

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Major events, HC 1339

Tuesday 28 April 2026

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

Questions 232 - 304

Witnesses

I: Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth; Jonathan Martin, DCMS, Director for Project Delivery and Major Events; and Michael Livingston, DCMS, Director for Major Sporting Projects Delivery.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Stephanie Peacock, Jonathan Martin and Michael Livingston.

Q232 **Chair:** Welcome to this meeting of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Today, we hear evidence from the Government in the final session on our major events inquiry. We are joined by Stephanie Peacock, the Minister responsible for major events. Alongside her are Jonathan Martin, DCMS director for project delivery and major events, and Michael Livingston, DCMS director for major sporting projects delivery. Welcome to all of you.

I should put on record that we invited either the Minister or a senior official from the Home Office to attend today. Unfortunately, the Minister is unavailable. We were very disappointed that the Home Office was not able even to send a senior official. As a Committee, we will write to the Home Office to point out that this is not acceptable and in future it should at least make available a senior official to a Select Committee. When it comes to Home Office issues, it is unfair that the Minister and team at DCMS have to answer questions about that Department.

Minister, the recurring theme we have heard throughout the evidence on these matters is the lack of a coherent strategy, or strategies, for major events. To start off, can you help us understand what the Government have in terms of a strategy for huge major events held across this country, which take place in such geographically diverse parts of the nations?

Stephanie Peacock: Chair, thank you and the Committee so much for all your work and for holding the inquiry. I have listened to most of the evidence and found it really interesting. The inquiry will be really worth while. It is important to acknowledge that we have an absolutely amazing world-leading major events sector. That is really clear from all the witnesses you have heard. It is about showcasing the country on a global stage; it is about self-confidence as a nation. Of course, it drives economic growth and strengthens cohesion, and through legacy it can inspire the next generation. It helps communities to come together and create collective memories. We heard that through the Committee; I have also heard it from the industry. I think DCMS and the Government have a strong story to tell, but it is important to acknowledge up front that we can go further on that and say very clearly that we should have a strategy in one place. We will be publishing that in the next 12 months.

It is also important to acknowledge the previous inquiry undertaken by the predecessor Committee. If you look at those 10 recommendations, eight of them have been met by this Government and the previous one, but it is telling that the one that has not is the point around a golden thread and tying things together. As for what the Government have, we have the creative industry sector plan, the Arts Everywhere fund, the UK gold framework and we are working towards the visitor economy plan. The DCMS acts as a co-ordinator and works with colleagues across



Government. In your evidence, you heard that that could be strengthened. That is something we want to work on and do more. We have an exciting pipeline of events and want to make sure we maximise their benefits.

Q233 Chair: You are absolutely right: the golden thread was one of the recommendations of our predecessor Committee. It feels like that is a missed opportunity. We are not getting as much bang for our buck as we should be from these events. There is no co-ordinated narrative that links some of them together and means that we are entirely capitalising as a country from all their benefits. What progress have you made against that particular recommendation of the golden thread? As you say, it was one of the few that was not implemented or followed up.

Stephanie Peacock: As the Minister leading on major events, I co-ordinated a roundtable meeting in January. I intend to do another one before the summer recess. That brought together industry bodies, Government Departments, ALBs and regional reps. It was industry-wide because, while we recognise there are different needs across sport, culture and business events, as you have heard, there is a common thread and more we can do to get more bang for our buck. Of course, the officials present have led on a number of different major events. I do not know whether anyone can take an example of one major event and how we have tied together culture and sport.

Jonathan Martin: I led a lot of things from VE Day through to the coronation and funerals, as well as COP26 and a variety of others. We have a really strong convening role when we own that event and are the event owner for it across Government. We have brought together each of the Government Departments. We work very closely with the Foreign Office, Home Office and Cabinet Office in particular around that. We also have a very strong relationship with the police and other emergency service partners to convene that together. What we try to do there is think about it not just in terms of the event delivery. We have evolved over the past three or four years the ability to broaden out a much wider impact. When you look at some of the VE Day engagement scores we get, it is really positive around how we have gone beyond London, trying to touch different communities and really focus on the social cohesion element to it. We are really keen to keep maximising that as we go forward.

