

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Major Events, HC 1339

Tuesday 20 January 2026

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Members present: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Chair); Mr Bayo Alaba; Vicky Foxcroft; Damian Hinds; Dr Rupa Huq; Natasha Irons; Anneliese Midgley; Jo Platt; Jeff Smith; Cameron Thomas.

Questions 99 - 162

Witnesses

[I](#): Ruth Hollis OBE, Chief Executive, Spirit of 2012; Claire McColgan CBE, Director of Culture & Major Events, Liverpool City Council; and Phil Batty OBE, Chief Executive, Glasgow 2026 Organising Company.

[II](#): Jason Barrett, Chief Executive, Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo; Adrian Lambert, Chief Operating Officer, Hay Festival; and Major General Simon Brooks-Ward, Chairman, HPower Group.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ruth Hollis OBE, Claire McColgan CBE and Phil Batty OBE.

Q99 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's meeting of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. This is our second session on major events, and we are joined for our first panel by three witnesses with really great experience of major events and their legacies. We have Phil Batty OBE, who is the Chief Executive of the Glasgow 2026 Organising Company. Welcome, Phil. We also have Ruth Hollis OBE, who is the Chief Executive of the Spirit of 2012, which is obviously the Olympic games legacy. Then we have Claire McColgan CBE, who is the Director of Culture and Major Events for Liverpool city council. A huge welcome to all of you. Thank you so much for coming. Before we begin, I remind Members to declare any interests before you ask your questions.

I will kick off. Our predecessors on this Committee did a report in 2022 on major cultural and sporting events, and they said, "while individual occasions may well deliver memorable moments, we see no golden thread linking the events or tying them to a vision for the future of this country." Since that report, has there been any progress, Ruth?

Ruth Hollis: There has been progress in some areas, but I don't think there has been progress on the golden thread. We have seen really exciting progress in the events that UK Sport is bringing to the UK and the city of culture announcement that has happened—both Bradford finishing new city of culture, and new towns of culture. What we see is that the collective impact, and what that says about the vision for how we use events in the UK, is still missing.

After the Select Committee recommendation, we took that challenge very directly because we also had an inquiry into major events in 2023 and it came up with a very similar recommendation. We have worked with Mark Scott and his team at the Warwick Business School to do two reports—"Creating the golden thread" and "Connecting the golden thread"—to look at how that might happen, and how we might bring more cohesion and coherence to the ecosystem around events, but also the vision for how we use events in the UK.

As part of that, we have been convening stakeholders right across the events ecosystem—sport, business, ceremonies and culture right across the UK. We have found a real consensus on the need for more join-up and more cohesion and for working better together on that golden thread.

Q100 **Chair:** Something that keeps coming back through our evidence is that we need some kind of major events strategy—something that collectively brings everyone together behind a common goal and purpose, so that everyone knows what they are aiming for. Phil, do you agree, and what would a major event strategies look like?



Phil Batty: I definitely agree that there is more work to do on bringing the golden thread together. A major events strategy needs to deliver three key things. The first is vision. We need a long-term vision. It is great to know that we have a huge pipeline over the next three years, but what does 10 years look like? What does 20 years look like? Those are the planning cycles on which major events are delivered.

We also need to understand for a major events strategy how sport, culture and social cohesion come together, because one thing we have seen through all our major events is that they deliver incredible social impacts. I do not think we have seen enough about the intersectionality of those sectors and how major events unite them.

Thirdly, we need a really clear pathway into Government, so that we can understand how we can work with the full might of Government through a major events strategy to deliver major events that have more impact. I think that a great legacy will come from making these impact first decisions on what is in the pipeline and how we execute those major events.

Q101 **Chair:** Claire, would you add anything to that?

Claire McColgan: From a regional perspective, Liverpool has put culture and major events at the heart of its regeneration for the last 20 years, and you can see the difference; you can feel it—those of you who know Liverpool.

From European capital of culture right through to Eurovision and beyond, the key for us was bringing a major international event that talks about Liverpool as a place, but also talks about it on an international stage. A good example of that is Cunard; the brand Cunard is attached to Liverpool. I work from the Cunard building. It has a huge story and history to tell, but it is also an international brand, and so is Liverpool. We brought both of those together. We sailed three ships down the Mersey and had 1.2 million people attending, and it was just truly wonderful. But it was international; it was in Liverpool, but it went around the world and did really well for us.

The key with a major events strategy for the country is to make sure not just that there is that voice regionally that tells a story—we have brilliant stories across the whole country—but that you take that on to an international stage as well and use that to sell the UK. Not all events need to be led and run from London; they can be run from places that have an exceptional story to tell.

Q102 **Chair:** That is a very good point. Ruth, if we were to bring forward a major events strategy, is there anything else that you would throw into the mix in terms of what it would look like? Would that need legislative backing? What items would you include in a major events Bill, for example?



Ruth Hollis: I don't think it does necessarily need legislative backing. It is a two or three-piece strategy, really. As Phil said, one piece is setting out the vision and looking at how we co-ordinate across the UK, and then thinking about what the route into Government is. We need much more at the co-ordination level.

To add to what Phil and Claire have said, it cannot just be about the events that we bring in. It needs to be about the UK generating our own events. It also needs to be about the events that happen year in, year out. There are the big set piece things—the Tour de France, the Commonwealth games are brilliant—but year in, year out, communities, cities and towns host events. It is about seeing the overall impact of them and being more co-ordinated.

We can see in Scotland how a nested national and local events strategy works very well. When we started the consultation across the nations, there was a bit of pushback from Scotland and Wales to say, "We have our own events strategies. Thank you. What would you add?" I think we need to be really careful that a UK events strategy is not just adding up what is in all the other strategies, but actually adds that vision and the co-ordination at a national level.

I would not have said there was a need for legislation, but Phil and Claire may have a different view.

Q103 **Chair:** So a major event strategy, but not a major events Bill, Claire?

Claire McColgan: It just needs a big vision, doesn't it? If you look at something that is not major, like heritage open days, they are great. Everyone does those across the country, but imagine if you knit all of that together beautifully and move them to somewhere where it is quiet for tourism for the UK—to January or February. You suddenly have a whole national picture but with individual stories within that.

I think the key to anything that is about creating a national events story is, yes, we do the set piece events and we do them brilliantly. We have the Tour de France coming to Merseyside, and I am delighted about that, but where are we inventing those events that we can grow? What are the real, fantastic things within our communities where you think, "Right, okay, if we give that event £11 million or £12 million, what could we do with that for that place?"

That should be a key thing about where we go next, because creativity in the events sector is out there. It is extraordinary, and people are doing these things voluntarily all over the country. Everywhere in this country there are moments where you go, "That could be fantastic." It is about knitting those together to create a national picture, rather than having a national body saying, "Right, okay, we need to do this, this and this, and we are doing this." That just does not work. You need those voices to rise up, and to choose the real moments that make us feel better as a country.



Q104 **Chair:** Yes, we definitely need that. Phil, anything to add to that?

Phil Batty: From an event delivery organisation perspective, we definitely need more co-ordination, more efficiency and more synthesising of what happens at a local level—we have incredible working relationships with local authorities—and what needs to be delivered at a UK Government or devolved Administration level.

On the amount of time that is taken to co-ordinate that from the perspective of an event deliverer, anything that gives us more efficiency in that space would be welcome and valid. We also need something that can last the test of time, whether that is legislation or other foundational documents. If this is not locked in for 20 years, the iterative, continuous change will be the thing that destabilises it. So that “yes” vision, but also the long-term ambition, is fundamental.

Chair: There is a role for the Government and Government Departments, which I think we will come to in a minute, but what you are saying is that it does not need to be a statutory one. Damian, did you want to come in?

Q105 **Damian Hinds:** I want to ask about the how. Knitting things together sounds great. It is a bit like joined-up Government or an integrated transport strategy. The question is how you do it. You said not a national body and not necessarily legislation. Who would make those trade-offs? Your points about the off-season and thinking of it as a yield management opportunity are all wise, but doesn't it need a bit of a guiding mind?

Claire McColgan: It does need co-ordination, so you need a co-ordination strategy or co-ordination group at the top. You now have mayoral authorities and other authorities growing up around the country. All of them have culture really strongly as part of their devolution deal.

But how do you bring those together? You have VisitBritain, VisitEngland and all the arm's length bodies that the DCMS look after. Eurovision is a really good example of that. Eurovision brought the whole country together in Liverpool for Ukraine in an incredible way. That was led by DCMS over six months under very difficult circumstances and it was a huge success for the country. So it is not beyond anyone to do that.

The thing about events that is very different is there is always a deadline. You start an event on a day and you finish it on a day. You have to work to a deadline, and the events sector is really used to working like that. If the skills within that sector in terms of getting things on and getting them done are looked at, you could bring people together across the country.

There would be enthusiasm there. Look at the enthusiasm for town of culture and city of culture that spilled out everywhere when DCMS announced it last week. People want to be proud of their places, and they want things happening in their places. It is when the Government take an interest in that that suddenly everything can be lifted up. I do not think it is that difficult.



Q106 **Damian Hinds:** Why hasn't it happened?

Claire McColgan: From my perspective, the learning about things sometimes does not go through. I will pick up on Eurovision because for me it was practically perfect. I have worked on a lot of events, and in the Events Research Programme, which Eurovision learned a lot from. We worked in three parallel lines. There was the city and the region, and I led on that. We did all of that; we worked on making it feel fabulous when you came and all those brilliant things—the village. The BBC put on the most incredible, extraordinary show. The Government also worked hand in hand with us to open and unlock doors across the whole of Government. The team led by Robert Specterman-Green of DCMS worked for six months solidly to get that show on, and those three pillars worked really well.

Q107 **Damian Hinds:** I do not want to interrupt you or be difficult—that is all about that event, and you can talk about the Greater Manchester authority or the Liverpool city region—but you were talking earlier about co-ordinating so that we fill hotel rooms in January and on Sunday nights, the police force are not trying to be in five different places at the same time, travel is co-ordinated and that sort of thing. That is the bit. You say it is important and should not be too hard, so it is reasonable to ask, “Well, if those two things are true, why doesn't it happen?”

Chair: Don't ask anyone else's questions.

Damian Hinds: Sorry.

Phil Batty: If I can add in from a Glasgow and Scotland perspective, the fact that we have an events strategy for the city, led by Glasgow Life, one of the arm's length bodies for the city that looks after culture, sport and heritage, means that there is a co-ordinated portfolio approach to which events are right for the city that harmonises with the wider festival calendar across Scotland, and harmonises with the hospitality and tourism sector. What is great is that that then docks into a VisitScotland national events strategy, so the major event cannot exist without the community event. We are looking at the highlands and islands. We are looking at it in context.

If we go back as far as the European capital of culture 1990, the garden festival, the Commonwealth games in 2014 and the portfolio approach since, the UCI cycling and the festivals, the reason we have been able to host a Commonwealth games in 2026—with less than a year of co-ordination and collaboration—is that that events ecosystem has been nurtured. The reason we have a clear plan for the future is that those two strategies do not compete; they complement each other. A UK strategy would sit alongside those two to provide the golden thread and uniting steer at the top.

Chair: That leads us directly on to Jeff's questions.

Q108 **Jeff Smith:** I just want to dig into that a little bit. It works in Scotland,



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clearly, but on a UK level, we are entering even more than ever into an era of devolution. You have talked about the mayoral authorities, which are all very ambitious for their regions and will be competitive against each other. I am from Manchester and Anneliese is from Liverpool, and those are two fantastic cities, but 40 miles apart, that will want to do similar things to regenerate our areas. It goes back to this issue about who co-ordinates. Who brings all those threads together, and how do you get a national strategy that interacts with all the individual ambitions and strategies of the individual devolved authorities?

