

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – Report from Cllr Flick Rea (Chair)

The arts and culture

1. I was pleased to attend the Rt Hon Maria Miller MP's Value of Culture Speech at the British Library on 23 January. The Secretary of State spoke about the social, community and economic benefits that culture can help to deliver. She also highlighted the importance of Britain's cultural offer to attracting visitors and businesses. I was impressed by her passion and enthusiasm, but I felt the speech was a missed opportunity to highlight that outside London it is local councils who invest more in culture than government. I have exchanged positive letters with the Secretary of State, and I am looking forward to her speech at the LGA's annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference next month in Portsmouth, where we are welcoming over 110 councillors and senior officers.
2. My evidence to the Warwick Commission on 24 January was an opportunity to highlight the many different reasons why councils value culture and the innovative ways in which councils are supporting culture in the current fiscal climate. The Warwick Commission is led by the University of Warwick and is developing policy recommendations on the future of culture, steered by Commissioners including Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England.
3. The second LGA / Arts Council England Culture Leadership Academy was very successful on 4 / 5 December, with 90% of portfolio holders who attended feeling that it gave them a basis for improvement. As well as my introductory presentation, Cllr Lewer and Cllr Crisp co-facilitated the Academy, and Cllr Doreen Stephenson shared how East Lindsey District Council is driving growth through an innovate festivals and events programme.

Libraries

4. An independent report on the public library service in England has been commissioned from philanthropist, entrepreneur and publisher William Sieghart by Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey MP, and Local Government Minister, Brandon Lewis MP. Mr Sieghart will lead a panel to take evidence and report to ministers by the end of the year. The LGA has highlighted that public libraries are a service provided by democratically-elected local councils and we have offered to help William Sieghart's panel as it conducts its review.
5. I was delighted to speak at the LGA / Arts Council England leadership seminar for portfolio holders at the new Library of Birmingham on 11 February. 25 councillors attended and there were presentations on transforming library services from Birmingham City Council, Newcastle City Council, Warwickshire County Council and Tri-borough (Westminster City Council, London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham). The event included a study tour

of the wonderful new Library of Birmingham, which has quickly become an iconic destination at the heart of the community.

Heritage

6. I met Sir Laurie Magnus, the new Chair of English Heritage, on 27 November. This was an opportunity to discuss the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's consultation on splitting English Heritage into a self-funding charity that cares for the 400 plus properties in the National Collection, and a separate regulatory and planning function (Historic England) that engages with councils and communities.
7. I emphasised that the best way to secure high-quality heritage outcomes in this challenging fiscal climate is to support strong local political leadership that is reinforced by professional conservation expertise, organised efficiently and with strategic influence. Historic England is an opportunity to embed this approach. I also highlighted the LGA's strong support for the properties in the National Collection remaining in public ownership.
8. I was delighted to discuss these points further at a breakfast discussion on English Heritage's proposed New Model, hosted by Sir Laurie Magnus, and attended by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and other heritage stakeholders.

Visitor economy

9. Sir Merrick Cockell and I met Viscountess Penelope Cobham and James Berresford, Chairman and Chief Executive of VisitEngland on 19 December. Sir Merrick and I updated VisitEngland on the LGA's Rewiring Public Services Campaign and especially how proposals for a localised and more proportionate approach to licensing will help the hospitality industry. We also discussed the implications of the changing economic landscape for the visitor economy and how to encourage visitors to spend more time in destinations around the country.
10. The visitor economy was the main agenda item at the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board on 6 February. Members agreed actions to support councils to boost growth by encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more in destinations, including a programme of leadership seminars delivered jointly with VisitEngland.

Sport and physical activity

11. Cllr Steve Bedser (Community Wellbeing Board) and I gave evidence to the All Party Commission on Physical Activity on 15 January. We shared the wider context that councils are operating in and emphasised the opportunities presented by health reform for a proactive focus on promoting wellbeing.
12. Sir Merrick and I met Lord Coe, the Prime Minister's Legacy Ambassador, on 3 February. Lord Coe updated us on his campaign to get more people active. Sir Merrick

and I said that we were very keen to work with him given the leading role of local authorities in physical activity and councils' commitment to embedding public health into all of our work.

13. We were also both delighted to attend the launch of Lord Coe's physical activity campaign on 13 February in Hackney. Sir Merrick pledged strong support from local government for this important campaign and the need to reform all of our systems, services and plans so that they actively promote health and support people to get more active.

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