

Levelling Up the United Kingdom: White paper

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The Government has published the white paper on levelling up, outlining how it intends to deliver on its flagship policy. The white paper also includes additional detail on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is designed to replace EU funding streams.

This paper identifies the key elements of the paper relating to culture, tourism and sport, and seeks the Board's views on priority engagement and lobbying issues on levelling up. It also seeks to test initial LGA narratives around levelling up with the Board.

Two DCMS colleagues will be in attendance to share the department's current thinking and explore any opportunities for joint work to strengthen and further embed the role of culture, tourism and sport in the levelling up agenda and across government departments. Elisabeth Bouchard is Strategy Lead for Culture, Tourism and Civil Society, and Harman Saggat is Head Economist for Arts, Heritage and Tourism.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendations

1. The Board consider the evidence base in paragraphs 21-37 and identifies gaps
2. The Board discusses the questions in paragraph 46
3. The Board endorses the work programme in paragraphs 38-41
4. The Board provides direction on the LGA's work on the visitor economy in a levelling up context

Actions

Officers to progress as directed.

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Levelling Up the United Kingdom: White paper

Background

1. On 2 February 2022 the Government published its long-awaited levelling policy paper [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#).
2. It includes details of a new devolution framework, the establishment of a new independent data body and a new Levelling Up Advisory Council.
3. The White Paper also provides details of [12 new missions](#) across four broad areas:
 - 3.1 boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;
 - 3.2 spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest;
 - 3.3 restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and,
 - 3.4 empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.
4. The twelve missions will support key levelling up objectives and the capitals framework. They outline the medium-term ambition for the UK Government and act as an anchor for the expectations and plans of the private sector and civil society.
5. The white paper commits to further consultation on the metrics used to measure the success of these missions and to creating a statutory responsibility on Government to report on their progress.
6. The Government also published [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: pre-launch guidance](#) providing information regarding the aims of the fund and the delivery roles of local partners.
7. The White Paper promises a series of next steps: a comprehensive programme of engagement across the UK; consultation on missions and metrics and the devolution framework; the establishment of a new body focusing on local government data; rolling out Levelling Up Directors across the UK; simplifying growth funding; creating three sub-groups to support the levelling up advisory council; and introducing future legislation to create an obligation on the UK Government to publish an annual report on progress and to strengthen devolution legislation in England.

8. Further detail can be found in the [LGA Briefing](#), while the LGA's existing narrative can be found in the response to the DCMS Select Committee (Annex A), although it should be noted this was written before the Levelling Up white paper was published.
9. The white paper itself was not accompanied by any new funding announcements. However, the Levelling Up Fund is expected to open for a further round of funding bids, while a pre-launch prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was included as a core component of the white paper, and it is clear that these funds are expected to drive much of the delivery on Levelling Up.
10. However, the paper sets out the expectation that other departments will align funding streams to support levelling up, and a small pot of £30 million for parks, announced at the last budget, has already been integrated into the UKSPF. More significantly, DCMS has taken the lead on this by [announcing that all of Arts Council England's spending review uplift will be invested in levelling up areas](#), including via the next National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) round. NPOs will be expected to increase the total proportion of their combined impact in Levelling Up for Culture Places by 15% by March 2026.
11. This is consistent with the LGA's long-standing policy line that more arts and culture funding should be invested outside of London. Importantly, this should not lead to a reduction in investment in London as the additional funding is drawn from the Spending Review uplift. However, organisations are likely to experience a decline in real terms as a result of inflation and pressures like increased energy costs. We would value views from the Board's London members on the likely overall impact of this decision.
12. Similar commitments have not been asked of Sport England or VisitBritain to date. However, Sport England's new strategy and investment plans have a strong focus on place, as presented at the previous Board, while the DCMS Tourism team is conducting a policy sprint into the North East to identify how to grow the regional visitor economy. The LGA is supporting this work.

Culture, tourism and sport's contribution to the whitepaper

13. The white paper recognises culture, heritage and sport's impact on communities, although this is not consistent throughout the paper. The Pride of Place section is where this is most frequently discussed. However, culture, tourism and sport can deliver across a number of the identified missions and it is a weakness of the white paper that it treats investments as silos and does not recognise that investing in particular activities or assets can have a positive impact on multiple missions at once.
14. Culture is explored in some depth and forms the key component of the Pride of Place objective. It is viewed as a relatively quick and easy way to make progress on levelling

up objectives. However, the challenge will be to move this investment beyond superficial street scene improvements (although these have a role too) and towards some of the major contributions that we know cultural investments can make to community cohesion, economic growth, and health and wellbeing.

