



Public Accounts Committee recommendations

In line with best practice, the following updates set out in detail further progress the Department and its arm's length bodies have made in response to all current and outstanding PAC recommendations that are still incomplete or outstanding.

Session 2007–08: Forty-Second Report – Preparing for sporting success at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond (HC 477)

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC conclusion (6): The Department is aiming to secure a sustained improvement in sports participation before and after the London 2012 Games, but there is no conclusive evidence that winning Olympic and Paralympic medals influences levels of participation in the community. The Department has a target for two million more people to participate in a sport or physical activity by 2012. It should review existing evidence on how elite sporting success impacts on sports participation and undertake new research where there are gaps in the evidence. In the light of this research, it should work with UK Sport and the home country sports councils to develop an action plan on how it will use sporting success at the London 2012 Games to improve levels of sports participation before, during and after the Games.

Response

Recommendation accepted.

Our earlier response referred to DCMS issuing an invitation to tender as part of our Joint Research Programme, the purpose of which is to more generally understand participation across all our sectors.

We also referred to UK Sport conducting its own 'sporting preferences' survey of the general public. At the time the follow-up post Beijing was underway.

Update

This work is ongoing. We are building our knowledge in this area, part of which is the Olympics meta-evaluation which is seeking to measure and detect any legacy effect on sporting participation. Whilst some internal analysis assessing the available evidence has taken place, essentially there is a gap that can only be filled when we see what happens at the next Olympics. We do have some indicative data from Taking Part that suggests there may be an Olympics effect for some people in some sports.

The first phase of the Culture and Sport Evidence (CASE) programme is underway. A consortium of the University of London's EPPI-centre (Evidence for Policy Practice Information) and Matrix Knowledge Group undertook a key evidence and data review on the drivers and impacts of public participation in culture and sport, their report was published in July 2010 and is being used in the Olympics meta-evaluation.

The results of the Sporting Preferences survey were published on 29 December 2008. The survey was based on the responses of a UK-representative sample of 2,111 adults aged 16 or over. In terms of sports participation, interviewees were asked whether the success of Team GB at the Beijing Olympics or Paralympics had led to any specific changes in their participation, involvement or interest in sport. Eighteen per cent of respondents (362 people) said it had. Of these, 48 per cent said they were simply more interested in sport than before Beijing. However, 14 per cent (about 2 per cent of the UK public) claimed to have taken up a new sport; 7 per cent

(1 per cent of the UK public) said they had been to a sports event that they probably would not have attended pre-Beijing; and 7 per cent (again, 1 per cent of the UK public) said they were taking part in sport or physical activity more often than they were before the start of the Olympics.

Session 2008-09: Twenty-Fourth Report - Maintaining the Occupied Royal Palaces (HC 201)

This commentary provides an update on last year's in the DCMS Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2010, pages 102-104.

Recommendation

PAC Conclusion (1): The Royal Household has reported that there is a £32 million backlog of maintenance work but this is not supported by rigorous analysis. In the absence of a consistent approach to assessing the condition of the Estate and calculating the backlog, and without an assessment of the practical consequences of the backlog, the Department and the Household cannot be sure how big the problem is or what to do about it. The Household should define criteria for inspecting the condition of the Estate, agree with the Department the basis for calculating the maintenance backlog and, before the end of 2009, set out a plan for managing it.

Response/progress

Recommendation partially accepted.

The Household is in the process of improving records of the condition of the Estate and is using software developed by Defence Estates. It is on track to record all of the Estate by the end of 2011. The software measures 'target' condition and 'actual' condition based upon specific definitions of condition for each part of a building. The target condition of each building is being agreed with the Department's advisers.

Recommendation

PAC Conclusion (2): Work required to repair the Victoria and Albert Mausoleum, a monument of national importance, has been outstanding for 14 years and its condition is getting worse. Repairing the Mausoleum would cost around £3 million but resource constraints mean the Household has no plans to do the required work. Ultimately, the condition of the Estate is a matter for the Department, which should identify how the restoration of the Mausoleum can be funded without impacting on the Household's resources for maintaining the rest of the Estate.

Response/progress

Recommendation partially accepted.