Ruth Hollis: It needs a better front door from DCMS—probably a single front door into DCMS. DCMS has got much better at co-ordinating internally over the last couple of years, but we are still talking to a major event and sports team, a culture team, a ceremonials team and a community team, so we need much better co-ordination in DCMS as the front door.

I am not sure it then needs a cross-Government team, but it does need that DCMS front door to co-ordinate across other Departments: Transport, the Home Office and the Departments that are dealing with some of the social issues—health and wellbeing—that are being delivered through events.

It then needs some oiling of the wheels locally. When we go out and talk to people across the UK, we see that there is a real willingness from combined authorities and local authorities, who have the ambition and already want to harness events, but also from some of the places that are perhaps a bit further away from devolution, who are more worried, perhaps, about being left behind as the combined authorities become stronger. I think it needs top-down co-ordination, respecting what is already there and working with it, but also oiling the wheels and bringing people together to make it happen.

Phil Batty: We also still need sector-specific leadership—for example, the role that UK Sport plays in defining which are the right events for this nation to host. For each of the respective sports to be hosted here, it is also important to get that sector leadership.

What we do not have at the minute is the integration of the work that the arts, culture and heritage sector is doing, with the more mature model that the sports sector is doing, with that then knitted into a really good understanding of the existing annual events calendar.

This whole conversation also needs to be about not just which events we want to attract in and host, but which events we want to create here in the UK that we can export out across the world. It is about a balance: each sector needs to be world class—the UK already has a world-class reputation across each of those sectors—but there needs to be better integration and better co-ordination of where those sectors each shine, what is right in each year, how we use a UK city of culture versus a Commonwealth games versus a world championships versus a big



ceremonial community celebration versus commemoration. All those things must co-exist, and it is the curation of those that is lacking at this time.

Q109 Jeff Smith: Sport is a good example of where you have the national co-ordinating body. Who else needs to be involved in developing the UK major events strategy?

Claire McColgan: I would suggest that the Arts Council and VisitBritain need to be involved in that. Sport is really ahead of this in the way that it works across the country. There is not the same body at all for cultural events, or anything like that, to grow those. There is just not. You end up inventing them, which is the right thing to do from your own place, but then you go asking for resources and money, and it becomes about that, rather than about the strategic view above that then feeds into place.

That point about Liverpool and Manchester is really interesting, because if you are an international visitor, they are 35 miles apart. The next stage of our development as regions is probably how we work to create a powerhouse of events between those two places in the north-west, although there are similar examples of that across the whole country.

It is hard, because you have all this ambition coming up now from all the devolved authorities. That is brilliant, and that is exactly what should happen. But it does need co-ordination by the Government, without places being done to, which is really important. You have that ambition in place, and you want that spirit of place, don't you? You don't want it all just to be copycat events everywhere.

Phil Batty: Critical to that success will also be looking at areas where the devolved Administrations and national agencies within those Administrations are leading the way. Arts Council England does some amazing work, and there is also the work of Creative Scotland and Creative Wales. The lottery family, in particular, has so many touchpoints across so many different other statutory agencies, partners, programmes and initiatives.

When we were working with Spirit of 2012 we felt that, because it was pan-UK but also very place-based, it had a very good understanding of what worked in different parts of the UK. It will be really critical that, while this needs to have a UK-wide vision, it is not a top-down, imposed vision, and that it is built from local place and with a sense of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England coming together in one cohesive vision, even though there may be different strengths and different aspects that each part of the country wishes to lean into and focus on.

Q110 Jeff Smith: I am trying to understand how you bring these two things together. All three of you have talked about the ideas coming up from the bottom, but you have also said you need co-ordination from the top. In practical terms, how does that work? You need some sort of governmental body to try to bring all these people together. I am trying



to understand what powers this body would have and who would be responsible for setting out the vision and stopping the rows that might happen between individual authorities or organisations who want to bid.

Claire McColgan: There is probably a maturity out there now and there are not as many rows. The mayors are very collegiate across the country, so there is a real energy there that I am excited about. The willingness to understand the place within the mayoral thing is really exciting.

Where the Government come in well for us—I really noticed it during the Events Research Programme work we did during covid, but also during Eurovision—is when they open doors. Their convening power is much bigger than that of the regions, mayors, councils or whatever. When the Government ask people to come to a meeting, they turn up. During Eurovision, all the ALBs were given six months to work with us. They did it willingly, but it was led by the Government, and it was led very strongly by the Government—“This has to be a success for the UK, as well as for Liverpool, because we are doing it on behalf of Ukraine.” The convening power that the Government and DCMS can bring when there is a deadline—because there always is—is extraordinary. I found there was a marked difference between what we did with the Events Research Programme and Eurovision, and the events we do by ourselves. The convening power of the Government is really important.

Phil Batty: We also should not be afraid of the role that a visionary leader will play in this. In events, there is often a group of people who are leading the event. Their day job is to bring the police, statutory agencies, arts, culture, heritage, sport and the business sector around the table. Although there is an important role for the Government, there is also an important role for independent voice, the sector and the ability to have some bold, brave ambition that people are uniting behind.

I think that one of the things we have all found across the major events we have worked on is that if there is a compelling vision and there are people invested in telling that vision and bringing people together, it is quite easy to get that collaboration. It is when that vision and leadership are lacking that events cannot thrive and the infighting begins.

Q111 **Jeff Smith:** In terms of that vision, should it be the Government coming in? For example, many years ago in Manchester, we thought, “We need to revitalise east Manchester.” The Commonwealth games was the start of that, and it has been massively successful. That was part of a wider regeneration vision. Should the Government come in and say, “We have a problem in former industrial communities”—or the east of England or whatever—“so we want to focus the national events strategy on a piece of work like that”?

Claire McColgan: No.

Jeff Smith: I suspected the answer was going to be no.



Ruth Hollis: I think it needs to set the UK context and the UK vision. How do we as a country want to use the incredible expertise, passion and creativity that we have to tell the story and to unite communities? At the end of the day, events are about people and communities and bringing people together. There is a real willingness to do that better and more strategically across the UK. It is not about imposing. UK Sport, under the gold framework, will look at which locations are best placed to deliver the events that it is bringing in. There always has to be a discussion and a trade-off around priorities and where events go to, but I do not think it needs to be directed in the way you have set out.

Claire McColgan: One of the worst things that can happen is if you just do an event. That is absolutely not what we should be talking about. The whole point about events is that they are a highlight for a really great cultural and artistic programme that goes on in the city or the place all the time. When they stand alone, I think they become a bit vacuous. In Liverpool, every two years we do something major and really big and international, but as a city council we also support our cultural organisations well and properly, and always have done over the last 15 years.

That for me is the golden thread. It is how you work with artists and support artists properly in place, and then you sometimes bring in these incredible things that bring international attention. Without that through-line, events are just lovely and something that comes and goes. Everyone goes, "That was great"—and moves on. They are not part of the lifeblood of a place.

Ruth Hollis: It is also about having a long-term look at impact. At the moment, we are viewing events very singularly. Cities of culture has got better with this, but even cities of culture have been viewed singly. Looking at the evidence—the what works across the piece—the way in which they can be part of the fabric of how we bring our communities together is really important. How do we do that? No events are really going back and doing proper evaluation 10 years afterwards. We do not have enough of that. We can do that through looking at place and the impact on place, but we are not doing it strategically enough to look at how we deliver across the country.

Chair: Thank you. Let's move to our own champion of Liverpool, Anneliese.

Q112 **Anneliese Midgley:** Thanks very much for coming in. Claire, what you said about culture being at the heart of the regeneration of the city is absolutely right. As a Liverpool girl, I know how the 2008 European city of culture completely transformed the city that I grew up in and brought it back to its former glory. Its greatness was back, and that legacy lives on.

I want to talk a bit about Eurovision, which was an absolutely tremendous success and something we are still proud of in the city. That



was done under huge time pressure. What was done was phenomenal. What was the secret? How did you do that?

Claire McColgan: Well, we have learned. I have been in Liverpool for 20 years. I produced European capital of culture. Eurovision gave us the opportunity to put into practice everything we had learned over 20 years. We were just determined to win it. It was a competition. When we did win, the key thing for me is what I said earlier: three departments worked together on it. There was the BBC—which did an extraordinary show—us and the national Government. We worked equally, but we stayed in our own lane. For me, in terms of people working on major events, there wasn't a cross word in those six months. It was actually, "We are delivering this. We are delivering it on behalf of Ukraine. We are going to do the best thing. We are going to make the UK shine in this place, and we are going to make the city shine."

Again, going back to your point about when you do events properly, you don't just do the event. It would have been very easy for us at that particular time to go, "Right, okay, the BBC will just come in. It will be great. The BBC does brilliant things. It will be fine." We worked very much on making it as big as we could. We had a community programme and an education programme involving everyone across the city region. The city centre was full every single day for the nine days of the village. Even if you did not like Eurovision, people would come into the city and felt it. You felt it the second you got off at Lime Street.

For me, that is the key. We never do events that are just, "Let's bring the show in and go." Our events always connect with communities and with education. I thought that Eurovision had always done that. It wasn't new to us, but Eurovision hadn't. That was a first for that particular major event. Eurovision had never worked like that before. That is what brought the joy. You had kids coming home to you from school going, "We've just done this workshop with Ukrainian kids. We're all making kites, and we're flying kites across two cities at one time," and then they saw the show on television on the Saturday night. It was just incredible.

We have learned how to do that over 20 years, knowing Liverpool, knowing the spirit of the place and knowing what works. For a major events national strategy and national place, it is about how you tell the story of this place—of the UK. How do you tell the story the way we have done, hopefully, in Liverpool?

- Q113 **Anneliese Midgley:** A colleague will ask about community and legacy specifically. Unfortunately, I did not get a ticket for Eurovision. I am a big fan, so I was moody about it. Obviously I did see all those events you were talking about that were around it, and how the city had that vibrancy and was really full and buzzing. You did bring in the community; the community were part of that. Can you say a little bit, but not too much, about how you brought them in? I know you said you had experience, but I felt that they were a key part of all of this being a



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success. It was not just, as you said, in that arena on that night. It was spread across the city, and people were part of it.

Claire McColgan: That is the beauty of major events when they are done well—they touch everybody in that place, and everyone wants to be part of it or to go and see it. That connection is fantastic.

In Liverpool, you do not need to try very hard, because we have had 20 years of doing major events, so people get it. Someone said to me in 2008 with the capital of culture, “Once you let the genie out of the box, you can’t put it back in.” People suddenly expect that of their place. As you know, Liverpool is very vocal. If you don’t do things right, they kind of tell you, which is right and proper. People just wanted to be part of it because we were doing it on behalf of Ukraine. It was Eurovision; it was joyful. So we did not have to try too hard.

But I think that the systems we have in place across Merseyside just click in. We have lots of people. We always say, “We have lots of people in a box,” whether that is emergency services or teachers or community workers. When we get the chance to do a major event, we just open the box, and they all go, “Yes, please.” It is not their day job. That is the spirit of when you do events well, but it is also about when you have the improvement of place and pride in place at the heart of it.

Q114 **Anneliese Midgley:** The Government have learned and implemented things based on the success of Eurovision. How have they done that?

Claire McColgan: You see it through town of culture and city of culture. They are two initiatives that you see that through. It was a formula that really worked, so I hope that the Government have taken it forward on other major events. The key thing for me was that we were left to get on with the stuff that we know well, while the Government got on with the stuff that they did well and the BBC did. That was really clear, and it is a great governance model as well.

When there were major issues, we had a gold, silver, bronze structure that would just go up and things would be done and solved at ministerial level for that event as well. It was a really brilliant experience, and the Government should be very proud of it. But they should obviously be doing it post Eurovision—it was two years ago.

