

## Levelling up through Culture, Tourism and Sport

### Purpose of report

For direction.

### Summary

This paper updates the Board on the Government's Levelling Up agenda and suggests way in which the CTS work programme will contribute to the LGA's work in this area.

Is this report confidential? Yes  No

### Recommendation/s

Board members to suggest any particular areas of focus for the LGA's submission to the Levelling Up White Paper.

### Action/s

Officers to prepare the CTS dimension of the LGA's response to the Levelling Up White Paper at the appropriate time.

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## **Levelling up through Culture, Tourism and Sport**

### **Background**

1. Board members have been clear that culture, tourism and sport have important roles to play in addressing social and economic inequalities within and between places. They have directed officers to ensure the year's work programme continues to demonstrate local government's leadership role in these sectors and its importance to the successful delivery of Government's levelling up agenda.
2. In recent months, Ministers have become increasingly clear that they see culture in particular as being an important way to achieve levelling up. Neil O'Brien MP, previously levelling up adviser and now a minister at DLUHC, has also spoken of the importance of a healthy and active workforce, providing connections to the Board's sport and physical activity agenda. Recent investments in sporting infrastructure for football and tennis also indicate that Government is considering the role of sport in levelling up.
3. At the Conservative Party Conference, Ministers confirmed that the four themes that will define the levelling up agenda across the UK are:
  - 3.1. Empowering local leaders and communities
  - 3.2. Growing the private sector and boosting living standards, particularly where they're lower
  - 3.3. Spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they're lacking
  - 3.4. Restoring local pride.
4. The Government has also committed a number of funding streams towards 'levelling up' areas of the country.
  - 4.1. The Levelling Up Fund, which has cultural and town centre investment as two of its themes. Successful projects were announced in the Spending Review. At the time of writing the exact number of cultural bids was not clear; however, the assessment notes published by DLUHC stated that number of the transport and culture bids submitted was proportionately lower than those focussing on regeneration. The CTS team has identified at least 28 successful bids, from 109, that are wholly or mainly focused on CTS-related activities.
  - 4.2. The Community Renewal Fund, which is open for innovative proposals across a wide range of themes, but which specifically mentions culture-led regeneration and community development and improving green spaces and local assets. Announcements of successful bids has been significantly delayed and the LGA is calling for an extension to projects' original March delivery date in order that the projected outcomes be secured.
  - 4.3. Other funds, such as the Towns Fund and High Street Heritage Action Zones; pandemic support funds, and other funds announced in the Spending Review, the details of which are not clear at the time of writing.

## **Issues**

5. The Board's work programme is already closely aligned with levelling up. The close working between officers supporting the CTS Board and those supporting the City Regions and People and Places Boards, which lead the LGA's levelling up work, mean that the Board is well positioned to contribute to the debate.
6. The Levelling Up White Paper, originally expected in October, was confirmed in the Budget as being due by the end of the year. Officers will draw on the Board's previous work on culture-led regeneration, the securing the future of public sport and leisure services report, the upcoming culture commission, and work with the combined authorities as well as research and case studies of councils' leadership through the pandemic to evidence our contribution. While we have some time before the response to the White Paper is due, lead members are invited to make any comments about particular issues or themes they would like officers to focus on.
7. One of the LGA's priorities is making the case for fewer competitive funding pots and an overall longer-term, sustainable funding settlement, however it is certain that some measure of competitive funding will remain. From our contacts throughout the sector we are aware that there is a skills deficit around successful bid writing, particularly for cultural bids. We have recently run joint webinars with heritage funding organisations to begin to share good practice and skills throughout the sector. The LGA will also be working with successful bidders to the Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund to better understand what makes a winning bid, and to improve the overall skills in local government.
8. Officers have established positive links with DCMS' levelling up and place team, and are in discussion about how to strengthen the use of culture, tourism and sport in this agenda.

## **Implications for Wales**

9. CTS issues are devolved in Wales. Where relevant we work with the WLGA and Culture and Leisure Officers Wales (CLOW) to share good practice and learning.

## **Financial Implications**

10. All activity can be covered from the Board's budget.

## **Next steps**

11. Officers to continue to deliver the work programme, building in learning from successful CTS bids to the Levelling Up Fund.
12. Officers to develop the CTS dimension of the LGA's response to the Levelling Up White Paper at the appropriate time.