

Update on Magna Carta

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The purpose of this note is to update Lead Members on latest LGA activity and in particular our bid to the Magna Carta 800th Committee for funding to run the “Magna Carta 800: Local Leadership, Local Liberties” project that will aim to engage every English and Welsh council in the anniversary.

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the progress update and offer any further steer.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

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Update on Magna Carta

Introduction and Background

1. In 2015, local, national and international communities will celebrate and reflect upon the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta in Runnymede. Regarded as the founding document of our democratic political system, the anniversary is highly relevant to local government.
2. The Barons' challenge to an over-mighty King 800 years ago resonates with the LGA's own campaign to reverse years of centralising top-down government by devolving powers and funding to a constitutionally independent and rejuvenated local government. The prospect of constitutional reform and greater devolution arising from the Scottish referendum gives the Magna Carta anniversary immediate relevance to the biggest political issues of today.
3. Councils up and down the country are using Magna Carta as an opportunity to reflect on civic life, boost UK plc through increased visitor numbers, and engage young people about how Magna Carta gave rise to the individual liberties they enjoy. It is through local councils that the Committee's national programmes will be given locally relevant expression and communities engaged.
4. The CTS Board leads the LGA's engagement on Magna Carta and has been very involved from the outset. Cllr Peter Golds (CTS Board Member – Tower Hamlets) is a member of the Magna Carta 800th Committee which is overseeing national preparations. Cllr David Sparks OBE, LGA Chair, met Sir Robert Worcester, Magna Carta 800th Committee Chairman, on 31 July. Cllr Sparks emphasised the relevance of the anniversary to present day debates about constitutional reform and local government's campaign for greater devolution.
5. We also represent councils' interests to Ministers, Parliament, and promote opportunities for councils across the country to get involved. We have recently launched a new web resource that brings together information for councils in one place on the LGA website <http://www.local.gov.uk/magna-carta>.
6. Looking ahead, the next Magna Carta 800th Committee meeting is 17 September, and Cllr Stephens, CTS Board Chair, is speaking at the launch of the Magna Carta Tourism Trails on 25 September. This is an opportunity to highlight the opportunity to boost the visitor economy across the country. As Members are aware, the 2015 Annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference is in Durham 3 – 4 March and democratic renewal will be a key theme, as well as giving delegates the opportunity to learn about Durham's historic connection to Magna Carta.

Progress Update

7. Since the CTS Board on 1 July, the following actions have been taken forward to continue to represent councils' interests to the national organising committee, Ministers and Parliament, and to promote national and local opportunities to councils:

8. Councillor Flick Rea MBE, former Board Chair, wrote to Sir Robert Worcester, Chairman of the Magna Carta 800 Committee, and Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Culture, to reinforce the relevance of the anniversary to councils across the country and to emphasise the need for effective coordination in order to maximise the benefits. The letters are attached at **Annex A**.
9. As a result, on 31 July Cllr David Sparks, LGA Chair, met Sir Robert Worcester. Cllr Sparks emphasised that the LGA greatly values its engagement with the Magna Carta 800th Committee, and that we are mobilising councils across the country to involve communities in events and projects to mark the anniversary. Cllr Sparks also highlighted the political significance of Magna Carta for local government and referred to his opening remarks at LGA annual conference when he talked about the constitutional role of local and central government. He highlighted the opportunity for democratic renewal and the links to the LGA's own campaign to reverse years of centralising top-down government by devolving power and funding to a constitutionally independent, and rejuvenated local government. A number of actions were agreed to strengthen even further our work with the 800th Committee, including an invitation to Cllr Sparks to join the Magna Carta Advisory Group, which is meeting on 19 November, and to attend and speak at the launch of the Magna Carta tourism trail on 25 September. Sir Robert has agreed to speak at the CTS Conference in Durham in March and will also extend an invitation to the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge. Finally, we agreed to put the Committee in contact with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.
10. Councillor Peter Golds, the CTS Board's historic anniversaries champion, represented the LGA at a meeting of the Magna Carta 800th Committee on 15 July. Key dates include:
 - 10.1 Future meetings of the Magna Carta 800th Committee are: 17 September, 24 October and 19 November;
 - 10.2 In February the four oldest copies will go on display at the British Library and will be joined by the original US Declaration of Independence and the Original Copy of the US Bill of Rights;
 - 10.3 Durham holds three copies of the Magna Carta and there is an opportunity (highlighted at the 1 July CTS Board) to give Magna Carta a high profile at the annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference 3 – 4 March 2015.
 - 10.4 There is to be a Royal event on Charter day, which coincides with Garter day (15 June 2015). There will be limited places and we need to ensure strong representation for local government;
11. There will also be Magna Carta merchandise and the possibility of copies in the original Latin and a translation being printed for distribution at schools;
12. Councillor David Sparks OBE, LGA Chair, referenced the Magna Carta anniversary in his inaugural speech at LGA Annual Conference on 8 July, and linked it to the proposals in 100 Days for a new constitutional settlement for local government and deeper devolution.
13. We have updated councils on the latest plans and the LGA's role in the monthly culture, tourism and sport e-bulletin sent on 23 July and will do so again this month. We also sign