Surveys and monitoring of the Mausoleum continue and the Household is updating its estimates for repair. Following the announcement of the introduction of a 'Sovereign Support grant' from April 2012, decisions on the restoration of the Mausoleum will be taken in the light of the Household's resources at that point.

Recommendation

PAC Conclusion (4): In 2007-08, the Royal Collection Trust received over £27 million from visitors to the Occupied Royal Palaces, of which just £1.8 million was passed to the Royal Household to top up the resources available to maintain the Palaces. The arrangement by which money paid by visitors to the Palaces goes to fund the Royal Collection Trust dates from 1850, but times have changed. More Palaces are now open to the public and hundreds of thousands of tourists visit them

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each year, yet only a fraction of the income generated is used to maintain the Palaces. The amount paid over to the Household is at the discretion of the Royal Collection Trust, but some staff of the Household are also involved with the Trust and have potential conflicts of interest. The Department should:

- (a) work with the Household and Royal Collection Trust to revise the arrangements for the collection and distribution of visitor income to reflect the fact that visitors come to see the Palaces, as well as the works of art in them; and
- (b) assure itself that the revised arrangements are equitable for the Household.

Response/progress

Recommendation partially accepted.

The Department and the Royal Household continue to keep these matters under review.

In 2010-11 the charge paid by the Royal Collection Trustees for the use of Buckingham Palace was £260,000 in the line with its agreement of March 2009 with the Household.

Session 2009-10: Fifth Report - Promoting Participation with the Historic Environment (hc189)

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (1): The Department's targets for broadening the audience for heritage were unrealistic and set without clear evidence of how they would be achieved. The proportion of the population visiting historic sites is already high and the most reported reasons why people don't visit these sites is because they are not interested in the historic environment. Before setting targets in future, the Department should:

- (a) use existing knowledge of what works to make a clear action plan that shows how its objectives will be delivered. It should involve key parties, such as English Heritage, in assessing the realism of targets to which they will contribute, and
- (b) undertake a full examination of the costs and benefits of achieving the targets and balance this against other spending priorities.

Response

The Department partially accepted this recommendation.

Update

Given that targets were achieved in one category, and nearly reached with a statistically significant increase in another, the Department believes the targets were pitched appropriately at a level that was measurable, deliverable and stretching. The Department and its bodies are driving forward work to enhance our understanding of how the cultural and sporting sectors operate and this increasingly sophisticated understanding will be utilized in future target-setting discussions. The Department accepts the value of involving key parties in this process as much as possible and continues to draw up and agree action plans with its partners to map the delivery of such key objectives. As part of the Treasury's Public Value Programme review of Arm's Length Bodies the Department is examining the ways in which it interacts with NDPBs and Agencies and will keep the manner in which targets are set under consideration as part of this.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (3): The Department funded English Heritage for 19 months without setting clear expectations about what it would deliver for the money. Agreeing

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measures to monitor performance on key policy areas provides essential accountability for taxpayers' money. In future, the Department should agree what its sponsored bodies will deliver before it releases the related funding.

Response

The Department partially accepted the Committee's conclusion.

Update

The Department accepts that it took too long to achieve formal ratification through Ministerial sign-off. However, this was in part the result of changes to the Machinery of Government, including the division of a co-signatory – DEFRA – into two separate Departments. The Department agrees it should set clear expectations of what will be delivered before it releases funding to a body as it did in English Heritage's allocation letter, through mechanisms including such allocation letters and funding agreements in the future.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (4): Several government-funded organisations across the cultural sector are seeking to attract new audiences, and there is a risk that they might waste resources through duplication of effort. The Department should collate information about what works in attracting new audiences across sport, culture and the arts, and disseminate it across its sponsored bodies. It should promote cross-fertilisation of knowledge, such as by inviting specialists from other sectors onto the Broadening Access Group which English Heritage chairs.

Response

The Department partially accepted the Committee's conclusion.

