

Lobbying Priorities

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper outlines some key lobbying priorities for culture, tourism and sport services that will inform the LGA's programme of advocacy and engagement with political parties and stakeholders as we move towards a general election.

LGA Plan Theme: **Supporting local people and places**

Recommendation(s)

That board members:

- Discuss the lobbying priorities brought before the board.
- Identify any gaps, or proposals that should not be included.
- Review and confirm the three primary asks.
- Provide direction on paragraphs 28 and 29.

Contact officer: Ian Leete

Position: Senior Adviser

Phone no: 020 7664 3143

Email: ian.leete@local.gov.uk

Lobbying priorities

Background

1. The LGA's CTS Board has a track record of effective lobbying for the local government culture, tourism and sport sectors.
2. Some of the outcomes delivered by the Board in 2022/23 included the following:
 - 2.2 Successfully lobbying the Government to urgently provide **support for swimming pools and leisure facilities, resulting in the £63 million Swimming Pool Support Fund** announced in the Spring Budget to help publicly-owned swimming pools manage the increasing cost pressures. This is a significant achievement given that public swimming pools and leisure centres were only one of two sectors to receive emergency support in the budget.
 - 2.3 Launching the **LGA's Independent Commission on Culture and Local Government's** final report, [Cornerstones of Culture](#) in December 2022. A number of its recommendations have since been progressed, including [the extension of the Creative Industries Clusters programme](#) along with further support for the creative industries and the development of Arts Council England's network of Cultural Compacts.
 - 2.4 Building relationships with the **DCMS ministerial team** and establishing a commitment to regular catch up meetings between Lead Members and Minister for Arts and Heritage Lord Parkinson and Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society, Stuart Andrew.
 - 2.5 Successfully lobbying for the introduction of a **tourist accommodation scheme in England to regulate the increase in short-term lets**. The [LGA responded to this](#) making several recommendations for regulation, which in turn led to two further consultations – on [introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets](#), and [introducing a use class for short term lets](#).
 - 2.6 Delivering a popular **leadership training** programme for officers and councillors in partnership with Sport England and Arts Council England, alongside three culture peer challenges and seven library peer challenges.
3. Further analysis of CTS Board wins can be found in the End of Year Report presented to the Board at their last meeting in June 2023.
4. As the Board moves into its next cycle, there are opportunities to further develop its impact and connection to wider LGA priorities. This includes the [Make It Local](#) campaign, which makes the case that public services can be delivered faster, better and more efficiently at a local level, and the LGA's developing Local Government White Paper, which will explore this principle in more detail.

Proposed priorities

5. The LGA is a cross-party organisation and works with the main national political parties through our political group offices to influence the development of parties' manifestos. Work to engage with manifestos has been underway for several months and is always based on the LGA's agreed cross-party lines.
6. This paper outlines proposed lobbying priorities for culture, tourism and sport services that will inform the LGA's engagement with the national political parties as they develop their election manifestos and work towards the next election.
7. We are proposing a longer menu of lobbying lines that can be developed if the opportunity arises, but to ensure clarity of communications, we recommend that the top three asks are given primacy and form the basis of our key messaging as a Board. We would welcome members' comments on these priorities.
8. We have received a strong steer that any manifesto asks should primarily be non-financial in nature. However, there is a genuine financial need in local government and some financial asks will be required. As set out in 'Make it Local', all our asks will be framed around the principle of local government's potential to deliver 'faster, better and more efficiently' and will be set out as an offer to Government.
9. Each of our sector stakeholders, and sub-sectors, are developing their own lobbying and advocacy proposals. We will also use this list to coordinate with partners and develop a consistent ask across policy areas, where this is possible.

10. Cross-sector priorities for culture, sport and visitor economy:

11. Our top three lobbying lines, which sit across the CTS portfolio are as follows:
 - 11.1 Secure better value for money through place-based investment by DCMS-related arms-length bodies and non-ministerial departments, allowing pooled funding across agencies. Councils have traditionally been the core funders of culture and leisure in a place, but this funding declined by over 40 percent over the ten years leading up to the pandemic as a result of wider cost pressures. A long-term, sustainable funding settlement for local government would give councils the certainty to invest in culture and wider civic infrastructure in place.
 - 11.2 Invest in the retrofit of cultural and leisure assets, including heritage sites, swimming pools and leisure centres through the extension of the [Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund](#) will support the long-term sustainability of our vital cultural, sporting and leisure infrastructure and deliver against wider carbon reduction targets.
 - 11.3 Support the vital creative industries, leisure sector and visitor economy with a more local approach to skills and employment support, as set out in the LGA's Work Local proposals [Work Local: Unlocking talent to level up | Local Government Association](#).

