendation that Government urgently provide funding to council leisure centres), [the launch of this year’s Keep Britain Tidy campaign](#), [additional emergency funding for culture](#), and [the role that the creative industries can play in economic recovery](#).

Implications for Wales

30. 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

31. The CTS Board has fully committed the £40 000 it is allocated to spend on policy and/or improvement work between April 2020 and March 2021.

32. All budgeted items are on track and expected to be delivered within budget.

Next steps

33. Officers will continue to deliver on the workplan and commission work as directed by the Board.

34. 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.