

Think pieces on cultural placemaking and devolution

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper outlines the contents of a [new LGA report, comprising a series of seven independently written think pieces](#), exploring the future of local cultural services, cultural placemaking and devolution.

LGA Plan Theme: **Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy**

Recommendation(s)

That Culture, Tourism and Sport Board members:

1. Note the published report; and
2. Identify any organisations we should invite to contribute to future iterations of this series.

Contact details

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Background

1. The CTS Board's workplan, agreed in September 2023, set out an action to deliver a series of devolution' think pieces, as the CTS Board's contribution to the LGA Local Government White Paper, and responding to political parties in their thinking on devolution of culture in March 2024.
2. We committed to commissioning a series of think pieces from experts in the sector looking at how place-based investment and devolution of non-cultural powers, such as skills, can enhance and empower councils' cultural work. These were to be launched at the CTS annual conference, and form part of our Culture Commission follow up.
3. Contributors were invited to respond to one or more of the following questions:
 - 3.1. How can local government be better empowered to deliver vibrant thriving cultural places and services for their residents? What needs to change? Are there areas where more powers could be devolved (for example skills, education)?
 - 3.2. How can devolution support this agenda? What mechanisms make a good devolution deal for culture? What role can combined authorities most successfully play in supporting culture?
 - 3.3. What would a coherent approach to funding and governance look like at a local, national and regional level? What mechanisms would enable this? How could this support the delivery of a legitimate local cultural strategy?
 - 3.4. What can we do to protect cultural infrastructure in place and invest in capital assets? How can we ensure they are sustainable for the next generation? What role is there for social finance? What is the role of planning?
 - 3.5. What is the role of communities in shaping local cultural provision? How can authorities ensure the voice of communities is heard in determining the future of services? What policies, governance structures and approaches will facilitate this?
 - 3.6. What approach to cultural data and evidence would most empower councils?

Content

4. The report was launched at the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference on the 5th March 2024. It contained forewords from: Cllr Liz Green; Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England; and Lord Neil Mendoza, Chair of Historic England.

5. There were seven articles in the series from the following contributors:
 - 5.1. **Val Birchall**, Immediate Past Chair, Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association explored the question of what would truly place-led working look like for cultural services - in terms of funding, governance and the relationship between councils and funding agencies.
 - 5.2. **Paul Bristow**, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Place Policy of Arts Council England set out some of the next steps for the Arts Council England in developing its approach to place-based working with councils.
 - 5.3. **Professor Katy Shaw**, Programme Director: AHRC Creative Communities and Director of University Cultural Partnerships at Northumbria University and **Dr Henry Kippin**, Chief Executive of the North of Tyne Combined Authority drew on the case study of North East devolution and the development of its innovative cultural sector development programme to show how culture can drive other outcomes including skills, transport and R&D.
 - 5.4. **Professor Nicky Marsh, Dr Joseph Owen, and Professor Daniel Ashton** at the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities described some of the findings of the [Neighbouring Data](#) project on the use, connection and representation of qualitative data, outlining its potential role in understanding lived experience and the wider opportunities it presents for place-based decision-making.
 - 5.5. **Professor Michael Kenny and Owen Garling at the Bennett Institute for Public Policy for the University of Cambridge** considered the role that culture plays in Combined Authority strategies – with a particular focus on ideas of cultural infrastructure and the disconnect with the funding situation across local authorities.
 - 5.6. **Shivani Menon**, Senior Researcher at UK Onward explored the role of philanthropy in supporting arts and culture-led regeneration projects across the country, proposing ways in which councils and their partners might grow their philanthropic base.
 - 5.7. **Ben Walmsley, Director and Anna Kime**, Policy Officer at the Centre for Cultural Value focused on data, considering the question of how can we ethically and effectively fund place-based cultural activity to empower the cultural sector and the local communities they serve.
6. We are inviting further think pieces to contribute to this series over the spring/summer.

Implications for Wales

7. The majority of culture, tourism and sport funding and policy is devolved. We share learning and best practice with Culture and Leisure Officers Wales, although the WLGA is responsible for formal improvement work.

Financial Implications

8. There were no financial implications for this piece of work

Equalities implications

9. Access to cultural opportunity is addressed as a theme in several of the articles in the series. It may be a topic on which we wish to invite further contributors in future iterations of this work.

Next steps

10. The team will invite writers who were unable to contribute to this series but have indicated they would like to write an article to write for the next sequence of articles, to be published in spring/summer.