Q115 **Anneliese Midgley:** How did it work with the funding? As part of the strategy we were talking about before, how does the funding around this work on the ground when it is done but also in terms of putting together bids? It seems a bit chicken and egg: regeneration happens, but you need the money and things in place for that. Do you know what I mean? There is the local government, the mayor’s money, the national and maybe a bit about the tourism levy as well that some cities are bringing in. What do you think about that?

Claire McColgan: For places like ours, it is really hard because the place has got to want it. It cannot just be you beating on the door saying,



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"Events are really great." Your politicians have to really get it. They get it in Liverpool, which is fantastic. But you have to put that jigsaw together around funding from combined authorities, city councils and the Arts Council, and all of that has to be done during a bidding phase.

The complexity of putting funding together is really tough. When we did Liverpool, when we were bidding for Eurovision, we had to go through all our committee systems on the chance that we might or might not get it. We had to sign the contract before. Then the Government stepped in and supported it significantly as a national project, but they had not stepped in at that point, so we did not know what budget we would be working to.

That whole thing about resources is really tough, and that is where Spirit—actually, Ruth, you were there—was fantastic because they were the first to put their hands up and say, "We will support Eurovision. What do you need?" rather than, "These are the hoops you have to jump through to get it," when we had six months—although there is something very good about doing things in short periods of time; it just gives an energy that is different.

Phil Batty: It is important to recognise that major events require investment. One of the transformational examples is the Birmingham Commonwealth games in 2022. There was £778 million-worth of public funding. We are delivering the Commonwealth games in 2026 for £150 million, with not a single penny of public funding going into that. That is because people wanted to reinvent how the event is delivered and the operating model for that event.

Could we have done that in Glasgow if there had not been that investment in 2014? No, but this is that long-term legacy. This is 12 years later, using public investment that gave us the infrastructure, the skills base, the industry, the strategy. Twelve years later we are able to deliver the same high-quality event without costing the taxpayer a penny. If and when we get that right, we will be able to offer that learning to other nations—73 other nations and territories throughout the Commonwealth—about how you reduce the scale and cost of delivering an event, while also keeping the quality and focus of the event. I think there are a lot of things where the UK is leading internationally in rethinking the commercial delivery of events.

Ruth Hollis: Can I come in on that? From an event funding perspective, we talk a lot about the funding for the event. Events need funding before to get themselves together. They need flexible developmental funding, as we did with Eurovision, to say, "What do you need?" Then they need funders to come in afterwards.

One of the areas where we need much better co-ordination around events—there is a willingness on the part of funders to come together and do a bit of that—is how we make sure there is funding afterwards for the communities, so that when that inspiration, that magical moment, has happened, there are tangible things for communities to continue



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doing that are funded as a result of the event and that are part of the whole funding ecosystem. It is really important that we do not look just at the funding of the event; we also need to look at the entire life cycle: how do we fund it before, what happens during the event and how do we fund it for a long time after so that that impact can continue to be felt?

I feel that event organisers are often trying to present themselves in the vision of other people's strategies, so you have very creative people having to squeeze what they are trying to do into the strategy of an arm's length body. Anything we can do to co-ordinate that funding better, and look much more strategically and much more holistically at it, to give the places and the creatives that are delivering the freedom to do it as brilliantly as we know they can, is hugely important.

Q116 Mr Alaba: Good morning. I will first refer to my statement of interests. Before this place, I worked in the events industry across national and international events, including major events.

I understand some of the comments around cross-Government support, but if we were to have a cross-Government major events team, what policy areas and what Departments would be involved, and how would that look?

Before you all answer, I know you spoke about the fact that the industry can do this. But it is important to point to things like the 20 and 30-year pipeline or planning cycle that you talked about, Phil. How would you look at that?

Phil Batty: I would want to start with making sure that we have the responsibilities clear between the UK Government, the devolved Administrations and local authorities, so that at the absolute top level of the front door, there is a clear understanding about how those three levels of government interface and interact.

From some of the projects I have delivered that have fallen within the UK Government's remit, it is clear that DCMS has a leading role to play. The thing that we would all say about DCMS engagement is that much better internal integration is needed within DCMS.

Where we have seen the most impact is a Department taking real, clear accountability for a programme of work that supports and amplifies the event. That might involve working with Business and Trade on international programmes or with FCDO on soft power. You cannot run an event without close integration with UKVI and the Home Office. However, those accountabilities in respect of specific major events are not clearly set out. You have to go into the Department, you have to find the relevant individual and you have to convene.

If that accountable ownership of major event responsibility was more clearly set out departmentally within individual Departments, but DCMS was given the agency and ownership to not just convene that group but



to activate that group and use that group, and move the machinery of major events expertise across Government, that is where we would see a greater pace of delivery, but also greater value and greater impact.

Q117 **Mr Alaba:** Ruth, I suppose that points to your term—I loved it, by the way—about a better front door.

Ruth Hollis: Yes. I think it needs a better, more consistent front door. It also needs a level of understanding of where the expertise is in delivering the social outcomes that we want events to deliver. We talk a lot, particularly at the moment, about how events can deliver social cohesion. We also talk a lot about wellbeing. If we are going to do that, and we had a cross-Government team, you would want them to have some expertise or to know how to draw on expertise about what is really working in delivering those social outcomes. There is also something in terms of that team around measurement and the economic value of events—both the hard economics but also the social value they are delivering, and how we look at that over the long term.

Q118 **Mr Alaba:** Do you think the Government can do that? This points slightly to the calendar co-ordination you were talking about, Claire. Do you think that as a Government, as a Committee, we can implement that and make those changes?

Ruth Hollis: Yes, with good co-ordination.

Claire McColgan: You cannot forget the creativity in that. When you are talking about events—we have just done an events strategy, and ours is in three bits, which are business, sporting and cultural events—creativity needs to be at the heart of it as well, because that is where you want to be. Again, it goes back to the golden thread and how you knit that together.

We have a very established event group within the Liverpool city region; we have worked together for years. That includes all the different services that you would expect to run an event, and that could be mirrored nationally. At the heart of that is a key belief that events are really important and can tell our story on a national and international stage. If you get that content heart right and the creativity right, the rest of it will come.

Sport is very organised. UK Sport is brilliant. It is really organised. Business is also, because of conferences and the work it needs to attract internationally. But that cultural part is what tells our story. That is the bit probably for me that is the weakest at the moment from a national perspective.

Ruth Hollis: Also, when we think about audiences and those who will come to the events and enjoy them, we spend our lives in a very sectoral world; we talk about sports events, cultural events and business events, but most people just want to do a bit of everything, and most people's lives are interconnected. It is about finding that join. Events are really



powerful in the way that they bring joy, hope and optimism, as well as forward-looking, but also harder, skills, tourism and economic value. The co-ordination of those two things and how they work together is where we need to look.

Q119 Mr Alaba: I know I don't look like it, but I spent time in the creative industry. Events is where I lived. Claire, you mentioned creativity, and that of course needs to be front and centre. Ruth, you mentioned that producers have to fit through the eye of the needle in many respects when it comes to planning, licensing and things like that, and I have been there. That is why I am concerned that the Government really does need to be part of this. Ultimately, producers and funders have to fit through the legislation that is coming down the road. If we are talking about a 20 and 30-year pipeline, the Government needs to set that framework so that the creators can do their thing.

Ruth Hollis: Yes, and it needs to be a flexible framework. What is lacking is that vision. What is the vision for how we are going to use events right across the events industry for social good and economic benefit in this country? Then, we can have a flexible framework underneath that for the places and the creatives to do what they do best.

Phil Batty: It has been fascinating to reset the dial with this Commonwealth games. Although it has not got a single penny of public funding, we started from the premise that we could not deliver them without the public sector and the Government—the resources, the expertise, the knowledge and the industry—but because we are not in that typical funder relationship, we have set the pace.

We had a year and a half to put a global sporting event on in the city of Glasgow, so every single day mattered. What we have seen—whether we are talking about the expertise in the Glasgow city council, the teams in the Scottish Government or the teams here in DCMS—is that we are able to drive our own timetable a bit more, because the event is independent, has agency and ultimately has a deadline that no event deliverer wants to miss. That has definitely reframed that relationship; it is no longer the funder-event organiser. We are hosting the event in this nation, in Scotland, in Glasgow, so everyone wants it to be a success, but everyone needs to keep pace.

That has driven us to a much more innovative space. It has meant that decisions have been made far faster. If you think of previous Commonwealth games, in 2014 it took six years to put the event on, and I am sure it was the same in Manchester. I know it was four years in Birmingham. Everyone needs to change with the pace of the events industry. In terms of setting out a long-term vision, 20 years in the events industry is 100 years in most industries, so it needs that rigour and agility for it to be successful.

Q120 Chair: What you all have in common is that you come into this world—into the cities where you are organising events—with an enormous



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amount of expertise and a track record of delivery. If you are a city that does not have that at your disposal, where do you start? Where is the playbook that you can use to figure out what the mistakes are, what the bear traps are, how to avoid them, and how to bid, successfully win and successfully deliver a major event, Claire?

Claire McColgan: We are working very closely with Southport at the moment, which I am really excited about. I think that that is where the whole regional thing comes in brilliantly. That is about using the expertise of Culture Liverpool—20 years of expertise—and working with the events team in Southport, which does brilliant work and has done great stuff. Obviously, after what happened in Southport, there is a real issue around the tourism sector there recovering from that.

Sefton council wanted to do something extraordinary in that area to celebrate the beautiful things that are that coastal town. This year we had the businesses talk to us. We talked to the mayor a year ago. From February, we will be delivering a major events programme in Southport that will really put a focus on all the light and love that is in that place.

What is really interesting about the combined authorities is that there is that recognition of support from different places. My role is combined now with the city region combined authority and the city council. So the expertise of the whole team can work with others to grow those brilliant places and the ideas that are coming out of places like Knowsley and Alice in Wonderland in Halton.

There is some incredible stuff coming out of the region, and it is about using expertise that is local but then leaving it there. The key thing for me is that it is fine to go and work with other places, but you have to leave the expertise and the growth there. So the learning has to be in that place and then they have to take control of it as well. That is hopefully what will happen in Southport and in Sefton, and it has been an absolute joy.

There is expertise across the country. The key thing is not to just go in and go, "Thanks, we're off." It is about leaving the legacy and skill base within the place.

Phil Batty: We need to be better at giving places confidence as well. It is important to fail; it is important to make mistakes. I am from Hull. The first time we bid for the UK city of culture, we didn't win. We dusted ourselves off and we bid the second time, and it was an incredible success in 2017.

Going into Glasgow, I have certainly experienced that the talent pool that has been nurtured over 30 years is the reason that that muscle memory lives and breathes in that city every week of the year. That is regardless of whether there is a major event happening during those 11 days or it is part of the existing programme. That is enabling us to think not just about the big multi-sport event, like the Commonwealth games, but



about the innovation that went into the UCI cycling world championships, the world championships we host, the amazing annual programme—including things like Celtic Connections, which is on right now—and the work that Glasgow Life and others do to make sure that they are continually pushing themselves.

This is a long-term journey, but every place is at a different stage of that journey, and it is okay to have some places that are more experienced, with more expertise. Other places might be bidding for town of culture for the first time; this will be the first big event they have hosted and they will build on that into the future.

Ruth Hollis: From a Spirit of 2012 perspective, we have been working in this space cross-sectorally—across sport, arts, community and commemoration—for the past 12 years. We are just over a week away from closing, because we were set up by the national lottery as a spend-out trust. We have tried to brigade all of the learning that we have with our partners on to our website, which will be made freely available for the next three years. Loughborough University is taking our archive. There is lots of brilliant material in there, from not just the programmes that we have funded but case studies of cities like Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, and how they have done it, where we have taken perhaps more innovative steps.

One of the things we did for the last city of culture round, because we could not invest in the way we did before in Bradford, was to give money to some of the places that were not successful to look at how they could develop their cultural volunteering offer on the basis of their bid. That took quite a long time for them to develop, because they did not have the immediate capacity to be able to do that, but Great Yarmouth now has 1,000 liveried volunteers who go out and volunteer in its cultural and heritage sector.

