

Lord Parkinson
Minister for Arts and Heritage
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

24 November 2022

Dear Lord Parkinson,

Local Government Association

As lead members of the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Culture Tourism and Sport Board, we would like to congratulate you on your re-appointment as a Minister for the Arts and Heritage. As you know, 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 harnessing the arts, heritage and culture to level up communities, drive economic prosperity and create vibrant places in which people want to live, work and visit.

Councils remain the biggest public funder of culture and heritage, spending over £2.4 billion on culture and related services a year, in England alone. They run around 3,000 libraries, 350 museums, 116 theatres, and numerous castles, amusement parks, monuments, historic buildings and heritage sites and are at the heart of our national cultural infrastructure. As three-quarters of councils' expenditure on culture is discretionary, they are choosing to invest because they recognise the tremendous health and wellbeing, social and economic value cultural services and opportunities bring to their communities. Developing a thriving cultural economy and sustainable public culture services in every place will be central to maintaining the UK's position as a world leader in culture and levelling up across the country.

The LGA is committed to working closely with partners to ensure that local government has the support it needs to continue its vital contribution to our national cultural infrastructure, and we have a longstanding partnership with Arts Council England, which includes working with them to deliver our shared improvement programme for council cultural departments. As we outlined in [our submission ahead of the Autumn Statement](#), securing a long-term, sustainable funding for local government and moving away from competitive funding pots, as the Government committed to do in the Levelling Up White Paper, will be vital to enable councils to seize the benefits of culture and deliver better, more transformative outcomes for their communities. While the financial outlook for councils following the Autumn Statement is better than expected, we are still awaiting further information from Government to understand to what extent the funding gap has closed and certainty on the allocation of resources for 2022/23 and 2023/24, which are needed as soon as possible to avoid impacting services.

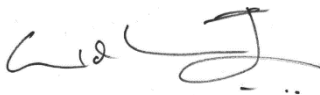
Over the past year, our [Commission on Culture and Local Government](#) – which has been chaired by Baroness Lola Young and supported by Lord Neil Mendoza in an advisory role – has been exploring the important role local publicly funded culture can play in supporting inclusive economic growth and wider objectives such as improving pride in place, tackling regional inequalities, and boosting wellbeing. Against a backdrop of growing pressures, the Commission set out to investigate the opportunities and challenges facing our essential local cultural infrastructure and design a vision for the future of public culture. The LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport team has been engaging closely with DCMS officials throughout the course of the Commission.

We would be delighted if you could join us for [the launch](#) of the Commission's final report, to hear the commissioners' findings and recommendations. The launch will be held from 4.00- 6.00pm on Thursday 8th December at 18 Smith Square, SW1 3HZ. The event will open with a panel discussion, chaired by Baroness Lola Young, followed by refreshments and an opportunity to network with members of the Commission and local government representatives. If you are able to attend, we would be grateful if you could RVSP to Megan Edwards (megan.edwards@local.gov.uk), who would be very happy to work with your office to accommodate your availability.

We would also like to invite you to join us for a meeting of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, to discuss how the LGA can, on behalf of local government, continue to work with your department to tackle the challenges that lie ahead and ensure that people in every place – no matter where in the country – benefit from opportunity and prosperity. We (memberservices@local.gov.uk) would be happy to work with your officials to find a suitable meeting around your availability.

I wish you the best of luck in your role.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board Chair



Cllr Geoff Knight
Vice-Chair



Cllr Peter Golds CBE
Deputy Chair



Cllr Shabir Pandor
Deputy Chair