

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Ian Stephens (Chair)

New Government

1. The new Government will need to work closely with councils to achieve its manifesto commitments for culture, tourism and sport. A number of CTS Board priorities are reflected in the manifesto, including supporting libraries, investing in grassroots football, school sport, promoting tourism, building on the Olympic and Paralympic legacy, and growing the creative industries. The Board will work to ensure that Ministers deliver their commitments and that national policy reinforces and supports the locally-led nature of much of this agenda and LGA priorities. The Board will take this forward in partnership with the LGA Chair, Leadership Board, and other relevant policy boards.
2. I have written to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Ministerial Team to welcome new and returning Ministers and to set out how we can work in partnership to deliver shared policy goals. In particular, I emphasised the significant impact further cuts to local government funding will have on local culture and sport provision, and that this will also impact negatively on other policy areas including health, social care and economic growth. I highlighted the strong partnerships between LGA and the DCMS national agencies and the importance of continuing to support effective local political leadership by seeking out and sharing good practice.

Libraries for Leadership Task Force

3. I attended the second meeting of the Libraries for Leadership Task Force on 19 May. The Task Force, which is jointly accountable to LGA Members and Ministers, was set up earlier this year to implement the recommendations from William Sieghart's Independent Review of Public Libraries. As well as local government chief executives, the Task Force brings together The Reading Agency, Society of Chief Librarians, BBC, British Library, Public Health England and others to support locally-led transformation. I emphasised the opportunity for the Task Force to provide timely and practical support for libraries in line with the sector's needs. Ed Vaizey MP, Culture Minister, also attended the Task Force and confirmed his department's strong support.
4. Paul Blantern, Chief Executive of Northamptonshire County Council and Chair of the Task Force, updated on progress against the priorities agreed by LGA Members and Ministers: rolling out Wi-Fi to more libraries, supporting sector-led best practice, raising awareness about the contribution of libraries to wider community outcomes and workforce development. In particular, £7.4 million has been secured to fund the rollout of Wi-Fi to public libraries not already connected.
5. Prior to the Task Force, Paul Blantern met Culture, Tourism and Sport Lead Members.

Magna Carta

6. Cllr Peter Golds attended the Magna Carta 800th Committee on 21 April and 20 May. As preparations enter the final phase, the LGA has continued to promote the LiberTeas event on 14 June far and wide through LGA social media, e-bulletins and member networks. Where appropriate, the LGA's letters to new Ministers emphasised the relevance of the Magna Carta anniversary to local government and how we are involving communities to make the most of the opportunity for democratic renewal. We have confirmed a Magna Carta inspired fringe session at LGA Annual Conference on 1 July and this will be an opportunity to reflect on legacy and how councils can keep up the momentum on civic engagement. CTS Lead Members, the LGA Chair and LGA Group Leaders are attending the national commemoration in Runnymede on 15 June.

Sport and Physical Activity

7. I was delighted to welcome Nick Bitel, Chair of Sport England, to the Isle of Wight on 21 May. The meeting was an opportunity to further strengthen our positive partnership. I highlighted that in the face of continued budget pressures, we need to support and emphasise the significant contribution of sport and physical activity to tackling costly health and social care pressures, including obesity and mental health. I also updated Nick on the LGA's campaign to secure fairer funding for grassroots football.

Visitor Economy

8. The LGA has responded to VisitEngland's consultation on updating its growth strategy. The visitor economy is one of this country's fastest growing economic sectors and councils play a leading role maximising its growth potential. We welcomed the enhancements to VisitEngland's role that will follow the Triennial Review and said that the revised strategy must take account of devolution and the fundamental changes to English governance. Decisions about how to support the visitor economy must be taken locally and councils are best placed to coordinate the work of destination management organisations, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local Chambers of Commerce and others with an interest in the visitor economy.

2015/16 Culture, Tourism and Sport Improvement Offer

9. I am delighted to confirm that once again Sport England and Arts Council England are funding a comprehensive sector-led leadership offer for sport and culture portfolio holders. We will deliver six leadership events and three peer challenges between July and the end of March 2016, with the aim of supporting over 150 portfolio holders to lead transformational change.

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