It is about making the evidence of what can be delivered in places really available, and putting it out there for everybody to use. Also, it is not just winning the designation or hosting the event that can make the change. The change can come through bidding. It often comes through the vision of local leaders who step up and say, “We want to change our place by thinking in this way.”

Q121 Jo Platt: You have spoken a little about legacy building for communities. As a small outlying town in Greater Manchester, we hosted the UEFA women’s championships in 2022. I cannot tell you the impact that that event had on our little town. Not least, participation in women’s football and all our grassroots community clubs’ memberships went through the roof. I want to get to grips with the difficulties with legacy building and the resource challenges that face organisers. Claire and Ruth, how can major events achieve meaningful legacies?

Ruth Hollis: The first thing I would say is that there is an umbilical link between what you can deliver as a legacy and the success of the event;



you cannot detach. We have thought long and hard about the relationship between the organisers and those left in the place to deliver the legacy, and about whether the responsibility for developing that legacy strategy ought to sit with the organising committee, which is going to close, or whether it needs to sit locally. However, there is an umbilical link between the two. If London had not been seen to be very successful, we would not have been set up and there would not have been that long-term legacy. So you cannot divorce the two.

From my perspective, one of the critical things is about governance and accountability. We think events can work very well as a pivot point for a place and its change. Rather than just parachuting in to be a host city, how do you use an event as rocket boosters almost to bring partnerships together, to bring funding to the table, to excite communities and to be a booster on that journey of change? That needs local partnerships to be developed. It needs local accountability and local governance. Critically, it needs funding—a long-term view on the funding.

Over the past 12 years, I have sat around many tables with event organisers who have said to me, "Ruth, I would love you to fund this thing afterwards, but actually what I need you to fund is this thing now." Having a much more co-ordinated, strategic approach to where funders are best able to fund work to deliver the long-term legacy and how that seeds into the long-term vision for the place is important.

The women's Euros was brilliant for the game. We also need to recognise that there will be different legacies delivered by a single-sport, multi-location event, as opposed to a multi-sport, single-location event, a cultural event that happens over the course of a year or a cultural event like Edinburgh that happens year to year to year. Understanding those nuances and the levers that can be pulled, and not being tempted to think that an event can solve everything, is important. There are some levers that events can help you pull, but there are others that it will not. Thinking about the relationship between the national and the local, and where it sits, but also about long-term accountability and funding, is important.

Claire McColgan: I have lived the legacy of capital of culture in Liverpool, so I have seen it, and I have seen it change. There are 18-year-olds now in Liverpool who have only ever grown up knowing the city in that way, and that is really incredible. You feel it, and there is a whole generation who value culture, because they have seen it and felt it and they have had free events.

For us, it goes back to that point about having a very clear strategy of funding our cultural sector well and properly, and then bringing in brilliance and working with brilliance every two years to really shine a spotlight on the city and make the whole place feel excited about that. Whether it is a sporting event, the three ships or giants walking the



streets, all those things create a community of people who have shared memories over a long time.

We have talked very much about culture being the rocket fuel for the generation of Liverpool. We have had the same story for 20 years. That has sunk in and you can see that generational change now. It is a real privilege to see kids now who are 18, who were born in 2008, who have only ever known the place as vibrant, as full and as exciting as it is now.

“Legacy” is a word that is overused a lot, but if you look at the Liverpool city region and what we have done there, there have been a series of politicians taking it really seriously, investing in it properly and well, and doing things properly at scale, as well as supporting the grassroot communities and the grassroot work that informs that. When you get those two things right, you have a real sweet spot that brings the place alive. You will feel it now, any of you who have been there recently.

Q122 Jo Platt: What role could the Government play more in supporting legacy benefits?

Claire McColgan: I think it is about the arm’s length bodies committing to place, in a way where the place, not the arm’s length bodies, has the strongest voice in that. That is really clear. We know what we want to do in our area. We know how to make Liverpool city region work. We live there, our kids grew up there and we know what our audiences want there. It is about the arm’s length bodies going, “How can we support you to achieve your ambitions around place?” not the other way around, which is sometimes what happens.

Ruth Hollis: It is also about setting the intention that that is what you are going to use the event for. If, nationally, we can set the intention that we want to use events to develop communities and to deliver social outcomes, and we measure that really carefully over the long term, I think the Government could have a great co-ordinating and ambition role there.

Claire McColgan: The economic benefit is really clear for us. We got that right from the very beginning. Every time we do an event, we measure economic impact. The thing that we do not need to do any more—in Liverpool especially—is talk about that, because people get that. They get the money it brings in and feel the visitor economy. A visitor levy will be transformational for the events sector, because it means we can plan. We will have a budget to plan in our own place under our own terms. I think that that economic point should be made as well, because it has made a huge difference to us.

Q123 Jo Platt: And that should be driven by the Government, to make that point. We have evidence that suggests that smaller organisations and event organisers are not able to fund the evaluation.

Claire McColgan: That should definitely come. We do that as a city, because we know that that is the point where you unlock resources; we



know the economic value of events—you see it, you feel it and we have the evidence for it. The thing that is more interesting now—especially around the town of culture and all those other initiatives—is the emotional regeneration of place and how you feel about somewhere. We still have not cracked how we measure that.

Ruth Hollis: Evaluation needs to be funded. There needs to be an expectation that evaluation will be funded. Government can play a role in setting that expectation with the arm's length bodies. We allowed all our projects to spend 10% of their budget on evaluation. We encouraged them to evaluate from the start. The critical thing isn't the evaluation; it is using it. How do you use it? How do you make it available? If you are collecting data, how do you ensure that it is not just to tick a box on a funder's form, but says, "Who is in the room and who isn't in the room? How are we going to reach them? What is the change that can happen? How do we make it better?" It is about evaluating, but it is also about actively using the data. It is about that expectation from the Government that if we are going to do evaluation of events, the active use of that needs to happen.

To Claire's point, we have done two sets of polling now: 10 years after London 2012 and 10 years after Glasgow 2014. In both cases, 60% of people nationally—so in Scotland for Glasgow, and UK-wide for London—said they thought there was still a legacy from those games, and 75% of people in the place thought there was. Those are not people on organised legacy programmes; they are people who remember the magic, how it made them feel and how it made them think about their communities and their relationships. Harnessing that magic with some really intentional, well-governed funding against a vision for how you use events is critical.

Jo Platt: When I put Leigh forward for town of culture, I will be taking those points back. Thank you.

Chair: Nice plug.

Q124 **Dr Huq:** The mascots can even cause a legacy. We still have some toys from 2012—that funny, spiky figure. Thanks for that.

I have some specific questions for Phil on the finances. You said that Glasgow is doing it for £150 million, with no cost to the public purse. Is that because you have the 2014 to build on? You mentioned that Birmingham's Commonwealth games cost £778 million, and they are going bankrupt now, although I understand it is not for that reason. They are having the European athletics championship, so they are obviously coming back for more. Does it help to have had a recent event? Just how did you do it?

Phil Batty: I think there is a global challenge, in that no nation in the world is saying, "Please give me a more expensive major event."

Dr Huq: You only did it when Victoria pulled out, so thank you for taking

it on.

Phil Batty: Absolutely. We have done it because we have been given this mandate for change. The journey to reformat and reimagine the Commonwealth games began before Victoria pulled out. There was a desire to see an event that all 74 nations, all continents and all Commonwealth regions could actually have the infrastructure and resources to host. There is this compelling mandate that by reinventing the event, you are making it more inclusive because more nations will be able to do that up-front investment to put the event on in the future.

We have needed to rethink the core tenets of how the event is delivered. Our model is much more industry-led. We are using the expertise of the private sector, the supply chain. Compared to a 2,500-strong organising committee, we have 200 people working in an organising company that has our embedded suppliers baked into the organisation with us.

We are using a completely different geographic footprint. It is great to use a broad events programme that is spread across the country, but to put cycling on in Birmingham in 2022, we had to host it here in London because that was where the velodrome was. By designing a sport programme that uses the amazing national infrastructure that is in Glasgow as a legacy of 2014, we have been able to put 215 medal events on in an 8-mile space, which radically transforms what you can do from an active travel, a sustainable transport and a public mobility point of view. It completely changes the nature of temporary infrastructure and the commodities and overlay that you have to put in on the back of it.

COP26 was hosted at the SEC campus and some of the technology infrastructure that was put in for COP26 is allowing us to put on six sports at the SEC campus over the course of 10 days. We are taking all the investment that was made and going, "How do you deliver this event smarter? How do you deliver this event not just in a resized version of what was done before, but using a different model that is fit for purpose and, importantly, in formats that"—now that we know that India has been announced as the host for the 2030 centenary games of Commonwealth sport—"Amdavad in India can take forward in the design of its event, with a four-year planning cycle?" That connection between the UK and India, between Scotland and India, will come from these nations sharing the desire to reimagine what a Commonwealth games looks like will be incredibly powerful for soft power and international diplomacy.

That could not have happened if Manchester had not had an incredibly successful 2002, 2014 was not a success and Birmingham was not a success in 2022. To Ruth's point, the success of an event opens the doors for future innovation and future impact. We as an organising company have set out in our story of change the areas in which we believe we can contribute most to the sustained impact of the event. A lot of that is around the environmental footprint of the event. Our focus, given the



societal challenges at the minute, is on community cohesion and bringing 74 nations-worth of athletes together in the city centre to live and experience Glasgow and Scotland. All these are areas where we believe that this event will be different, but it is a better, higher-quality, more innovative difference—it is not just resized and rescaled.

Q125 **Dr Rupa Huq:** Do you know what the mascot will be?

Phil Batty: We have an amazing mascot. She is called Finnie. She is a unicorn, and she is the national animal of Scotland. Sadly, Clyde, the thistle and the mascot for 2014, is cheering on from the sidelines. We tried to get him to retire. He has not quite retired. He is very much cheering on Team Scotland. Even Borobi, from Gold Coast 2018, popped over for a tour of the city not long ago.

Q126 **Chair:** Phil, in December it was announced that TNT Sports, not the BBC, would broadcast the live coverage of the Commonwealth games. What impact will the lack of free-to-air coverage have on viewing numbers and the legacy aspect of the games?

Phil Batty: It is clear that, globally but also here in the UK, the way that sports fans consume sport is changing. That is not just in terms of subscription versus linear. We saw with the women's rugby world cup just how much content was consumed via social media and the storytelling of athletes there.

We have had a great commitment from Warner Brothers Discovery to broaden out the amount of sport that is visible to more people over the 11 days of the games. Historically, only two or three sessions might have been available. Moving to this new solution allows us to see more sports on air more of the time through that streaming solution. Clearly, because it is a listed category B event, it will have a component of free-to-air as well.

As event organisers, we have a responsibility to make sure there are as many ways to access the games as possible. Yes, that is live and in-venue with a ticket, but right now we have £250,000 of investment going into community projects through our festival fund. We will look at how we take the sport out into community spaces and green spaces, and at investment in local governing bodies and national governing bodies to give people, once they have been inspired by seeing something on the field of play, an opportunity to try it for themselves. That ecosystem of access and inclusion is important.

Clearly, the free-to-air element is still a fundamental part. We are lucky that, as a category B event, we have the protection to be able to make sure that is still safeguarded.

Q127 **Chair:** When Victoria announced that it could not host the games, it felt like, potentially, a moment of crisis. It felt like a bit of a pinch point with regard to the future of the games, not least because of the question marks about whether the Commonwealth as an organisation is as



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relevant as it has been in the past. Do you genuinely think that the Commonwealth games have a future beyond 2026?