posted councils to the Magna Carta 800 website where the full national programme is available to view and let councils know that the latest bulletin from the Magna Carta 800 Committee is available online. Councils can sign-up to receive the bulletin direct: <http://magnacarta800th.com/>.

14. On 28 July, we launched a new Magna Carta resource on the LGA website that brings together in one place information and signposting for councils. Content will be developed on an on-going basis and new information added as it is made available by UK Parliament and others. <http://www.local.gov.uk/magna-carta>.
15. LGA officers attended the 2015 Anniversaries Stakeholder Event on 3 July hosted by Sir Peter Luff MP (no CTS Board Members were available). The purpose was to join-up UK Parliament's programme of activities to commemorate Magna Carta 800 and the 750th anniversary of the de Montfort Parliament. Organisations in attendance included Arts Council England, The National Trust, The National Archives, the Museums Association, the History Society and the Battlefields Trust. Key updates include:
 - 15.1 Sir Peter Luff MP introduced the event and emphasised the nationwide relevance of the anniversary. Caterina Loriggio, 2015 Anniversaries Senior Parliamentary Campaign Manager UK Parliament (who attended the CTS Board in November 2013) gave an update on Parliament's plans to mark the Magna Carta and the De Montfort Parliament anniversaries. This includes a flag competition, banners exhibition, a libraries programme, education resources and public art commissions. Further detail will soon be available from UK Parliament to share with councils.
 - 15.2 Ms. Loriggio then spoke about the LiberTeas proposal – a nationwide “moment” 3:00pm Sunday 15 June when it is hoped communities will come together to debate, reflect or celebrate rights that are personally, nationally or locally important in an informal setting like a tea party. An online resource will soon be available on UK Parliament website and we will promote this widely to councils who will have a key role supporting communities to engage.
 - 15.3 Sir Robert Worcester said that the Magna Carta 800 Committee's plans were progressing well with over 150 projects and he said how much he valued the partnership with the LGA as a way of engaging councils across the country.
 - 15.4 Geri Silverton, Project Director Magna Carta 800th Surrey Partnership, National Trust updated on Surrey's plans, which will be the focus of international and national ceremonial events on 15 June. He also emphasised the importance of local engagement and partnerships with the relevant councils in Surrey and neighbouring councils.
16. LGA officers followed-up the links to UK Parliament by meeting Caterina Loriggio, 2015 Anniversaries Senior Parliamentary Campaign Manager UK Parliament, on 1 August. Most of Parliament's engagement programme will be launched in January 2015, but we will look to give councils advance knowledge about upcoming opportunities so that there is plenty of time to plan at the local level.
17. We have secured slots in the LGA's First magazine during 2014/15, which is sent to every councillor in England Wales, to promote opportunities about local government and Magna Carta. This builds upon Cllr Andrew Lewer MBE's article in December 2013.

18. We continue to work with Cllr Simon Henig, CTS Vice Chair and Leader of Durham County Council about the CTS Conference 3 – 4 March 2015. Magna Carta will of course be a key theme running throughout the event and the focus of one of the study tours.

