

Update on the LGA Culture and Tourism Conference 2022

Purpose of report

For update.

Summary

This report gives an update on planning of the Culture and Tourism conference 2022.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendation/s

Members are asked to comment on the outline proposal and identify potential speakers or best practice for consideration on the agenda.

Action/s

Officers to progress as directed, bringing a draft conference programme to the next Board meeting.

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Update on the LGA Culture and Tourism Conference 2022

Background

1. The LGA's Culture and Tourism Conference 2021, took place virtually on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of March. The event had a theme of 'Culture, Tourism and Sport's contribution to our national recovery'. This year also saw the reintegration of sport to the event, following three years holding a separate event for sport. The LGA Board took the decision that all virtual activity would be free to attend for LGA members in the last financial year, so these were not run on a commercial basis.
2. Over the week from 1- 3 March 2021 we held a virtual CTS conference on the Zoom platform consisting of 4 webinars, attracting 714 delegates over the three days and receiving positive feedback from participants. The session topics and number of attendees for 2021 are below.

Date	Session	Attendance
Monday 1 March 2021	Culture Conference - How can culture contribute to our national recovery?	236
Tuesday 2 March 2021	Tourism Conference - How can tourism contribute to our national recovery?	207
Wednesday 3 March 2021	Sports Conference - How can sport contribute to our national recovery?	188
Wednesday 3 March 2021	CTS – Hearts for the Arts awards ceremony	83

3. This compares to 70 delegates at the in-person conference for 2020, held on a commercial basis over 2 days.
4. This paper updates the Board on the format and delivery model for the culture and tourism conference 2022. Board members are asked for their suggestions for speakers and case study examples for the programme.

Format

5. Following consultation with lead members on the format for the 2022 conference it has been agreed that a virtual event carries little risk compared to an in-person event. The significant additional number of delegates engaged in 2021 compared to 2020 also demonstrated the value of an online offer to members.

6. Early discussions with organisers of the Hearts for the Arts Awards indicated their preference for the event to be held online again to enable award hosts and as many winners and supporters to be able to participate as possible. The feedback from last year's virtual event was very positive, and organisers particularly liked the celebratory feel to the event.
7. A hybrid event was considered by lead members but was discounted because of the high complexity and IT costs involved in running a hybrid event. Delegate feedback from the LGA's virtual Annual Conference held in July showed that some delegates struggled with the platform technology.
8. In recognition of the value of in-person events, and particularly the walking tours traditionally held at the start of the CTS conference, lead members agreed that in addition to the conference two in person study tours would be held in the Summer to support networking and sharing ideas amongst peers, which is something that is lacking from virtual events.

Thematic focus

9. Last year's conference focused on culture, tourism and sport's contribution to recovery. This is still very much a pertinent issue for councils as demonstrated in our recent survey on culture and sport services which provided the following insights:
 - 9.1 100 per cent of culture respondents said that supporting local economic growth featured as a key priority in culture strategies compared to 33 per cent of leisure respondents
 - 9.2 Responding to the Government's levelling-up agenda also featured highly in culture strategies (47 per cent) but less so in leisure strategies at 22 per cent
 - 9.3 In comparison participation in leisure, reducing inequalities (both 81 per cent) and improving mental health (78 per cent) featured highly in leisure strategies but were less likely to be a priority in culture strategies.
 - 9.4 There is a clear difference in focus between culture and leisure services priorities for recovery.
10. The process of recovery from Covid-19 remains underway and councils and communities remain in need of support. However, the conference presents us with an opportunity to focus on recovery in the context of levelling up and tackling inequalities. The COVID-19 crisis has further amplified existing inequalities in our communities, whether that be through job losses, poorer mental and physical health, long term effects or death from COVID-19, loss of facilities in communities where they are needed most and maintaining momentum on domestic visitor numbers.
11. This would also enable us to pick up on some of the priorities and issues raised in the abovementioned survey and to help sport and leisure services better understand their contribution to local economic recovery and levelling up and likewise support culture

services to better understand their contribution to the inequalities agenda and how this has a wider impact on economic recovery.

12. Based on the above, lead members agreed the conference theme for 2022 would focus on recovery through levelling up and tackling inequalities and building back better.

Conference details

13. The conference will be held via zoom on Monday 7 (focus on culture), Tuesday 8 (focus on tourism) and Wednesday 9 (focus on sport, and close with the Hearts for the Arts Award ceremony).

14. The pricing structure is:

- 14.1. £79 per webinar
- 14.2. £159 to attend all three webinars.

15. The study tours will be treated as separate events held in the Summer. Officers will develop proposals for these separately.

Implications for Wales

16. Welsh authorities are eligible to register for the conference at the same rate as English member councils.

Implications for inclusion, diversity and equality

17. All councils now have established online communications technology, but many have travel bans in place and staff who are reluctant to travel, some of whom will have medical conditions making them particularly susceptible to Covid-19. An online event will ensure the widest possible accessibility level for council officers.
18. A diverse range of speakers will be identified, ensuring a variety of perspectives and experiences are heard, and demonstrating a range of leadership roles, from different geographies and political backgrounds.

Financial implications

19. Costs for the event will need to be covered by delegate fees. An online event will minimise costs. However, the delegate fee will also be commensurably less, leading to a small loss of income to the LGA.
20. In order to ensure these events remain as accessible as possible, we have agreed that each conference will be charged individually, allowing delegates to select the content most relevant to them, while a discounted price is offered for booking all three sessions.
21. The Hearts for the Arts Awards will remain free to everyone who wishes to attend.

Next steps

22. Board members are invited to suggest suitable speakers or areas of good practice in using culture, tourism or sport to level up communities or increase inclusion within a service or community.
23. Officers will develop the programme in line with Board members comments and present a draft programme at the next Board meeting.