Phil Batty: The last two years have answered once and for all the question around whether this is relevant and needed. In 2023, 74 nations gathered in Singapore and asked themselves the existential question, "Should we exist?" All 74 nations were absolutely committed to seeing this event carry on, so much so that Commonwealth Sport has invested in reformatting and reimagining the event.

The challenge, because of the investment made in Scotland and UK, was that few places across the Commonwealth could put on a Commonwealth games in this shorter timescale. It is important—this is a bit like the stories you were sharing about hosting, Claire—that we see ourselves as doing this on behalf of all 74 nations. That means that now, when we have a centenary games in India, it is a new era.

That is still important. Part of our programme is looking at the legacy of empire, the colonial past of the Commonwealth and the origins as the Empire games. But it is about using the space that the event creates to allow 74 nations to have that conversation and communities in a place from those 74 nations to openly discuss these things.

We are sitting here today knowing that, just this week, 74 nations have told us which athletes they are starting to send and who they are looking to see qualify. We would not be in the confident position of knowing, 184 days out, that 3,000 athletes from all over the world are coming to Glasgow this summer if this was not still wanted by that community. The challenge is how we make sure that that has meaningful impact.

One thing we have been able to do with Commonwealth Sport and the King's Baton Relay is rethink the social purpose that that has. In partnership with the Royal Commonwealth Society, the relay has committed to collecting a million pieces of plastic out of our waterways and oceans across the Commonwealth. Already, we are over halfway there and the relay is not even halfway through.

So there is a power when the Commonwealth acts as one. When those nations focus on their shared interests, sports diplomacy, sustainability, and the rights of children and young people, the Commonwealth can be truly great and truly convening in the community in what it does.

Ruth Hollis: One other innovative thing about the Commonwealth games is that it is co-programmed. It is an inclusive sports event; parasport is on the programme alongside mainstream sport. It is important to have that for parasport and disability sport, because the Commonwealth games leads the way on that visibility on the same platform, that inclusiveness and that co-programming, and it can be a model for others. Losing that would be detrimental.

Chair: We are going to move on to inclusivity with you, Cam, aren't we?



Q128 Cameron Thomas: Yes. Ruth, in the context of how major event organisers ensure that their events work with local communities, can you give the Committee an example of events that have managed to deliver significant community benefits and how they achieved that?

Ruth Hollis: Lots of events have delivered community benefit. The past four iterations of the cities of culture have been fantastic at doing that in different ways and thinking about how the community can be involved. They have 365 days—a year—to play with it, so it is a bit different from a two-week event that is trying to spark a long-term legacy. That gives them the ability to work in a really deep way in communities and have community engagement.

In both Hull and Coventry, we funded programmes where artists and producers were embedded into communities. They were embedded in community groups in areas of the city to work flexibly with residents and with service users, in the case of Coventry, to look at their response to a city of culture and how they wanted to be included.

When they are done well, events can be very inclusive. When they are done badly, they can be exclusive and people can feel left behind. So you need to think about how you embed producers and creatives into the community infrastructure to give people a voice. Also, we talk a lot about co-production, and bringing in the vision and creativity from people coming into the city to do something quite different is very impactful.

Some of the best long-term legacy we have seen has been through the city of culture. We have been lucky in Hull that we funded the volunteers right from the pilot programme through to last year. That 10-year legacy of 2,000 people who put on their uniform and say, "How can I help people in Hull?" has been really impactful. That was not an intended legacy of the city of culture. They did not know that was going to continue. It just became very successful.

You need to resource intentional planning and involving communities, but it is also about having a bit of space in legacy planning for the things that have popped up that are more successful than you think, and about how you take that forward.

Q129 Cameron Thomas: Thank you. Phil, would you be so kind as to answer that from your perspective?

Phil Batty: On the investment in the integrated delivery of the event, if you take this Commonwealth games, there has been a lot of commentary on the size and scale of the event. This is the largest ever parasport programme in the history of the Commonwealth games over 96 years, and the first medal on the first day of the games is for para powerlifting. That goes right through to what we did in Birmingham: opening ceremonies are those moments where the whole world is watching, and we spent 14 months working with a group of 200 young disabled



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individuals so that they could feel the confidence they needed to be able to stand in Alexander stadium in front of the world and perform.

You have to be committed to the values of your event. Our event is about inclusion. It has disability representation front and centre. That needs to be embodied not just in the infrastructure of the event and the important work you do around accessibility; it also needs to truly be a lived view of inclusion and it needs to permeate all different aspects of the event. Inclusion definitely drives our organisation day to day, whether that is making sure at the broad level of the Commonwealth that everyone feels they can be seen and safe at this event, right through to the individual who is in one venue at one point in time seeing someone who might be a role model for them compete at their absolute optimum. We know athletes have the incredible power to inspire.

Ruth Hollis: The programme that Phil has mentioned—Critical Mass in Birmingham—was built on learning from London. Although the opening and closing ceremonies of the Paralympic games showcased incredible disabled performers, they did not showcase disabled community members. There needed to be a different way to engage young disabled people in the community to take part. That is not just an example of a fantastic legacy programme; it is an example of a fantastic legacy programme that has taken the learning from the last 10 years of delivering major events in the UK. I am sure the learning from that will be taken on in Glasgow and other places.

Q130 **Cameron Thomas:** Now that you mention it, I can still remember the brilliant marketing from London 2012 about the Paralympic games, with that fantastic song by Public Enemy, "Harder Than You Think". I still remember that now.

Claire, I was going to come to you with a slightly different question, if you don't mind. You have spoken about the legacy of Eurovision. How important is it that inclusion is a key pillar of legacy planning? You have spoken about the legacy.

Claire McColgan: It has been crucial to us, and we do it through every event that we do. But I wanted to pick up on something you said earlier, because it is important. Free events are important. Events that you do not need to spend a load of money to get into, and where you can go and stand with your neighbours on a street to join in a proper celebration of place, are hugely important. I worry that because events are getting more expensive, we are getting fewer of the free events that give that access.

We do River of Light, which is a beautiful light festival, every year. We have 300,000 people who turn up to it, and 40% of them have never been to another cultural event before. That is their first access to great art and great work. It is free. They are with their friends and families on the street.



We have to be careful, when we are talking about events and an event strategy, that we are not just talking about events that are commercial and successful and that you have to buy a ticket to go to. We have to start reclaiming our streets, our towns and our parks and allowing these free events to happen really well, with great quality.

At the end of the day, you can do as much inclusion work as you want—you can do great community projects and great education projects—but if that event is not of the best quality and you do not get that moment when you remember the song or the fireworks going up, or where there is that moment of collective joy, there is no point. We are in danger of those big free events becoming commercialised to such an extent that you have to have money to be able to get through the door to do them, and that would be disastrous.

Q131 Cameron Thomas: To be inclusive, it has to incorporate socioeconomic groups as well.

Claire McColgan: It absolutely has to. People have to be able to experience these things. They have just as much right—they all pay council taxes. They have just as much right to be there. With the commercial events, you have to spend that money to buy that ticket. That is important.

Chair: Thank you all so much for appearing in front of us today. If you have any further comments or thoughts, could you drop us a note so we can include them in our final recommendations? We are grateful for all your time. We will now take a short break while we gather our next panel of witnesses. Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jason Barrett, Adrian Lambert and Major General Simon Brooks-Ward.

Q132 Chair: We are joined for our second panel by three more witnesses who are involved in really successful major events in the UK and overseas. We have Jason Barrett, who is the Chief Executive of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Adrian Lambert, who is the Chief Operating Officer of the Hay Festival, and Major General Simon Brooks-Ward, who is the Chairman of HPower Group, which, among other things, has the Royal Windsor Horse Show. Thank you so much for joining us today. It is a great pleasure to have you here with us.

Jason, I will kick off the questioning with you, but I will come to everybody with this. We heard in our first panel about some of the reach of major events and about the amazing opportunities they hold for things like soft power, international relations, trade and so on. How could the Government better integrate some of our major events, both at home and overseas, into trade missions, export campaigns and that sort of thing?



Jason Barrett: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Committee. First, it is about awareness and the great things that all these events do, where they go and how they perform. It is about that awareness on both sides. Then also, on the side of the major events—and I can speak to the Tattoo—it is about understanding where the priorities are for the UK Government, whether it be trade or our great partners at the MOD and their defence engagement priorities.

We are going, as many of you may be aware, to Australia and New Zealand in a mere matter of weeks. We were there in 2016 and 2019, and are now going back. With that, it is about what we can do as a platform. We pride ourselves on being one of the better engagement platforms for the UK, whether at the highest levels of military or the diplomatic corps, or in terms of business, culture and education.

As we deploy, and as we go abroad—“export” is the word people are using—how does the Government plug into that and integrate into that? There will be a ministerial presence when we are in Australia and New Zealand. Meetings will be held on the back of the Tattoo as a platform. We are proud to be able to provide that engagement platform.

Looking through the lens of soft power and soft diplomacy, it is about learning where those priorities are. When we learn about those priorities, we can begin to integrate that into our strategy to internationalise, grow and diversify. I will pause there, but the start of it is that level of awareness and prioritisation.

Q133 **Chair:** Simon, how can the Government better integrate major events into things like trade missions and export campaigns, and should they be trying to fit major events into their wider policy priorities?

Major General Brooks-Ward: First, a declaration of interest: I am bottom line-driven. I go to places where I can feed mouths within my business and also to export our products. That comes with it.

I will give you the golden thread—people were being asked about the golden thread, and I listened to that earlier on. I have a good news story. In the strange life I have lived for the last 36 years, I have been all over the world, from the Cook Islands to Las Vegas to Shanghai—wherever it may be. One thing that comes across consistently is that we are an exemplar in major events across the world. They trust us and respect us. We have credibility before we even enter the room. That is a wasted opportunity in some cases. I have been to the middle east. France, for instance, has been there before us with a powerful proposition, which is backed by the Government, and we are there as single operators trying to carve our own way.

I suggest that there are two routes to success here. One is on a trade mission, but it is also about identifying in that trade mission what is important to that nation. It could be a national event coming up, in the case of Oman. It could be equestrian in the middle east. It could be the



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military in New Zealand and Australia. It is about what is important to them and identifying within that trade mission who might be useful in developing that soft power and also that export potential.

Finally, we are not just exporting or trying to export an event. I will give two examples. We are looking at Azerbaijan, funnily enough, which looked at us for the Royal Windsor Horse Show. We will also run an event based on our London International Horse Show in Hong Kong, starting in two weeks' time. We are not only exporting a brand, but giving our IP and taking suppliers and contractors from the UK because, basically, they are trusted and we know they can deliver. When we go somewhere, we want to be able to deliver so that the next time it is even better.

I will probably end it there, but the FCDO is important. I am going to Baku in a week and a half's time. The ambassador does not even know I am there. I will go into the President's office to deliver a proposal. There is certainly a disconnect between our Government and independent operators like myself.

Q134 Chair: You are running events overseas but also in the UK. In your UK events, in some cases you are bringing in performers from overseas to take part. That is a double opportunity there, isn't it?

Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes, there is. I am not exporting the Military Tattoo. I am just exporting a format, a concept and a product. But it is a trusted one here, so they think it will be trusted there.

We also need to view it in a wider context. It is not just about sporting culture; it is about delivering national events for them. It always should involve in the criteria, either a Head of Government, senior Government or a Head of State. With that patronage and that foresight, we could really make some differences.

Q135 Chair: Adrian, it is the same group of questions to you. How can the Government better integrate major events into trade missions and export campaigns? Should they try to fit major events into wider policy priorities? How can they use you better?

