

Julia Lopez MP  
Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
100 Parliament St,  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

03 November 2021

Dear Julia,

### **Local Government Association**

As the Local Government Association's Champions for Digital Connectivity and the Creative Industries, we would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure. The LGA works on behalf of councils across England and Wales and has enjoyed a constructive relationship with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as we seek to achieve our shared agenda of rolling out world class digital infrastructure and developing the creative industries in every place to level up communities.

Councils are the biggest national funders of culture, spending over £1 billion annually on the arts, heritage, museums and libraries in England, and are vital partners in delivering DCMS services and objectives. The success or failure of the creative industries is important to councils, not just from an economic perspective but because of the way culture and creative spaces contribute to local identity and opportunity. Councils support local creative sectors through economic development strategies, infrastructure investment and skills strategies and direct sectoral support. The LGA has recently published [a guide](#) for councils seeking to support their local creative industries.

Over the last 18 months, councils have provided a raft of support to mitigate the economic effects of the crisis and worked with your department to target support to where it's been needed most, including through the Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure Grant Fund and through providing local cultural institutions with comprehensive support to save them from closure. We look forward to working with you and your officials to share our ideas for driving local recovery and regeneration and continue making the case for sustainable investment, to ensure councils can create thriving places that people want to live, work and visit.

During the pandemic, access to effective broadband has been essential to facilitate working and learning from home. With the right resources and flexibilities, councils can play a much greater role in driving the broadband rollout and we look forward to strengthening our good working relationship with you on the digital agenda. Councils recognise the importance of world class digital connectivity and have partnered with the telecommunications industry to extend superfast and now full-fibre broadband to the hardest to reach areas. The LGA has also worked closely with DCMS on this agenda, supporting the work of the Barrier Busting Taskforce to share best practice across our sector, and welcoming recent proposals put forward to require developers to provide full fibre connectivity to all new builds.

To close the digital divide, tackle digital exclusion and ensure rural areas can seize the benefits of home working and attract high tech, high value businesses, we are keen to continue working in partnership to ensure investment is targeted to prioritise those with the least connectivity. As we outlined in our Spending Review submission, a £250 million contingency fund for councils to support the rollout of ultrafast broadband in areas that fall within the scope of Project Gigabit, but are lagging behind in delivery will help to reach those left behind by the current roll out, and a £30 million a year fund would enable councils to put in place a local digital champion to coordinate local delivery and recruit extra capacity to respond to surges in local roll out activity.

We also want our digital future to be safe, secure and inclusive. Our Cyber, Digital and Technology (CDT) team is engaging with your officials on a new National Cyber Security Strategy and with Whitehall officials more broadly on the Government Cyber Security Strategy. We are also working closely with your department on Secure Connected Places and interacting with your Cyber Policy Regional Engagement Leads. Some of the CDT team's £4.4 million budget for this year has been allocated to councils to improve local connectivity, broadband and mobile. The LGA is raising awareness of, and supporting councils' preparations for the withdrawal of the Public Switched Telephone Network, in which DCMS has a convening role. We also continue to work with DCMS on the Digital Identities agenda, and related issues of data protection, security and inclusivity.

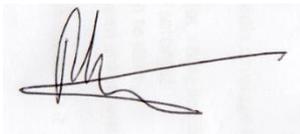
On behalf of the LGA, I would be delighted to meet to discuss how we can continue to work with your department to deliver positive outcomes for our communities. Emma West ([Emma.West@local.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.West@local.gov.uk)/ 07956 859543) in our member services team would be happy to work with your officials to find a suitable date for a meeting.

We wish you the best of luck in your role.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Mark Hawthorne  
LGA Digital Champion



Cllr Phil Seeva  
LGA Creative Industries Champion