15. Sport is less extensively discussed than culture, but has a greater profile than was initially expected. There is a strong emphasis on international competitiveness and elite sport, and we believe there is more that can be done to articulate the contribution of physical activity to many of the mission objectives, as set out below.
16. The visitor economy is mentioned only in a negative context, reflecting the decline of this industry in some coastal areas. This fails to recognise that the visitor economy is responsible for the largest flow of non-public money from urban to rural and coastal areas (around £2 billion per annum) and is a significant, albeit often seasonal, employer in every council area.

LGA public opinion polling

17. There has been some criticism of levelling up as a policy, claiming that it is poorly understood and has little resonance in places. The white paper has gone some way to addressing these concerns. However, the LGA has also undertaken some public opinion polling to identify what the public expect to change as a result of this policy.
18. The results are significant from a culture tourism and sport perspective, with the largest group of respondents identifying “Improving existing, or creating new local facilities e.g. libraries, community centres, swimming pools, parks” as their priority for local government spending - 42% of people said this, compared to the next highest of investing in more community safety officers (35%). This order of priority was true for Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, but was reversed for Conservative votes with 38% saying investment in facilities was their priority, compared to 44% saying community safety officers were the priority.
19. All figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,686 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 31st January - 1st February 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The missions

20. Culture, Tourism and Sport can contribute to these missions as follows:

21. Mission 5: Primary School Achievement

- 21.1. Young people’s participation in sport improves their numeracy scores by 8 per cent on average above non-participants. Underachieving young people who take part in

sport see a 29 per cent increase in numeracy skills and a 12 to 16 per cent rise in other transferable skills. (Sport England)

- 21.2. 85 per cent of young people learn essential swimming and water safety skills in a public swimming pool. Swim England research predicts that [1.88 million children](#) are estimated to have missed out on school swimming lessons due to COVID-19. Of this an estimated 532,000 of these children come from ethnically diverse communities and 411,000 live in the most deprived areas in England.
- 21.3. Libraries provide free, local access to a range of IT, learning and information resources and activities to schoolchildren of all ages. These include: free computer and internet access; homework clubs; class visits; STEM and code clubs; Makerspaces where children can engage in STEAM activities; national reading and learning partnerships such as the Summer Reading Challenge, National Numeracy Day, British Science Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, Empathy Day, Shakespeare Week, World Book Day and Fun Palaces.

22. Mission 6: Skills

- 22.1. More than two million people work in the UK's creative industries and, before the COVID-19 crisis, the sector was projected to create another million jobs by 2030. The Creative Industries are an engine for economic growth in towns, cities and rural communities right across the UK. Prior to COVID-19, they were one of the [fastest growing parts of the economy](#), growing at more than 4 times the rate of growth in the economy as a whole. Creative jobs have also shown themselves to be resistant to automation: [research](#) has shown that jobs asking for creativity are also much more likely to grow as a percentage of the workforce by the year 2030 - use of 'creativity' in a job description is consistently the most significant predictor for an occupation's chance of growing.
- 22.2. As well as having significant potential to lead our national economic recovery from COVID-19, the creative industries could play an important role in the levelling up agenda. They are geographically spread, with [over 700 different creative micro clusters across the UK](#), many of which are highly localized and uniquely rooted in place.
- 22.3. Local libraries provide a range of facilities and support to help job seekers to find work and improve their employment skills. The Business and IP Centres in libraries are physical hubs where people can come together to learn, network and access free and low-cost information and support in protecting and commercialising a business idea. Business and IP Centres in libraries have [achieved remarkable successes](#). Over a three year period they:
 - 22.3.1 Supported the creation of 12,288 businesses, 47% of which were in the North.
 - 22.3.2 Helped businesses create an estimated total of 7843 new FTE jobs.
 - 22.3.3 Boosted local economies - the net additional Gross Value Added for Business & IP Centre supported businesses was an estimated £78 million.