12. Priorities for the culture and leisure sectors

13. Councils are the biggest public funders of culture and leisure, spending £2.4 billion a year in England alone. Councils are responsible for our national infrastructure, this includes 3,000 libraries, 350 museums, 116 theatres, and numerous castles, amusement parks, monuments, historic buildings and heritage sites. It also includes 27,000 parks and green spaces, 2,727 leisure centres including 924 publicly accessible swimming pools, 31 per cent of grass pitches, 20 per cent of all health and fitness facilities and 13 per cent of sports halls.
14. Culture and leisure services are integral to the social fabric of the UK and can deliver against some of our most pressing agendas. They can improve health and mental wellbeing and educational outcomes. They can contribute to community cohesion. They reduce the burden on the NHS and social care services. They attract tourists and other visitors, boosting our economies; a cultural institution or sporting tournament can be a key anchor for a regeneration programme, and a major draw for businesses. Arts and culture add more than £10.8 billion to the UK economy every year. The public sport and leisure sector has a market value of £1.3 billion and 3.21 million members. Swimming saves the health system £357 million a year and frequent park usage saves the NHS £111 million each year.
15. The LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board commissioned research to explore the ways culture and leisure services contribute to post pandemic recovery and what needed to change to cement their future. This resulted in the following two separate flagship reports.
16. The LGA/APSE/CLOA report [Securing the Future of Public Sport and Leisure Services](#) (2020) was based on extensive research with local authorities and public leisure providers. It identified the historical and immediate challenges facing the public leisure sector and the sector's ambition for the future. The findings identified the following key themes - a need for the sector to transform and to focus on its unique offer to multiple agendas and stakeholders like decarbonisation, the NHS, social care, public health and economic growth, tackling inequalities, increasing activity levels and extending its reach into communities especially in the most deprived areas. This is underpinned by the need to increase the sector's leadership capabilities and move away from the traditional model of income generation, towards a more sustainable model that provides facilities and services based on local need.
17. The LGA's [Commission on Culture and Local Government](#) (2022) explored the ways in which culture can contribute to post pandemic recovery. It's final report [Cornerstones of Culture](#), concluded that there were four pre-conditions, or 'cornerstones of culture' which councils needed to support cultural infrastructure in place: funding, capacity, leadership, and evidence.
18. Drawing on the recommendations of each of these reports, we have identified the following key lobbying lines.

19. Financial resilience: enable councils to deliver

- 19.1 External funding for culture, leisure, sports and parks is frequently project-based, capital-focused and short-term, which creates challenges for long-term strategic

planning and the need is often more than the funding available. For example the capital element of the Government's Swimming Pool Support Fund is £40 million this is double the amount of the revenue element which is £20 million. To date the revenue element of the funding has received 159 applications, demonstrating high demand. A **long-term, sustainable funding settlement for local government would give councils the certainty to invest in culture and wider civic infrastructure in place.**

19.2 Government should continue to simplify the funding landscape **for local authorities** and work with cultural and sport related arms-length-bodies to further develop place-based approaches to funding. This will ensure local areas are incentivised to establish cultural and physical activity strategies and partnerships to drive growth and community engagement and improve health outcomes.

19.3 **Fiscal measures** to support the cultural sector are welcome. At Spring Budget 2023, the government extended the temporary higher rates of relief of three Corporation Tax reliefs that are collectively referred to as the 'cultural reliefs': Theatre Tax Relief (TTR) Orchestra Tax Relief (OTR) Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief (MGETR). Making the higher rate of these reliefs permanent would recognise the importance of the sector to the economy and support to play its part in creating jobs and growing the economy.

20. Local infrastructure: invest in the future of our cultural and leisure assets.

20.1 **Invest in the retrofit of cultural and leisure assets**, including heritage sites, swimming pools and leisure centres through the extension of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to support the long-term sustainability of our vital cultural, sporting and leisure infrastructure and deliver against wider carbon reduction targets.

20.2 The development of further **capital funding initiatives** to invest in the future resilience of our community assets would support our vital cultural, leisure and sporting infrastructure to deliver healthier communities and vibrant thriving economies and places.