Adrian Lambert: I guess we operate slightly differently to the models that the guys have been talking about. We have that credibility in the Hay Festival now. We operate across the world, particularly in South America, central America and Europe. We have festivals in Colombia and in Spain. We have worked in Lviv recently, and in Nairobi. All those festivals have been built with local representatives from those communities. So it is less about us being a franchise; we are not a franchise model. Each of those particular festivals has its own foundation and its own board, which is responsible for that particular festival. We go to countries or places where we feel that our model, what we want to say, and how we want to represent local authors and local democracy can be best used, while also ensuring that there is not a model already in place that we will be seen to be overtaking. We are not going somewhere



and exporting ourselves in a particular way that might be seen to create a profit necessarily, although each festival has to be sustainable under its own means. We work hand in hand with local representatives—municipal, regional or national—in each of those countries to create those festivals.

That is not to say that we do not have soft power in what we do because of the nature of those festivals. In Colombia, the one in Cartagena is at the end of this month—the 11-day festival. We have festivals in Medellín and Bogotá, which have been going for 20 years now and started when Colombia was a very different country. They have been absolutely vital in promoting democracy, cultural voice, literacy and literature throughout those countries, particularly in some more impoverished communities in those cities. To that end, we have worked with the British Council quite a lot. They are one of our partners in our international festivals. We have worked with other brands. Once we worked with a Great British brand that existed, and it branded part of our festivals.

We have worked with VisitWales, which have supported our work and use it as an opportunity to talk about the festival. Interestingly, from our perspective, we are a festival that is based in Hay-on-Wye—a Welsh festival based on the England-Wales border. The Hay Festivals in Colombia and Mexico do not know about Hay-on-Wye. They think it is the Hay Festival in Colombia. As far as they are concerned, their identity is completely sold in that, and they have not heard of Hay-on-Wye or Wales. They do not know that these festivals grew out of this now 40-year-old festival. They believe their festival is the Hay Festival. Their identities are solidly built in that way. So we have that slightly different relationship with those communities, which is nurtured through community outreach, programming and all sorts of different things.

As I say, in terms of the soft power of democracy, what we do and the people who come to speak at those events across the world, there is a lot that can be done. Various Ministers have been to Hay in the past to talk and all sorts of things.

Q136 Chair: This is a fantastic British export to a lot of parts of South America. I was in Colombia last year. The British Council in Colombia is outstanding. It delivers a huge bang for the buck. Does it feel like a missed opportunity if an iconic British festival is not even being recognised as one?

Adrian Lambert: Probably, yes, quite likely. Christina, who is the international director, would probably have more to say about that than I do but, yes, I would think so.

I was lucky enough to be in Colombia last January; it was the first time I had been there. The impact on that city was quite extraordinary. Seeing the packed-out audiences in each of the venues across the city was amazing. It is very a different model from the UK model. We have to have quite a commercial model. Their models are more particularly focused on sponsorship, trusts and foundations. The ticket prices are kept



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incredibly low because of the nature of trying to engage the local population and get them events that they probably would not ordinarily come to.

In terms of Hay's identity in those places, in Spain we won the Princess of Asturias award, one of the biggest Spanish cultural prizes in the country. They are huge, yes, and more probably could be done alongside those.

Chair: Interesting. Thank you.

Q137 **Jo Platt:** Adrian, this is to you. Claire McColgan from the first panel told us how they collaborate closely with other city regions in planning their events. How could festivals better support one another and share information that is needed?

Adrian Lambert: Yes, it is a good question. I was at the British Arts Festivals Association conference, which was yesterday and today in Birmingham. Probably about 60 or 70 delegates are representing lots of different festivals from across the UK. There are some interesting topics, including ones we faced a couple of years ago in Hay, about the nature of sponsorship and corporate sponsorship and what happens when things go wrong with that or concerns suddenly get raised about a particular sponsor and your festival comes under a tight spotlight. How do you react to that as an organisation, particularly when you are having to deal with it in the throes of a festival?

Factory International has created a brilliant new document to address that, not only for organisations but also for the staff who work in those organisations, who perhaps feel conflicted. We have seen it with the Adelaide Festival. It was shut down two weeks ago because the board of the Adelaide Festival disinvited a Palestinian author. Within days, the festival had completely shut down. That was a board decision, not a decision of the director, I hasten to add. Lots of practical lessons like that are unfortunate things that we are having to address more and more, but they can be shared among organisations.

We were also talking about how we work with universities and partners. That can be a key part of our offer, and certainly a key part of how we work with young people and draw young people to our festivals as well. It is a complex area. Universities are big beasts, and trying to get in touch with them and draw out and offer opportunities to their young people and graduates can be difficult. We are looking at different ways of doing that.

Some more practical things might include buying power in terms of infrastructure. Over the last five years, infrastructure has increased by about 20% or more. If you want to put a marquee up, the prices are increasing year on year. If you talked to other festivals that want to talk to a supplier about seating, marquees, flooring and power, and came together and said, "If we can guarantee that these festivals will use your services, can we try to create some cheaper deal between us to allow



people to use this thing and share it between us.” There are practical things like that.

On programming, sometimes when we have brought people over, especially internationally, we have shared those speakers with other festivals to cover the cost of bringing people, which probably happens a bit less than it used to, to be honest.

Q138 Jo Platt: How do you stop events from clashing with each other?

Adrian Lambert: That is a good question. We have an event that clashes with us massively in our own town, which is quite amazing.

That is a really good question. Everyone seems to go, “You are on now, and we will be on next.” Hay has been going for 40 years, operating in the late May bank holiday time, but over that 40-year period there has been a proliferation of hundreds of festivals, some that are getting quite close to where we are. We are lucky because we now have quite an established brand and an audience that wants to come to us. There are certain things where you will look at the calendar and think, “Don’t do the end of August because Edinburgh is on. Don’t do October because that is Cheltenham. Don’t do that because”—

Jo Platt: Is it just muscle memory?

Adrian Lambert: Yes, partly, a little bit.

Q139 Jo Platt: Who do you think should lead on it to co-ordinate?

Adrian Lambert: BAFA is interesting. The Association of Independent Festivals is another prominent and active organisation that represents lots of festivals. Festivals, in particular, differ so much in size. We go along and we are a bit of a beast. We do not feel like it, but we are a bit of a beast in that world. Some people go along and they have a one-day festival with a few hundred people going along. The demands on you and how you are perceived in your business are different. BAFA has been going for 20-odd years now. It is an association, an independent body, and it could perhaps cultivate that and lead on those sorts of things. It could potentially do something like that.

Obviously there is the DCMS itself. We have worked closely with it over the past 18 months, and it has supported us fantastically well with our international stuff. Again, there might be something in terms of those guys.

At the moment, we receive no core funding from any national funding body—Arts Council Wales or Arts Council England. We receive money from Arts Council Wales, but only for projects rather than for the festival itself. We get some money from Arts Council England, but that is again for projects, not for the festival itself. Both those organisations might be able to think about how they work with festivals.



Festivals have had quite a weird time, in the sense that, for a certain period about five or 10 years ago they were not even funded by Arts Council Wales, for example. It was not an art form that was funded and deemed to be fund-worthy by Arts Council Wales. You have to navigate what you do to draw down that particular funding. Maybe those guys could do something as well.

Q140 Chair: Adrian, can I take you back to what you said about the Adelaide literary festival and the pressure it had from pressure groups upon cancelling one of the guests who was coming to speak? Is that becoming an increasing problem for events like yours?

Adrian Lambert: We had it recently in Colombia, where—I am terrible; her name drifts out of my mind of course—the opposition leader in Venezuela, who received the Nobel peace prize, is appearing at our festival in Colombia, albeit digitally. When that was first announced, Colombian artists pulled out of the festival because they felt she was a tool of American imperialism, but we kept her in the programme. Since that moment, the world has changed again. Far be it from her being snuck out of Venezuela, she is now walking into the White House and giving President Trump her Nobel peace prize. I am not quite sure what effect that might have had on some of the people going to the festival in Colombia, particularly after the things that were said about Colombia as well. We will hear about those things more.

We were on the end of that two years ago, when Baillie Gifford, which was a funder of not only our festival but also Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Bradford and Wimbledon, and had been for a long time, came under fire from Fossil Free Books, which said it was investing in industries that perpetuate the oil industry. It quickly turned from Fossil Free Books and that, into an Israel-Gaza situation. Fossil Free Books then wrote to every author and speaker coming to the Hay Festival to ask them to withdraw. We had artists withdrawing on that basis and we had to decide quickly whether to turn down the money Baillie Gifford had allocated for us. We had not received it, ironically, at the time. Otherwise, the festival was facing a very dark future very quickly.

I think those questions will get asked more. I can perceive us coming under fire for various things. Again, it is going back to the stuff that Factory has delivered. Politically at the moment, the world is a challenging place and people are getting fired up for all sorts of different reasons and in lots of different ways—and in very divisive ways as well, which we are seeing through social media platforms. We have to be alive to that as festivals, not only for the people who are coming, but for our own staff and for the artists. They will all bring a different attitude towards that. Unfortunately, we will be facing that year on year.

To that end, when we contract our artists now, after what we went through, we give them our own speakers policy and where we are as a charity—because we are a charity—and we are asking them to adhere to that and understand why. When we take any funds from anybody—from



an individual or a business—it goes through a rigorous process. But as a charity, we are expected to take funds to enable us to exist to do what we do. I think it will, unfortunately, be a common occurrence.

Chair: We are in a world where we would rather cancel people who have alternative views to us than hear them out and get a balance.

Adrian Lambert: Yes, absolutely.

Q141 **Chair:** Can I pick up on one other thing you said? You said that you have had a lot of support from DCMS, and that it was supportive, but how joined up are the Government? How much support and interest do you get from other Government Departments? For example, it is the National Year of Reading. How much communication have you had from the Department for Education? You are probably the most iconic British literary festival. To what extent do you have that?

Adrian Lambert: We did not get any communication from the Department for Education. The first we knew about it was when it was announced as the National Year of Reading. The programme is being delivered via the National Literacy Trust—we are very much in contact with them and with Jonathan, who leads them—and we are talking to the NLT about how we can play an important part in that.

You are absolutely right. These things can sometimes happen year on year, with a national year of something else coming up, and organisations like us and many other arts organisations and cultural organisations work in these sectors week on week, year on year, and in communities to deliver this work. When those ideas get developed, thinking about who we should talk to and bring into the discussions, and perhaps about how they can help develop, shape and deliver these things, would be very beneficial.

Chair: Absolutely. It is that golden thread we heard about before, and how you maximise these things. The sum is greater than its parts. If everyone is working collaboratively to an aim and ambition, it seems to deliver so much more. Thank you. Let us move to Damian, please.

Q142 **Damian Hinds:** I want to come back to the projection of Britain abroad and soft power, and to ask Jason and Simon about it. It is a question that comes up with lots of sectors that this Committee covers, whether it is general tourism, music or film exports, or what have you. Everyone has a great story to tell about soft power until you say, “Okay, but how do you measure it?”

Jason Barrett: We measure it every year. It comes down to our Royal Gallery, which others have said—and we welcome this—is one of the best engagement platforms annually. The MOD has said that, and others. In terms of high-level ranking officers, whether at NATO, or at four-star level in America or here—so the highest level of military leadership and heads of service—238 stars were in the Royal Gallery last year. Eight ambassadors were there last year. Six Ministers visited, and dozens of



MPs. And you can extend that to the royal family and so on. Then you are able to say, "If you are coalescing that level of influence, what can be made of that?"

I heard your question earlier, and I enjoyed it because there is a lot of theory around soft power, but it really is about the how. The what is self-evident, but the how is how we do that. We have engaged in that. If someone were to tell me what the defence engagement priorities are for the UK in the next three to five years, it would be helpful. Then we would look at that and we would cross-reference that with the Tattoo's commercial, artistic and creative objectives over the next three to five years. Where they intersect is the opportunity.

Let's say it is Japan. In this instance here, we are interested in going out and finding a Japanese act to create diversity of artistic and creative construct for the Tattoo. That may happen to be a DBT trade priority or whatever the case may be, and now, all of a sudden, we find the win-win in that. So it is about those conversations where we can do that. We can activate—that is important—soft power and soft diplomacy, not just talk about it.