Update

Since the hearing, the programme boards for the Department's strategic objectives have continued to bring together senior figures from all Departmental bodies to assess progress against key departmental objectives and understand how others work together, and experts from other parts of the cultural sector have shared their experience with members of English Heritage's Broadening Access Group. The Department has also established the CASE programme in collaboration with its NDPBs including English Heritage to evaluate the drivers for participation in all our sectors and learn lessons across the piece. Since the hearing initial findings from the CASE programme have been published, and seminars arranged to spread this knowledge widely.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (5): The Department's definition of 'participation' with heritage is obsolete. As well as by visiting historic sites, there are many more opportunities to enjoy our heritage such as by getting involved in local conservation projects, by learning on the internet, and by watching historically-based television programmes. The Department and English Heritage should research how people interact with the historic environment, and use this knowledge to inform their strategies and performance measures for getting more people interested in heritage.

Response

The Department partially accepted this recommendation.

Update

The Department strongly supports participation that is as wide-ranging as possible. English Heritage has invested significantly in its online resources (4.2 million unique

visitors to English Heritage's website and over 88,000 education resources downloaded in 2008-09) and is frequently involved in TV programmes, most recently with Channel Four's Time Team at Dover Castle. The Taking Part survey gathers a wide range of data on engagement and its causes, including digital engagement. This allows the Department to consider the television viewing and digital engagement patterns of those who do, and those who do not, participate in the historic environment sector.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (6): In the last five years free educational visits to English Heritage's sites have fallen by 20%. This concerns us, as positive childhood experiences are crucially important to instilling a long-term interest in heritage. English Heritage should develop an action plan that addresses the obstacles to visiting heritage sites and identifies ways to encourage school visits by children from different backgrounds. It should aim to reverse the decline in educational visits to its own sites, set milestones to measure progress, and report back to this Committee in April 2010 setting out the actions being taken and the progress made.

Response

English Heritage partially accepted the Committee's conclusion.

Update

Free educational visits to its sites fell by 11% over the six years 2003-04 to 2008-09, not by 20%. It is inaccurate to add English Heritage's Discovery Visits to the total of free educational visits when they are a sub-set of them. English Heritage is committed to reversing the decline in visits and has prepared an education strategy for 2010-15, which includes targeted support to encourage visits by schools in deprived areas. English Heritage wrote to the Committee in April 2010 with further details of this strategy.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (7): English Heritage's workforce is less diverse than other government departments, and does not reflect the general population. This is, in part, because of the specialised nature of some professional roles, but also suggests English Heritage has not placed sufficient importance on achieving a more diverse workforce. English Heritage should develop an action plan to increase the diversity of its workforce, and set milestones for measuring progress and achieving outcomes.

Response

The Department and English Heritage agreed with the Committee's conclusion.

Update

Work with the Mayor of London's Heritage Diversity Taskforce from 2006-2009 has shown that this is an issue for the cultural and heritage sector as a whole. English Heritage will address this issue in three ways:

Promote actively to staff the value of allowing English Heritage to record anonymous profile data on disability and ethnicity to demonstrate the full diversity of staff already in post and plans to support diversity in the future.

Develop a Workforce Diversity Strategy with a realistic action plan focused on timed and measurable outcomes.

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Work within the newly established Cultural and Heritage Sector Workforce Diversity Network, which will bring together bodies from across the sector to share knowledge, skills and resources to deliver effective action on workforce diversity.

This work is ongoing, and English Heritage will participate in the cultural sector's newly established Race Equality Workforce Network.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC Conclusion (8): English cathedrals represent some of our most important architectural heritage yet many of them charge the public for entry. These buildings are expensive to look after and the Department and English Heritage should work together to find ways to fund their conservation so that they can be less reliant on charging for entry, which could deter people from visiting.

Response

The Department partially accepted the Committee's conclusion.

Update

Both the Department and English Heritage agree that cathedrals make a very important contribution to the nation's heritage, and continue to provide significant support for their conservation. The Department's Listed Places of Worship scheme continues to support repairs at cathedrals and other places of worship. It has made over £100 million of grants available to places of worship equivalent to the VAT incurred in making repairs since it began in 2001. The Department does not believe that there is necessarily a direct link between maintenance costs and a decision to charge for entry, and any decision to charge those who wish to visit cathedrals as a heritage attraction is rightly one for the Dean and Chapter to make. Cathedrals also continue to be able to access English Heritage support where needed, through regional funding schemes.