20.3 For example, the Cultural Investment Fund, comprising the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), the Library Investment Fund (LIF) and Cultural Development Fund have been essential in supporting capital investment in public cultural buildings, but is coming to an end, with the final round of LIF in 2023 and MEND/CDF in 2024. Similarly, the government's £60 million Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) provides short term emergency funding for swimming pools. Applications for phase one is a highly competitive process for a share of £20 million in revenue support for facilities with swimming pools facing increased cost pressures, leaving them most vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction comes to an end in August. Phase two will provide £40 million in capital funding investment, but applications have not opened yet and the need for investment outstrips the quantum of funding.

20.4 **Investing in future technology** in public buildings, for example ensuring libraries continue to open up access to new and emerging technologies (as they did with the People's Network) is a tried and tested way of democratising access to technology and boosting social mobility.

21. Joining up: reduce inefficiency by ensuring the value of culture and physical activity to the economy and wider wellbeing is recognised in wider Government policy outcomes, in particular education, health, economic growth and planning.

- 21.1 DCMS, DLUHC, Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Department for Education (DfE), HMT and NHS England should work in partnership with local government to build a robust understanding of the critical role public sport and leisure services play in addressing their objectives.
- 21.1.1 DfE should work with Government departments and councils to map the provision of swimming facilities and levels of curriculum attainment, investing to address gaps or future gaps in the system and making targeted support available to enable schools to invest in learn to swim and swim safety where the system is currently failing
- 21.1.2 The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities should take responsibility for embedding the strategic role of public leisure facilities within health systems and pathways, coordinating with DCMS, DLUHC and local government.
- 21.1.3 The Department for Education should work in partnership with other government departments including DLUHC and DCMS to ensure the plan is fully aligned with the Creative Industries Sector Vision and wider approaches to devolution and levelling up.

22. Evidence: data to support better investment

- 22.1 Improve the impact and reach of services through **better data** by aligning new DCMS, ACE, and Sport England data projects with council service delivery to ensure councils have the data and evidence they need to make informed decisions about strategic planning and delivery. This should build on the good practice developed by Sport England's Moving Communities database, the DCMS's [Arts and Heritage Capital Framework](#) and the LGA's [LG Inform](#) benchmarking platform.
- 22.2 DCMS should establish a programme for public sport and leisure services equivalent to its 'Valuing culture and heritage assets capital: a framework towards informing decision making' programme. The new programme should make statistics and evidence publicly available to aid the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book.

23. Key asks across the visitor economy sector:

- 23.1 Balance the important contribution of short-term lets to the visitor economy with the need to house staff employed in that sector, and ensure a suitable housing supply for local residents by giving local councils the powers to effectively manage housing and accommodation supply in their area. This will include both regulatory powers through a registration scheme, planning powers, and support for community land trusts.
- 23.2 Recognise councils' key contribution in managing destinations for both domestic and international visitors by confirming ongoing local government representation on the Tourism Industry Council. In addition to their destination management and planning roles, councils also own and run key attractions as well as most regional airports, making them crucial partners for Government on the visitor economy.

23.3 Ensure councils have the right fiscal powers they need to raise revenue to invest in the local visitor economy, reflecting the decades of success of this approach in other international destinations, and the test-bed approaches in Manchester and Liverpool.

Implications for Wales

24. The majority of culture, tourism and sport policy is devolved. Any financial commitments made by a new government would result in a proportional amount of funding being given to the devolved administrations, although they are not obliged to spend the money on the same service area.

Financial Implications

25. There are no direct financial implications for the LGA.

Equalities implications

26. The cross-sector priorities in paragraph 6 will each enable councils to improve their service design to reach parts of their community not currently experiencing or accessing the full benefits of the service. The LGA will provide support to help councils do this if the asks are successfully adopted by the new Government.

Next steps

27. Officers will identify appropriate routes to disseminate these lines, including meetings with ministers, discussions with civil servants, and parliamentary events.

28. In furtherance of this we propose inviting each political party to send a spokesperson to attend a board meeting. Subject to dates being suitable, we propose the following order:

28.1. November – Labour

28.2. January – Conservative

28.3. March – Liberal Democrat

28.4. June – Green (IND)

29. Board members may also wish to identify key partners they wish to hear from. For instance Arts Council England, Sport England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, or specialist partner organisations like Youth Sport Trust, Ukactive, or Libraries Connected.