- 22.3.4 Raised £6.95 for every £1 invested.
 - 22.3.5 Approximately 10% of all users were unemployed or looking for work when they first received support. Just under half of them are now running their own business (46%) while a further quarter (23%) of them are now in employment.
 - 22.3.6 22% of users are drawn from the top 20% of the most deprived areas in the UK.
 - 22.3.7 Of the users who went on to start a new business, 55% were women (65% in London), 31% were from a global majority background (44% in London) and 17% had a disability.
23. More than [585,000 people worked in the sports and physical activity labour market](#) prior to the pandemic covered 585,000 roles. It makes the following significant contributions to economic growth and levelling up:
- 23.1 From 2003 to 2017 the sector saw growth of 42 per cent, adding 129,000 net new jobs
 - 23.2 Regional sporting tournaments such as the Birmingham Commonwealth Games can help to drive growth. For example, following a pause in growth in the sector due to the recession, the success of the 2012 London Olympics signalled a period of 4 per cent average annual growth and 78,000 net new jobs over the following five years.
 - 23.3 34 per cent of jobs are held by 16 to 24 year olds, notably by males.
24. The sport and leisure sector can contribute to the development of graduate careers and apprenticeships. It is currently facing recruitment and retention challenges with an average size Trust averaging 700 hours unfilled (Community Leisure UK). The sector is moving towards aligning more closely with the health sector presenting increased employment opportunities, skills development and improved career pathway and addressing [industry shortages in key roles such as swim teachers](#) and lifeguards.
25. The visitor economy provides a crucial entry level opportunity for young people, allowing them to develop skills, often in conjunction with part time study. This is identified as a particular priority for areas with a lower skills base and fewer highly skilled employers. There is a prevailing narrative that hospitality jobs do not provide a career path or well-paid work which will need to be challenged if the visitor economy is to play a significant role in this mission – the Government’s Tourism Recovery Plan recognises this and makes commitments to improving skills delivery for hospitality and the visitor economy.
- 26. Mission 7 Narrowing life expectancy gap:**
- 26.1. Public leisure saves the NHS £32.8 million per month due to reduced demand, and increases long-term mobility and independence among older people. (UKactive). Physical activity plays an important role in preventing a number of

serious physical and mental health conditions, with the research showing this had a value of £9.5bn. Of this amount, £5.2bn was in healthcare savings, while £1.7bn was in social care savings (Sport England)

- 26.2. Delivery of learn to swim programmes in public pools can help to increase water safety and swimming skills, helping to prevent drownings which has increased from 270 in England and Wales in 2019 to 506 in 2020
- 26.3. Participation in the arts [has been shown](#) to contribute to better lifestyle choices. For example, after engaging with the arts, people in deprived communities in London ate more healthily engaged in more physical activity enjoyed greater wellbeing.
- 26.4. Evidence of the effectiveness of social prescribing, including referrals to culture and sport activities is emerging. UK evaluations have previously reported:

26.4.1 [60 per cent reduction in GP contact times](#) in the 12 months following intervention compared to the previous 12 months

26.4.2 25 per cent reduction in A&E attendance in the social prescribing group, with a 66 per cent increase in A&E attendance by the control group (Health Foundation; City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group & University of East London (2014). Social Prescribing: integrating GP and Community Assets for Health.

26.4.3 17 per cent reduction in A&E attendance and 7 per cent reduction in non-elective in patient stays were reported in the 12 months post intervention compared to the 12 months before it in an [evaluation report from the Rotherham Social Prescribing Service](#).

27. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of serious illness and disease by up to:

- 27.1 30 per cent – dementia
- 27.2 35 per cent cardiovascular disease
- 27.3 40 per cent – type two diabetes
- 27.4 30 per cent colon cancer
- 27.5 20 per cent – breast cancer
- 27.6 20 per cent – depression
- 27.7 68 per cent – hip fractures

28. Being physically active plays a significant part in helping to address obesity levels alongside a balanced diet. Councils are crucial partners in responding to the obesity crisis and delivering the Government's obesity strategy. Public sport and leisure services can directly support the NHS "Better Weight" campaign in an effort to encourage more people to lose weight. Many councils already have exercise referral programmes in place but currently this is not a consistent picture across the country. For example, Half of people completing East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Live Well programme have achieved at least a 5 per cent weight loss. This has drastically reduced the number of

bariatric surgery operations from 100 to 20 pa in the area in 8 years (the most expensive type of operation for the NHS), this has saved the NHS £2.5m in the process.

29. [Those living in the poorest areas of England die on average 7 years earlier than those who live in the richest areas](#). Regular participation in sport and recreation can help to increase life expectancy.

30. **Mission 8: Improved wellbeing**

30.1. Public leisure and activity achieves £42bn in improved mental wellbeing and productivity (Sport England)

30.2. Arts interventions have been shown to have a significant impact on mental wellbeing and are an accepted option in the medical management of wellbeing. A [longitudinal study](#) of 1297 patients concluded that art interventions can be effective in the promotion of well-being for those that complete a course of arts engagement, with significant changes in wellbeing evident across the intervention periods.