Q143 Damian Hinds: Thank you. Simon, in a slightly different part of the sector, do you find it is possible, for your own internal measurements, to assess soft power, but also to persuade others, particularly parts of the Government that you may want help and support from?

Major General Brooks-Ward: I will be quite honest: if soft power means that our events are supported year on year, it means we have succeeded slightly in developing those relationships, not just with you but with other people as well.

I have to be careful here, so I will lay it on the line that I cannot talk about some elements of the soft power that I would like to in this Committee. However, from a Government perspective, if you, for instance, phoned up or got input from our ambassador representing us in a country where we are delivering soft power, to get a report back about how important that is, I think that one or two—I could give you signals here—of our ambassadors would be writing back saying, "The Royal Winter Horse Show is extremely important in our relationship with X, Y and Z." They are a good barometer.

Do I measure it? I have told you how I measure it because I am interested in that. But I am not completely commercial about this. I enjoy the fact that people respect our country, our values and everything else that I hear about, because of the platform that we provide for certain individuals and countries within our events. That is extremely important, and I come back to the fact that we have such a massive reputation out there. We do our best to destroy it, but people out there I speak to and know in certain places are extremely fond of this country, and view it as being the exemplar still.



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Q144 **Damian Hinds:** Am I right in interpreting that the three of you have three different sponsoring Government Departments? One would be DCMS, one would be FCDO and MOD—

Major General Brooks-Ward: I am not sure where mine would lie. It would be a mixture of DCMS and FCDO.

Damian Hinds: The Tattoo is up there with the Farnborough Air Show and stuff. It has a special and particular place in the military ecosystem.

Jason Barrett: It is. If I could interject, yes, absolutely, and for 75 years. The word “Military” is in our name. But performers also went to Mumbai with trade missions in support of DBT. We work with the GREAT campaign. We are in Osaka at the World Expo. We are definitely cross-governmental, but, yes, of course, with our legacy and history, we are proud partners at the MOD.

Q145 **Damian Hinds:** The question I really want to come on to is, who does that co-ordination across the Government, and how good they are? In particular, DCMS is famously not a big Department in Government. It is not a Department with a huge amount of heft or—all these budgets are big budgets—that big a budget in the scheme of things, compared with others. Is DCMS well placed to co-ordinate on things like visas, security and all the other things that come together for a big international event?

Major General Brooks-Ward: I might come at it another way and take it away from a Government Department. By the way, I am trading on no knowledge or little knowledge of how that interoperability works. If I were the Government, I would look at major events and understand the criteria that are applied to those major events, either for UK plc or for exporting other brands, and come up with the criteria. It could be Crufts, the Chelsea Flower Show, the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo or the Hay Festival. If we put that into a major events portfolio, we then understand that we can go into the British Council, the FCDO, trade missions or wherever we may be, and say, “That one would appeal to this,” or, “The IP of anybody sitting around this table, and without, would appeal to that trade mission.”

Where does that belong? That is probably the next stage, but the first stage is to define what we mean by a major event and where that relates back to UK plc and to society, and then to come up with a plan. To give you an example, Bahrain, which is a much more agile environment with a small economy, has a major events strategy. It is run through the PM’s office. It involves the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Tourism. They can identify bed nights against events. They have an events schedule, which means that cultural, sporting or whatever events do not compete. They produce a coherent plan. That is difficult in this country, but I suggest that you start from that basis.

Jason Barrett: We were encouraged about 18 months ago to hear about the Soft Power Council. That was a great start. With the DCMS and the



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Foreign Office coming together, work has been done, but there is more to do. There are the inroads, there is the plug and socket, if you will, and there is the start of a strategy that can then cascade down to the likes of our organisations and how we can plug in and assist with that. That is the first thing I would say.

The other part, to go back to your original point, is that probably the phone that we answer second, after the MOD, is the Scotland Office. Working with them, similar to what Simon said, the major events in our brand abroad are second to none. With that, we promote Brand Britain, we promote Brand Scotland, and that has a receptive audience.

Q146 Damian Hinds: I have one final question to anybody who has a view to give on it. It is about something that came up briefly in the last panel, when Claire talked about the proposed visitor levy. She said she thought that it was a great opportunity for the sector. What indication have you had, or what internal assessment have you made, of whether 100% of the visitor levy will go into the visitor economy, and for what sorts of purposes—marketing, general destination management, facilities, capital or what? What have you heard from the Government?

Jason Barrett: Certainly in Edinburgh, it is a very topical issue on many fronts. First, working with the city closely on things like this, I know that accommodation, in particular, is of sensitivity for everybody who goes to Edinburgh, not least performers and festivals that have to house folks during the month of August. The largest portion of the levy—and I am ventriloquising for the CEO of the city of Edinburgh at this time—is to go to maintenance and beautification of a very touristed city that gets worn out year round, but particularly in the month of August. We are talking about potholes, graffiti, cleanliness of streets and things like that. We welcome that; if that is going to be the case, it can only help all of us.

It is a double-edged sword for us—and speaking for the other festivals in Edinburgh—because that levy is also applied to performers. If people from the Fringe were sitting here, they would speak about how that is affecting them as well. It is a force for good, but it can have its detracting effects.

Q147 Damian Hinds: Adrian, do you have anything to add?

Adrian Lambert: I do not know much about the rest of the UK. I know that Wales is introducing a visitor levy and an accommodation levy—or if you provide accommodation, you have to register. I am not sure how many people know about that in Wales, to be honest. From my conversations with the accommodation providers, they are quite in the dark about it and whether it will apply to people during the festival. We are in a very rural location, and we are wholly dependent on local providers providing accommodation for artists, staff and audiences. There are also local campsites. Whether people who rent out a room in their house for the 11 days of the festival will have to register, I do not know. That will be interesting to see.



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Q148 **Damian Hinds:** Do you expect it to be hypothecated and for that to be incremental funding for the visitor economy? They have to clear up the graffiti now. You may think they could do it better, but someone has to do it. Someone has to fill the potholes. I guess the question with the visitor levy is whether this is more money that is coming into the sector.

Adrian Lambert: We do not know.

Damian Hinds: Okay, fair enough. Thank you.

Chair: Let us move to Bayo, please.

Q149 **Mr Alaba:** This is a question for Major General Simon. You spoke about the trust, the exemplar, the relationship and the reputation we have as a country. Can you elaborate on that? How has that enabled you to build relationships with key figures around the world while you are running the business? Do you have any other insights?

Major General Brooks-Ward: It is a difficult one, and I do not want to get into personalities. What I would say is that we are in an industry that is prince to pauper. It is a misconception to think that equestrianism is just for the rich, wealthy and whatever. It covers a massive spectrum. Facebook will tell you that 7 million people have a "like" for a horse. That is quite a wide market. I wanted to say that.

Where we get into soft power is through individual relationships within countries. But I then go back to my earlier point: do not take it from me; take it from the ambassador who is involved in the relationship. That could be somewhere in the middle east or wherever. Outside of the Committee session, I could give you an example of that, but I do not want to get into individuals, because I am not here to do that.

However, I do know that the power of the horse in my bit has a beneficial effect in talking and in connecting people on a soft basis who normally would not talk to each other on a level that is not sport or horse-orientated. I am being a bit ambiguous, I know that, but—

Mr Alaba: You will love my next question, then.

Major General Brooks-Ward: I am being ambiguous, but I absolutely know that the connectors are there. We work with the FCDO, particularly in Bahrain, as an example, and the ambassador there is on my hotline. I know that he values the relationship between Bahrain and the UK. We helped develop that. It has been an advantageous relationship, I suggest, with the UK, but do not take it from me. That is where the Government have to have the surety and the confidence in events like ours through their own systems to deliver the temperature.

Q150 **Mr Alaba:** In terms of forging relationships, have the Government reached out to you to help broker, enhance or connect with individuals internationally? And—I think I am answering your question—should they use organisations such as yours more?



Major General Brooks-Ward: Not initially. The second bit to the question is whether we are happy to do that. Yes, in certain circumstances. We have to be aware of commercial and also relationship sensitivities, but we are all on the same side, so that is not an issue.

Should the Government do more to connect with people like me? Yes. I do not hear from anybody. As I say, over 36 years, I have dealt in many different nations, including many in the middle east. As an example, I ran the Jordan independence celebrations, because we do everything. If you can run a horse event, you can run any other event, in my opinion. Did I meet the ambassador once? No. Yet, King Abdullah was party to the celebration and how that was going to be run.

My point is that—I said it when I first started talking here—because I am bottom-line and I am responsible for helping to give my people a salary at the end of the month, that, in Government, is sometimes a negative; sometimes, there's a lukewarm, almost messy idea that I am here just for myself—that I am just trying to buy my villa in wherever. Yet, at the same time, I have a huge passion for this country.

I think there has to be a cultural attitude shift to people like me who are there, yes, to make a profit at the end of the day, because we need to make a profit. As we have been talking about, the live event industry is massively more expensive post covid than pre covid, so it is much harder to make money nowadays. So there has to be a bit of a cultural shift.

Q151 **Vicky Foxcroft:** How did you first start exporting your events, and what were the challenges? That is to whoever wants to go first.

Adrian Lambert: We exported our event to Colombia because Gabriel García Márquez would not leave Colombia, so we took a festival to Colombia. That was the reason it happened. Then, out of that conversation about wanting to platform one of the world's most famous writers, certainly in South America, grew a series of conversations with local people in the municipality, and funders got behind it because they got very excited about it. Over 20 years ago, the idea of a literature festival—people talking about books and ideas—did not really exist in Colombia. It got supported, and some of the people who supported it then still support it now, 20 years on.

We often get people coming to our festival in Wales and then asking us if they can have one, which is bizarre. We have these conversations. I have had two meetings with Korean delegates who have come to Hay—about 20 or 30 people from South Korea, which has been interesting. They are fascinated by how it works and want to know everything about how they could, basically, construct this in different regions of South Korea. We often get invites from different countries who want a festival.

We will have conversations with people but, as I said before, those conversations are based on what we feel the need of the country is in terms of what we do and how we do it, making sure that we always



retain editorial control over what happens there, so that the platform remains free and open to a whole diverse range of voices, because that is what we do. For us, it is about making sure that the relationship we create supports our own mission and values as an organisation from the off.

Q152 **Vicky Foxcroft:** What have the challenges been?

Adrian Lambert: They have been many and varied. Partly, it is funding. It is making sure you get the funds to support that. Each country will have its own different challenges. The models in, say, South America are different to models that we operate in the UK. It is less commercial. In Colombia, you cannot charge the ticket prices that we have to charge to make sure that we are sustainable, because of the context of the country and the economy.

It is about ensuring that you draw in sponsorship from all different sources. Depending on the country and its economy, it will be very different from the UK economy. In Peru, you might have to talk to corporations that you perhaps would not talk to if they were UK-based corporations, but you would in Peru because it is in one of the main industries.

In certain countries, security is an important thing we have to deal with and think about, as well as the practicalities, resources and infrastructure behind any festival. Most of the festivals we operate internationally take place in venues around cities. Hay is a tented, greenfield site. Again, each of those brings its own different challenges.

Jason Barrett: We have been doing the Tattoo on and off for several decades. We are looking strategically to see how we can make that more repeatable and more programmable going forward. The challenges are several, but two come to mind.

Like Major General Simon said, we are an entirely commercial organisation. We are a charity. We gain no subsidy whatsoever. We gave £1.5 million this year to charity, which is record-setting for us. What we do, in terms of going abroad, is make more money to give money away. In saying that, the commercial viability is challenging. We have to get bums on seats. We do that through promoters, so promoter relationships are critical and key. Those can be challenging when going abroad. You are taking something that you own, with every single cobblestone and brick in Edinburgh making the Tattoo in its entirety, and going abroad, and now you have to partner with somebody to do that. That can present some challenges, but ones that we will need to deal with if we want to grow, internationalise and diversify. We are doing that in Australia and New Zealand. That is the first thing.

