

## **Culture, Tourism & Sport Board – report from Cllr Ian Stephens (Chair)**

1. I am pleased that my first two months as Board Chair have enabled me to meet many colleagues from across the country who are leading the local transformation of culture and sport services. I have also had very positive introductory meetings with many of local government's important national partners, including VisitEngland and English Heritage.

### Magna Carta

2. The Barons' challenge to an over-mighty King 800 years ago resonates with the LGA's own campaign to reverse years of centralising top-down government by devolving powers and funding to a constitutionally independent and rejuvenated local government.
3. I was delighted to speak at the launch of the Magna Carta Tourism Trails, six suggested itineraries for people interested in finding out more about the places involved in the momentous events around the country that led up to the sealing of Magna Carta in 1215. My speech was an opportunity to highlight both the relevance of the anniversary for local government, and the potential of historic anniversaries in general to attract visitors and boost the visitor economy. Sir Robert Worcester, Chairman of the Magna Carta 800<sup>th</sup> Committee, also spoke at the event and recognised local government's role in the anniversary.
4. Building upon the already strong engagement of the Magna Carta Towns and Cities, it is vital that we keep working with the Committee, Parliament and other partners, to do everything possible to share information, coordinate plans and engage councils across the whole country in the exciting programme of events and opportunities. Strong local government engagement will explicitly link the anniversary to democratic renewal and we want to make the most of this opportunity. Cllr Peter Golds represents the LGA's interests on the Magna Carta 800 Committee, which is next meeting on 24 October.

### The Visitor Economy and Heritage

5. The visitor economy is one of the strongest performing economic sectors. I met Lady Cobham, Chairman of VisitEngland, on 2 September and we discussed shared priorities for the coming year. In particular, I reinforced the importance of VisitEngland encouraging Destination Management Organisations to integrate into the wider economic landscape through close working with councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships. These shared priorities were further reinforced when Cllr David Sparks OBE, LGA Chair, had his introductory meeting with Lady Cobham on 8 October.
6. We have also submitted written evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's Inquiry into the visitor economy. Our submission argued that future growth from tourism will be unlocked by supporting industry to improve the quality of its offer so that visitors stay longer and spend more in destinations. We also said that the Triennial Review of VisitBritain and VisitEngland is a timely opportunity to ensure that future national structural arrangements reflect the wider debate about the right governance arrangements for the UK following the Scottish referendum.
7. I met Sir Laurie Magnus, Chair of English Heritage on 30 September, and reinforced the value that the LGA attaches to our partnership. The Government recently consulted on a "New Model" for English Heritage that would split the organisation in two – a charity initially funded by £80 million from the Treasury to care for the 420 properties in the national collection and that

would become self-funding, and a non-departmental body with responsibility for discharging the government's statutory planning and regulatory functions in the historic environment. I emphasised that local government – as democratic leaders of place – will want to maintain a relationship with both bodies, and that there was an opportunity to build upon existing partnerships and embed the positive use of planning to boost growth through heritage assets.

8. We also discussed how councils are organising their conservation services differently and sharing resources with each other in the face of budget pressures.

#### Sport and Physical Activity

9. I was delighted to address the eighth Sport Leadership Essentials Programme on 4 October. In partnership with Sport England, this event was for London Borough sport portfolio holders in recognition of the different structures for sport and in London. Nearly one-third of London sport portfolio holders attended and were supported to lead transformational change of sport services.

#### Betting Commission

10. Cllr Flick Rea MBE attended the final meeting of the LGA-led Betting Commission on 17 September. The CTS Board has helped to champion the importance of strong local partnerships between industry and councils to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which is responsible for national policy on gambling.

#### 2015 Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference

11. We continue to work very closely with Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of Durham County Council and Vice Chair of the CTS Board, to plan for next year's annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference. I am pleased to confirm that the Chairman of the Magna Carta 800 Committee and the Chairs of VisitEngland, Arts Council England and English Heritage are all confirmed speakers. Durham is of course home to three copies of Magna Carta and the opportunity to rejuvenate democracy through the anniversary will be the main theme of the conference.

#### Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

12. The Culture, Tourism and Sport Board met on 16 September and agreed its work programme for this year. Priorities include influencing William Sieghart's review of England's public libraries, supporting local government engagement in the Magna Carta anniversary, and raising awareness amongst Local Enterprise Partnerships about how culture can drive growth, create jobs and attract businesses and visitors.

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