Session 2009-10: Twenty-Eighth Report – Preparations for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC conclusion (2): LOCOG must establish a funded contingency, and the Department must satisfy itself that recognised quantified risk assessment techniques are used to assess the amount of contingency required.

Response

The Department is working with LOCOG to ensure that arrangements for a funded contingency are included in the next version of its Lifetime Budget, which will be completed by October 2010. The contingency is expected to be based on a systematic quantification of risks and an assessment of which risks can be reduced, avoided or mitigated within the next two years, and which may remain outstanding at Games-time and therefore require contingency cover.

Update

LOCOG and GOE have worked closely and co-operatively on the development of LOCOG's latest lifetime budget, which has now been finalized. It is balanced and provides a funded contingency in line with GOE's and the PAC's recommendations.

Recommendation now met.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC conclusion (3). LOCOG has committed to making the Games accessible and affordable for the general public. LOCOG should publish now the principles on which ticket availability and prices will be determined.

Response

LOCOG will issue more information on ticket pricing in the autumn of this year. This will include information on public interest in tickets; the number of tickets available for events; the pricing levels for different sporting events; and special pricing arrangements for young people.

Update

LOCOG has published the principles on which ticket availability and prices will be determined. The application process for tickets for the Olympic Games was launched on last week (15 March).

Recommendation now met.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC conclusion (4). The Department should clarify straight away who is responsible for what and who pays, and finalise plans for checking progress. Delivery of the Games depends on consensus between a number of organisations, but with deadlines approaching and financial pressures increasing the Department should make clear who has overall executive authority.

Response

The Department is leading this work and has established seven cross-cutting work streams which are key to the operational success of the 2012 Games: Security; Transport; Command, Coordination and Communication (C3); London City Operations (including London borough services); Government Operations (including medical services, accreditation and dignitary management); UK-wide Operations (including host local authority services outside London); and Games-Wide Testing. The Department has identified a lead body for each cross-cutting work stream and work is now underway to resolve outstanding questions over scope, responsibilities, costs and budgets. The Department's aim is to have all outstanding issues resolved and to have agreed, fully integrated, and detailed plans in place across the Olympic programme by the end of 2010.

A Directors of Operations Group has been established to take overall executive authority for Games-time operations. The group comprises LOCOG's Director of Games Operations and the respective Operations Directors for Security, Transport, Government Operations, London City Operations, UK-wide Operations, C3 and Games-Wide Testing.

Update

This has been done.

As a result of the Spending Review, all known scope and funding issues have been resolved. The NAO has recognised that good progress has been made with the operational work streams and governance, and co-ordination across the programme is much better developed (Paras 8 and 3.8 of NAO Feb 2011 report).

Recommendation now met.

Recommendations and conclusions

PAC conclusion (5). Despite our previous recommendations, plans have not yet been made for viable long term uses of publicly funded assets in the Olympic Park after the Games, in particular the Main Stadium and the Media Centre. The Olympic Legacy Company should set out the criteria by which it will assess the value for

money of any proposals for long-term use of the assets on the Olympic Park. If there is the risk of assets remaining unused after the Games there should be a clear plan for minimising the cost of maintaining them.

Response

The OPLC has been established with responsibility for the long term management and operation of,the Stadium, Aquatics Centre and the Multi-use Arena, along with the International Broadcast Centre/Main Press Centre (IBC/MPC) and for the parkland. The OPLC recognises the need to resolve the future use of these assets, in particular the Stadium and IBC/MPC, as a matter of urgency and has planned its activities last year and for the coming year to achieve this. In doing so, the OPLC will publish the criteria to judge proposals for the legacy use of the particular assets, including value for money.

The OPLC invited expressions of interest from organisations interested in the long term use of the Stadium in March 2010 and concluded the first phase of the process on 18 June 2010. A similar process will be adopted for the IBC/MPC and the OPLC will also market test the other venues and parkland before determining its strategy for them.

Update

OPLC was not in a position to go out to tender on anything until it owned the assets involved. LDA assets in the Olympic Park did not transfer to OPLC until 30 September 2010. In those 5 months, OPLC has been successful with the procurements for the Stadium, Aquatics Centre, Multi-Use Arena and Orbit plus undertaking a market test for the IBC/MPC which elicited nearly 50 expressions of interest.

Ongoing