30.3. Libraries are free, safe spaces in local communities which makes the public library network a valuable platform to address the challenge of loneliness and social isolation. [A Reading Agency survey](#) in 2020 of over 1,000 reading group members found that:

30.3.1 84% feel more connected to other people because of being part of a reading group

30.3.2 71% said their mental wellbeing improved because of being part of a reading group.

30.4 Of those users of the Reading Well for young people scheme who replied, the emerging findings also indicate a positive impact:

30.4.1 96% agreed it offered support in dealing with difficult feelings and experiences

30.4.2 87% agreed that the books had offered advice for coping with pressures that could affect mental health and wellbeing.

30.5 More than 5 million adults in the UK have either never used the internet or not used it in the past three months, with a significant potential impact on their ability to engage in an increasingly digital world. Libraries have an important role to play in addressing the digital divide through their provision of free internet access and support.

30.6 [A 2019 scoping review](#) of the impact of historic places or objects on individual and community wellbeing concluded that historic buildings and places, and associated

- activities and interventions, can have a wide range of beneficial impacts on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals and communities. Evidence shows impacts on individual wellbeing, including outcomes such as increased confidence, social connectivity and life satisfaction.
- 30.7 A 2020 rapid evidence review on parks and open spaces made similar findings, highlighting benefits to physical health, mental wellbeing, life satisfaction, social integration, community engagement and economic growth.
- 30.8 Sport and leisure services provide an environment within which to learn a variety of different life skills at all stages of life. This can include provision of other activities such as adult education, road safety and cycle safety. For example, the Cycle for Health project being delivered in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority uses leisure facilities, parks and green spaces to deliver a twelve-week programme which aims to increase participants' activity and wellbeing levels, change travel behaviour and offer cycling opportunities. [Cycle for Health | Cycling UK](#)
- 31 The visitor economy contribution to improved wellbeing is tied up closely to the delivery of sport and cultural opportunities in an area. However, the importance of regular breaks is recognised in programmes supporting carers to have regular breaks, such as through the recent [England for Everyone Fund](#). The business case for introducing this fund could be expanded to better articulate and quantify the benefits of vacations to wellbeing.
- 32 **Mission 9 Pride in place:**
- 32.1 LGA public opinion polling on levelling up shows improved community assets like leisure centres and parks are people's top priority for improvements in their local area (42%).
- 32.2 [Research from the Bennett Institute for Public Policy](#) has concluded that social infrastructure – the physical spaces and community facilities which bring people together to build meaningful relationships - have significant economic, social and civic value. It argues that rather than seeing investment in social infrastructure as a rival to investing in large-scale infrastructure projects, policy-makers should be more focused upon strategic planning that brings together and better aligns these different kinds of infrastructure.
- 32.3 Public sport and leisure services (in terms of leisure centres specifically) are essential community hubs and a huge source of civic pride. They are often at the centre of their communities and are an integral part of local community life. There are now many examples of how these community hubs are integrated with other services and are often at the leading edge of driving this change. Integrated services include for example, community contact centres, libraries, adult social care day care, and NHS GP surgeries. For example the [City of York](#)

[Partnership has regenerated a deprived area of Burnholme](#) in York through the development of a new health and community hub. The hub includes refurbished and extended leisure facilities with an agreement with the leisure operator to protect the rights for local schools to use the all-weather pitch, grass pitches and indoor spaces. A care home with 25 beds available for council nomination, library, community venue, café and GP surgery and much more.

33 Improvements that benefit residents tend to also support visitors, and vice versa, as seen by investments in Hull, Coventry, and Stoke. This translates into a direct local economic boost:

- 33.1 63% of international visitors dined in restaurants, spending £20.5bn
- 33.2 29% of visitors went to museums and art galleries, spending £9.5bn
- 33.3 Domestic visitors spent £11.1bn on attractions and £4bn on museums and art galleries

34 **Mission 11 Neighbourhood crime and community cohesion:**

34.1 Returns on investment in sports programmes for at-risk youth are estimated at £7.35 of social benefit for every £1 spent—through financial savings to police, the criminal justice system and the community. (2018)

35 The National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance’s Re-Imagining Futures report [demonstrates a clear link between taking part in arts based activities and the movement towards a long-term, non-offending future](#). It reported that arts projects enable individuals to redefine themselves, engage with productive activities and improve their ability to co-operate with others.

