Culture, Tourism & Sport Board – End of Year Report

**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.
2. 2020-21 was a challenging year for the LGA’s 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:
   1. Securing funding for leisure services;
   2. Providing access to libraries during lockdown, and safe operation of CTS-services at appropriate moments in the year;
   3. Facilitating safe opening and operation of parks, beaches and events;
   4. Seeking financial support for culture and tourism services impacted by closures due to COVID;
   5. Communicating the longer-term role of culture, tourism and sport in the delivery of economic recovery; and
   6. Promoting best practice of councils across the sector.
3. The major achievement for the Board during 2020-21 was the securing of £100 million of emergency funding for leisure centres, as well as influencing the bidding process and deadlines to enable councils time to put together their funding proposals.
4. However, over the year the Board also secured an additional £2000 for each library service to enhance their e-book offer, which saw increased demand of around 600% during lockdown periods. Planned VAT exemptions were also brought forward by Treasury following the LGA’s lobbying on the matter.
5. In addition, the Board took action to ensure that councils were able to bid for the £1.75 billion Cultural Recovery Fund, after last minute changes to the terms and conditions would have excluded councils from accepting the grants. Precise figures are not yet available, but at least 40 councils secured funding through this and related funds as a result of this work.

**Publications**

1. During 2020-21, the Board continued its planned work of best practice publications to support councils in delivering their services. This included work [on supporting local creative economies](https://local.gov.uk/creative-places-supporting-your-local-creative-economy). However, the Board also supported a number of rapid response publications to help councils respond to the needs of Covid-19, and to highlight the work of council culture, tourism and sport services in this area. This included a guidance note on [supporting leisure providers](https://local.gov.uk/options-councils-supporting-leisure-providers-through-covid-19); research and case studies on [the financial impact of Covid-19 on parks](https://www.cfpuk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Managing-Public-Parks-During-COVID-19-FINAL.pdf); and [Leisure under lockdown](https://local.gov.uk/lga-councils-one-top-investors-culture-sport-and-leisure). Six publications were produced and launched during this period, collectively receiving over 25 000 views.

**Parliamentary briefings and committees**

1. The Board continued its parliamentary engagement throughout the year, providing briefings ahead of debates, working with key parliamentarians to ask questions in both Houses, and responding to select committee inquiries. Foremost among these was the response to the [DCMS Select Committee on the impact of Covid-19 on DCMS Sectors](https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/2022/documents/19516/default/), which included the importance of funding council leisure services as a priority recommendation.
2. Fourteen parliamentary briefings were provided during this period, along with two select committee responses, and Parliamentarians quoted from them during the debates. In addition, Cllr Vernon-Jackson gave evidence to the [House of Lords Committee on the National Plan for Sport and Recreation](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/482/national-plan-for-sport-and-recreation-committee/). Seven parliamentary questions were asked 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.

**Engagement with DCMS**

1. Engagement with the DCMS Secretary of State and Ministers has been a priority for the Board during the past year. Communication initially took the form of letters, but more recently direct engagement through local connections has proven more effective. The Minister for Sport attended the Board on 24th March, while the Commissioner for Cultural Recovery met lead members on 4 March and attended the Board on 17 March. A phone call between lead members and the Secretary of State is scheduled for 22 June.
2. Ministers also 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.

**Media*:***

1. In 2020-21 we ran 29 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. 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:
   1. Our [press release](https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-600-percent-boom-online-library-memberships-some-areas-coronavirus-lockdown), 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](https://www.itv.com/news/2020-04-04/libraries-see-new-online-memberships-soar-amid-lockdown/), **Independent Online**, **Mail Online**, **Sky News Radio**, **LBC Radio**, the **Telegraph**, **Mirror**, **i** **paper**, **Sun** and the **Sunday** **Times**.
   2. Our [press release](https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-lga-warns-leisure-providers-falling-between-support-packages) which called for the Government to ensure leisure trusts have access to key funding to safeguard services featured on[**Sky Sports News**](https://www.skysports.com/more-sports/athletics/news/29876/11984441/leisure-centres-facing-crisis-point-without-government-funding-say)**, Sky Sports News channel** and **the Sun.**
2. The CTS team has produced or secured 18 pieces of coverage in First magazine, covering the full range of the CTS portfolio, including thinkpieces from the Chair of the Board.

**Events:**

1. We have been able to deliver 12 events from April 2020 onwards which have had over 2000 attendees. This has included events covering sports, creative places and the future of public leisure, as well as the annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference which attracted record numbers. Further events are planned on the Mass Event pilots, which has 658 delegates registered, and an event on the new Sport England strategy and implementation plan.
2. 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. Delivering these contracts have involved a further 36 workshops and events, as well as three recovery and renewal panels and two peer challenges. Both contracts are being renegotiated for 2021-22. It is a sign of the strength of relationship with Arts Council England and Sport England and the value of this work that funding was made available to continue this work during the pandemic year, when most other funding streams were redirected to emergency response funds.

**Summer workplan**

1. The CTS teams’ work over the Summer will focus on three areas:
   1. **Supporting reopening and the recovery** –the majority of facilities have now reopened, but issues are emerging with interpreting guidance on the safe running of events, and the financial outlook for some facilities and community partners remains challenging. This will include the publication of our ‘emergency insourcing for leisure services’ publication, and supportive events and media work.
   2. **Making the case for financial investment** – the leisure sector remains financially vulnerable, with particular risks in areas of deprivation, so the team will continue to make the case for a further round of the National Leisure Recovery Fund, drawing on data collected through the Moving Communities Platform, and working with partners to build a collective and consistent ask of Government. We will also develop plans across the CTS portfolio in preparation for the Comprehensive Spending Review expected in the Autumn, and explore opportunities to strengthen cultural and heritage focused bids to the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
   3. **Strengthen the Board’s engagement with DCMS and key stakeholders** – the pandemic has shown the importance of having strong, effective networks. We have begun regular meetings with the DCMS place team and are setting up similar engagements with the DCMS sports team – these relationships will need an investment of time before they reach the strength of relationship experienced with the DCMS libraries and museums teams. New sector partnerships have also been established, primarily in the sport and physical activity sector, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that they have an understanding of the local government role, and that it is reflected in the collective offers and asks they are developing for Government.

I**mplications for Wales**

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

**Financial Implications**

1. The Board’s work has been completed in line with its policy budget.

**Next Steps**

1. Following on from member feedback officers will refine the programme for the Summer.