The second one should be fairly self-evident. The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo—to go back to the military—offers and takes UK military bands with us wherever we go. If we do that more than once a year beyond



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Edinburgh, that can provide a challenge to the MOD, in so far as its forces are diminishing. Can they afford to come across with us? These are the things that we face.

Major General Brooks-Ward: I will give two simple answers. How do we get to do it? Reputation. We have been 36 years in the game. I started the company when I was three. People come to our events and say, "We want a bit of this where we are."

Our biggest challenge—I will give it to you—is moving a horse. It is an absolute nightmare. There you go. I will probably leave it at that. My colleagues have—

Vicky Foxcroft: You know what? I am interested in the logistics of that.

Chair: It is a little niche for the purposes of this inquiry, but we—

Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes. We put them in a stable, put them on the plane, and then transport them to Hong Kong. We are doing that in a week's time.

Q153 **Vicky Foxcroft:** Are there any problems with visas?

Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes, quarantine is a huge issue. You can always transport a horse somewhere, but coming back to the EU is a whole other ball game. We work closely with the Hong Kong Jockey Club, which is a good partner to us. We quarantine the horses when they get there and then we do quarantine zones. If you want one challenge, that is it.

Q154 **Vicky Foxcroft:** What more could the Government do to encourage the exporting of major events, and what other support might you need?

Jason Barrett: The encouragement comes back to where the shared priorities are. In some ways, the wish that the Tattoo has relates to thinking about how events integrate into a strategy, which is a bit of a theme today. As the Government look to whatever the initiatives are abroad, what can the arts, culture, sport community do to support that?

At times—this is not a criticism, because everybody is busy and where everybody's horizon is set as far as their planning goes can be different—this can be viewed a little bit as an afterthought: "We are going here for a trade mission. We are going here for x or y. Wouldn't it be great if—". Then you get the phone call, and you have to come up with pipers, drummers, fiddle players and dancers, with only weeks to push sometimes. That is fine, and we figure it out, because it is a benefit to all of us, but if we could plan a bit better, it would be helpful.

Major General Brooks-Ward: Identifying the nation that you are going to, working out what it wants—whether it is a national commemorative event, an equestrian event, a military event, a literary or flower show, or whatever floats their boat—and taking somebody who is an expert within



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that industry with you would help enormously. Often, I find that these are very personal interests—either governmental or Head of State—so understanding the people you are presenting to would be a start, and then you can align the industry sector alongside it.

Adrian Lambert: Yes, I agree. Simon mentioned identifying major events in the UK that are already involved in working internationally, what they are and where they are working. Understanding what those relationships are would be a key starting point because you can then draw on that information. Like Simon said, if there are trips to certain countries, people can accompany people to talk about different things.

Major General Brooks-Ward: Targeting it.

Adrian Lambert: Yes. That would be a good idea.

Q155 **Dr Huq:** They are quite different events between the three of you—Hay-on-Wye, the horse show and the Tattoo. Could the UK Government take practical steps to promote a UK brand for major event delivery internationally? VisitBritain was mentioned in the last session. Could you do reverse branding for all your events?

Jason Barrett: There might be some examples like the one you mentioned, but also the GREAT campaign does a bit of that as well. There have been examples.

Q156 **Dr Huq:** Is the GREAT campaign a kitemarkable thing? I have not heard of it before.

Jason Barrett: All of you have worked with that?

Adrian Lambert: Yes.

Major General Brooks-Ward: We have all been part of it at some stage.

Dr Huq: Is it working? I had not heard of it, but I am not the target market.

Jason Barrett: The GREAT campaign comes out of No. 10. It is about Brand Britain and being able to promote that. It can work. It was involved in the World Expo, with GB day—each country there gets a day—and we participated in that. There is some intention and strategy behind how to do that.

We are back to the theme that I heard in the first session. This is about coherence. This is about, in some ways, good intentions, but then phone calls coming late in planning that you try to support. We are back to these priorities abroad. Where are the countries, what are the objectives, and how can we provide support there through major events? A lot of good people are trying to do good things, but bringing some coherence to that would be helpful.



Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes, codify what a major event is and have a clearer platform, as we have said.

As a small example, it might be nice to walk into Heathrow airport as a visitor and not just see people but see events. We have Wimbledon. We have this, that and the other. I am a great evangelical person about promoting British events abroad, because I have seen throughout my life how people react to us when we talk about Great Britain and Northern Ireland and to our events and how we do them. It could be ceremonial, literature and culture, or sporting; it does not matter. We have such a significant reputation that we need to build on.

Jason Barrett: Perhaps I could extend that, and I have said this before, so I will say it quickly, but it is important not to lose sight of it. When it comes to arts and culture, as far as a brand goes, there is something in the way this country has represented itself for centuries—whether it is Shakespeare, movies, acting, directing, and all these things. The USP and what distinguishes the UK from other countries is in that field. The question then is how that applies to strategy abroad.

Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes, and opportunity.

Adrian Lambert: You need delicacy sometimes. My experience with the Great British brand was when we were in Spain and we were given lots of big banners with Great Britain things on them—pictures of the Houses of Parliament and stuff like that—to stick up around the place. Why would I put those around in a town in Spain? It was a bit weird. It felt a bit arbitrary, like taking a hammer to a nut. These are conversations. People are already coming to talk about these things. We do not need to talk about them in this massively clichéd way.

If you are trying to be part of the community or town you are working in, you do not want to be seen as reflecting some kind of colonialist, imperialist, westernised idea and coming to bring your ideas to this particular town. It depends on what relationship you set up in the first place and what you are there to do, of course, but sometimes we are there to try to work closely with people from that local town, city, region and community to develop and deliver a festival.

Britain is very much part of that. We are a British organisation originally, but to a certain extent our festivals in these particular countries have become identifiable by themselves. They have fantastic links back to the UK, and we remind people of that all the time at those festivals. We sell tickets to them all through our single website in various different currencies, so everything is driven through that. If we are reminding people of that, how are we doing it? We can probably do that in more subtle or intelligent ways.

Jason Barrett: The major theme—and we have heard this—is that, in a world that may be more divided now than ever, arts and culture bring people together. If you ask yourself whether the UK is uniquely



positioned on a global stage to do that, the answer is yes. It is hard to have a row when you are having a good time. Arts and culture can do that.

Major General Brooks-Ward: And sport.

Q157 **Dr Huq:** What are the differences in the appetite for these things internationally compared to here? Your Colombia-on-Wye—what are the cultural differences?

Adrian Lambert: There is a huge appetite. It has been going for over 20 years now and—

Dr Huq: Do you have to tweak it quite a lot?

Adrian Lambert: I guess it has hit a point now where its success has driven it. For a long time, you could not really operate in Medellín, but we are now doing a lot of events there and also in Bogotá. Colombia has opened up. It is still quite a dangerous place in some parts, as we know, but other parts of it not so much.

There is an appetite for that, as we have discovered through that work, through our work in Spain and also through our partnership with Book Bunk in Nairobi. In terms of the promotion of literature and the growth of literature, a lot of these countries—South Korea has the highest proportion of young people in the world, at 30%—are our next audiences, and we have to try to engage with those audiences as well. There is an appetite for literature and culture.

We were saying that culture has become divisive. We exist as a platform to bring people together. It is about discourse. It is about putting people on stage to talk and share thoughts, ideas, stories and creativity with audiences, and that is absolutely critical.

Major General Brooks-Ward: The strategic bit is that you have your core, whether it is Hay, the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo or a sporting event. When you export it, you add in the cultural nuances of that individual nation—and sometimes city—so that you are incorporating that, but the core remains the same. The core product is still true to yourself.

Q158 **Dr Huq:** Brilliant, thanks. Do any of the places you export to do the money side better than us? Is there best practice we can learn about sponsorship and those kinds of things?

Jason Barrett: Yes, and we are learning. For instance, there is an aspiration for the Tattoo perhaps to do a touring proposition in America. That is the commercial side of things in America. To me, it is the hardest market to crack as far as where we go. Our brand is familiar in Commonwealth countries, but maybe less so in America, and once you can unlock that on the sponsorship and the commercial side, it is more lucrative there.



Major General Brooks-Ward: You have to look at the nuances as well. Every single country, every single place and every single culture is different. We are all event organisers. You have your revenue streams and you have your expenditure and whatever. On your revenue side, it will be different in Hong Kong to London. They do two-day travel packages, for instance, around that area. You have to adopt a different income policy, or income generation, than you would do over here but, again, everything is core.

Adrian Lambert: We attract an enormous number of sponsors and different types of sponsors, trusts and foundations, particularly for our engagement work and education work in countries to support us.

Getting sponsorship in this country is difficult, I have to say. Philanthropy is difficult. We have a successful festival, but we have to work extraordinarily hard every year to raise money to put that festival on. We have sold-out events. Your success sometimes can defeat you almost, because people look at you and say, "You must be fine. Look at all those people who are coming. That is great. Look at all those names." Yes, but that is a misconception. It is difficult tracking down sponsorship.

Also, as we were saying earlier, there is the potential for sponsors to get more fearful about sponsoring events. If something does happen to that sponsorship, or someone wants for some reason to raise an issue about how they feel about that particular sponsor, it could potentially affect their business. That will probably put some potential sponsors on the back foot a little bit.

Major General Brooks-Ward: Or they do not like the colour of the flowers.

Adrian Lambert: Yes.

Q159 **Chair:** That sounds like the voice of experience. Thanks, Rupa. A final question from me. You are in the business of events. We are in the business of writing reports to make recommendations to the Government about how we can maximise the potential of our world-class major events to promote the UK, drive our economy, develop soft power relationships and so on. If there was one recommendation that you would like us to include in this report, which we will deliver to the Government, what would it be, Adrian?

Adrian Lambert: I will not say reduce VAT on tickets, but if they reduced VAT on tickets by 10% for charity and non-profit-making festivals, we would make £200,000 a year—problem solved. There is that, but I know that is probably a bit pie in the sky.

Identify the major events in the UK that you want to work with, understand who they are, where they work and how they are constituted, and pull that information together to allow you more strategically to work with those organisations internationally and understand what they are



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trying to offer and trying to achieve. That would be a fantastic starting point.

Q160 **Chair:** The Cabinet Office should have a grid of the major events that are happening globally and to what extent other Government Departments should tie in.

Adrian Lambert: Absolutely, yes. If there could be that association with other Government Departments outside the DCMS, like Education, for example, as you were saying earlier, that would be fantastic. An awful lot of what we do spreads right across so many different Departments that have to understand the breadth and depth of what organisations have to offer.

Q161 **Chair:** Now you are asking for the Government to stop working in silos. You must stop dreaming. Simon.

Major General Brooks-Ward: I would put our events industry into sectors. It could be cultural, art, sport or a mixture, but put them into sectors. Then, ask them to identify the countries where they think this particular product would sit well. After that, invite individuals and get their IP into that country to talk about that. We know where our markets are; I know where the equestrian market is around the world, and I know exactly who to go and talk to. So put it into sectors, come to the experts within those sectors, put them on a trade mission and see where it goes to, but ensure that we are all connected with the FCDO.

Q162 **Chair:** Are we missing opportunities at the moment?

Major General Brooks-Ward: Yes.

Jason Barrett: Similarly, define the strategic objectives over the next three to five years at UK plc, where those engagements are and how you leverage major events. And be specific: we need to move out of the theoretical and get the number of events and what they do. We need to say, "Here are the engagement priorities, and here are the events we can leverage to enhance those engagements." We need to use the best of Britain and use the events industry in the UK as an export.

Chair: Very good. Gentlemen, thank you so much for joining us this morning. It has been great to hear from you.