36 Data submitted to the Justice Data Lab by Prisoners’ Education Trust, which delivers distance-learning courses, suggests that its [input can reduce reoffending by over a quarter compared to a matched control group](#). Grants made for arts materials resulted in reducing the reoffending rate from 35% to 30%. More information on this topic can be found on the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance [evidence resource](#).

37 After going to work/school/ college together (40 per cent), sharing hobbies and going to [sports clubs \(29 per cent\) was the most frequent public response for how people from different backgrounds could be encouraged to mix more](#).(DCLG, 2011)

LGA deliverables

38 The narrative and objectives of the Levelling Up white paper complement existing Board work, such as:

38.1 Culture - [Culture-led Regeneration: achieving inclusive and sustainable growth](#), our guide to place-based cultural strategies [a Cultural Strategy in a Box](#) , recent guide to [Culture and the creative industries](#) and the LGA/Arts Council England [Culture Hub](#).

- 38.2 Sport and physical activity – [Securing the future of public sport and leisure](#).
- 38.3 Visitor economy – [Supplying skills for the local visitor economy](#).

- 39 The new [Culture Commission](#) will be operating in the levelling up space between March and December 2022 and should provide the key focus and opportunity for communicating the importance of council cultural services to levelling up. The LGA improvement programme with ACE (see later item), will also be able to provide direct support to members on understanding levelling up and opportunities for enhancing local services.
- 40 We will be publishing five briefings to help communicate ‘Securing the future’ to councils, supplementing a powerpoint presentation that has been circulated to Heads of Service. The LGA/Sport England improvement programme also offers an opportunity to connect officers and councillors to this agenda.
- 41 This year’s CTS workshop at the LGA’s annual conference will focus on heritage and the visitor economy; and improvement colleagues have run a well-attended workshop on the visitor economy on 9 March. However, there is a gap in LGA support on the visitor economy and an increasing demand from members for support on this area. It is also clear from the white paper and the selected evidence base above, that more work is needed to fully integrate the visitor economy in the levelling up narrative and local aspirations, and to build the evidence base of this impact. It is important to note that several successful Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund bids focused on improvements to local visitor economies. The Board will wish to consider if this needs to be addressed when allocating the CTS budget at the next Board meeting.

Implications for Wales

- 42 Levelling Up is a UK-wide policy. However, the majority of culture, tourism and sport policy and funding is devolved to the relevant administrations. We are part of regular meetings with Culture and Leisure Officers Wales (CLOW) to share best practice and ideas.

Implications for inclusion, diversity and equality

- 43 If successful, levelling up has significant potential to address inclusion and equality challenges. However, the white paper operates at a strategic level and it will be critical that policy implementation and service design, delivered by councils, carefully considers how to build this in effectively. It will be crucial that government provides councils with sufficient development time to engage effectively with different parts of their communities, leading to a place-led and place-driven approach to investment.
- 44 The Culture Commission is holding a specific session on social mobility and inclusion. ‘Securing the future’ identifies key groups for support in being active. Our improvement programmes and events are checked for speaker diversity and meeting a range of

learning styles. There is a gap in this work on the visitor economy, reflecting comments made earlier about this part of the portfolio.

Financial implications

45 There are no immediate financial implications for this policy.

Questions

46 The Board is invited to consider the following questions:

- 46.1 How significant is levelling up as a policy to local areas? To what extent is this driving policy and budgetary conversations in councils?
- 46.2 Should we focus on maximising impact where culture, tourism and sport are recognised for deliver eg Pride of Place? Or should we focus our work with Government on securing better recognition of their contribution to other areas, like economic growth, narrowing life expectancy, or skills and academic attainment?
- 46.3 Not all parts of the country are identified as levelling up priorities. Does this affect our work and support for all LGA member authorities in a CTS context?
- 46.4 Have Board members identified specific support needs or challenges with engagement with levelling up in their or neighbouring authorities, that will not be addressed by the LGA activities in paragraphs 34-37?
- 46.5 Are there gaps in the evidence base for councils that we should be working with LG Inform and/or DCMS colleagues to close?
- 46.6 What role can the visitor economy play in levelling up, and if so, what role should the LGA play in supporting that?

Next steps

47 Officers to adapt existing programmes as directed.

48 A spending proposal paper will be brought to the next CTS Board outlining investment for the financial year 2022/23 and will incorporate any levelling up activity requested by the Board.