Local Leadership, Local Liberties Proposal

19. Members asked officers to explore further ways to support councils to mark the Magna Carta 800 anniversary. Given resource constraints, we identified an opportunity to bid for £20,000 funding from the Magna Carta 800th Committee, and following consultation with Lead Members submitted a bid on 5 September.
20. Building upon the Magna Carta 800th Committee's already strong engagement with the Magna Carta towns and cities, this project would give up to 373 English and Welsh councils, and over 8,000 locally elected councillors, extra support to involve communities in marking the anniversary and leave a lasting legacy of strengthened civic engagement. The funding would employ a part-time Project Coordinator for seven months from November 2014 and a small operating budget. Deliverables would include:
 - 20.1 The Local Leadership, Local Liberties Magna Carta Network - A councillor and young person's Magna Carta champion in every community (who wanted to participate) to spearhead local activity, be a powerful virtual network to coordinate, share vital practical information and connect councils to the Magna Carta 800th Committee; and
 - 20.2 Local Liberties: the Big Debate – a social media campaign to engage young people across the country in a conversation about what local liberties means to them, about the future of local democracy, citizenship and the contemporary relevance of Magna Carta.
21. Our project particularly focusses on the innovative use of digital technology and social media to engage young people in democratic renewal, so that the anniversary leaves a lasting legacy of strengthened civic engagement.
22. The Bid was submitted to the Magna Carta 800th Committee on 5 September. We expect to hear the outcome by the end of September and if successful aim to launch the project in October. Lead Members have highlighted the importance of a high profile launch that also involves the Children and Young People's Board. If the bid is unsuccessful, the LGA will continue our core work supporting and representing councils' interests in all aspects of the anniversary and making the links to the calls for greater devolution to local government and the place of local government in a new constitutional settlement.

Next Steps

23. The Magna Carta anniversary will continue to have the highest profile at the LGA with a range of actions over the coming weeks and months to ensure that we keep representing councils' interests to the Magna Carta 800th Committee and others, and raise awareness amongst all councils about the opportunities for them to get involved.

Annex A: Letters from Cllr Flick Rea MBE, former CTS Board Chair

Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL
Chairman
Magna Carta 800th Committee
Allington Castle
Maidstone
Kent
ME16 0NB

11 July 2014

Dear Sir Robert

The Local Government Association (LGA) greatly values our engagement with the Magna Carta 800th Committee and I am delighted that Cllr Peter Golds is representing the LGA at next Tuesday's committee meeting. I was also very pleased to hear that you emphasised the importance of our partnership at the recent 2015 Anniversaries Stakeholder Event, hosted by Sir Peter Luff MP.

One year out from the anniversary, I wanted to share some thoughts with you on how we can strengthen even further local government involvement in your exciting plans.

As you appreciate, the anniversary is highly relevant to local government. Councils up and down the country are using Magna Carta as an opportunity to reflect on civic life, explore the civic underpinnings of places, boost UK plc through increased visitor numbers, and engage young people about how Magna Carta gave rise to the individual liberties they enjoy, basic principles of fairness and the root of British democracy. It is through local councils that the majority of the Committee's national programmes will be given locally relevant expression and communities engaged.

Building upon your already strong engagement with the Magna Carta Towns, it is vital that we keep working with you, Parliament and other partners, to do everything possible to share information, coordinate plans and engage councils across the whole country in your exciting national programme of events and opportunities.

As the pace of planning steps-up, I feel it would be timely for you to meet LGA Members to discuss how we can best support you to try and ensure that the 800th anniversary involves as many people as possible across the country.

Please follow-up with Laura Caton, Senior Adviser, laura.caton@local.gov.uk or 020 7664 3154.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Flick Rea MBE

Chair LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport;
Department for Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

21 July 2014

Dear Sajid

I was delighted to meet you at the recent English Heritage breakfast meeting and very pleased to hear that you had such a positive introductory meeting with Sir Merrick Cockell, LGA Chairman. You should also have recently received a letter from our new Chairman, Cllr David Sparks, who I understand has written to you with a copy of our new report – “Investing in our nation’s future: the first 100 days of the next government”. I do hope you will be able to meet with him to discuss the report further.

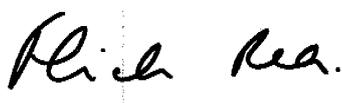
I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on local government and Magna Carta. I am sure that you are getting lots of reports on the exciting national plans that the Magna Carta 800 Committee, UK Parliament and other national bodies are developing.

The anniversary is also highly relevant to local government and I wanted to reassure you that we are very engaged. Councils up and down the country are using Magna Carta as an opportunity to reflect on civic life, explore the civic underpinnings of places, boost UK plc through increased visitor numbers, and engage young people about how Magna Carta gave rise to the individual liberties they enjoy, basic principles of fairness and the root of British democracy. From local civic heritage, to libraries, archives, museums, tourism and supporting community events, it is through local councils that the majority of the national plans will be given locally relevant expression and communities engaged.

The LGA is working closely with the Magna Carta 800 Committee, UK Parliament, VisitEngland and other national bodies to ensure that we coordinate effectively and share the right information.

We are at your disposal and please let me know if there is anything more we can do to support the anniversary.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Flick Rea MBE
Chair LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board