Michael Livingston: I will add three quick points. One is the synergies between events across sectors. I work most closely with major sporting events, but when we boost a local town or city's ability to run a sporting event, that builds the capacity in that area to deliver cultural events, ceremonial events and so on. The second is the catalyst. UK Sport did some work that found that 69% of respondents from across the events sector were more likely to do business in the UK on the back of our reputation as being a great home for major sporting events. The last thing is that these events are, in my world, rarely just sporting events



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any more; they are community events and cultural events. For example, if you are running the Commonwealth games, you will run a community festival alongside it, so it is pulling that golden thread together, as the Minister said.

Q234 Chair: You are absolutely right. We have seen the amazing work done by Liverpool city council when we had Eurovision in Liverpool, bringing the community together. It was exceptional. However, what the Committee has heard as a recurring theme is that the Department is fantastic at those one-off events—Eurovision, the jubilee and the Euros—but as a nation we have major events happening every year and, as a whole, they are worth over £68 billion to the British economy. It feels that there is not that same level of co-ordination and support for those major events and what they do for the British economy, as opposed to just the one-off events. That is what we have heard most loudly as a Committee. Minister, how do the Government view major events? To what extent do they understand the power they have to deliver on their policy aims? Do they really understand the firepower of our British events industry?

Stephanie Peacock: I think the simple answer is yes. I want to respond to the point about one-off events. I completely acknowledge the huge contribution they make, whether it be F1, Wimbledon or much smaller grassroots ones. I want to say very clearly that we do value them. If there is more that we can do in giving ongoing support, particularly co-ordination—I know that is a theme you have heard in the evidence—we are very happy to do that.

One thing I have tried to do over the past 18 months is tie together that Government co-ordination. The roundtable I referred to was attended by the DBT's Minister McDougall, and we had officials from a range of different Departments. When we hold the next one in June, I am very keen that we get ministerial attendance. Following that roundtable, we have had a number of official-led meetings and co-ordinations. Perhaps someone can come in on that in a moment. There is huge opportunity, as your inquiry heard, in the power of events to bring business into the country and showcase the country on a national stage. Jonathan, do you want to touch on the official-level co-ordination?

Jonathan Martin: We have brought together particularly those from the mayoral combined authorities, but also industry representatives, LIVE and others you have heard from already, including Liverpool, just to understand a little bit more about both what the barriers and opportunities are and how we can help facilitate that and be that kind of co-ordinating point. I think we all recognise that issue of how you get across things that I suspect you will touch on in terms of visas and risks on the security side, but also all the things we are used to doing as event owners ourselves. How do we understand and help develop that kind of taskforce to look at how we remove those barriers and make sure we can help?

Q235 Chair: You are absolutely right to identify those barriers. There are



barriers that those one-off events will have, but there are barriers that big national major events have every single year and it does not feel like the Government are pulling together to address them. The Minister mentioned some of them already. They can be diverse: everything from the Chelsea Flower Show to Glastonbury to the Grand Prix. They are very diverse sectors, but in many cases they have a common thread of problems, issues and obstacles to overcome in order to deliver and realise the potential of their event.

We have heard rumours that there is possibly a major events Bill coming up in the King's Speech, but that it is built around the UEFA Championships 2028. Is there scope for the Government to bring forward a wider-ranging major events Bill to provide the kind of underlying legislative basis for a more co-ordinated approach? Is that something that the Department has considered?

Stephanie Peacock: You obviously would not expect me to comment or announce the King's Speech ahead of it. Of course, there are precedents from the Commonwealth games and the Olympics that some provision will need primary legislation, and we will look ahead at how we meet those commitments. I was struck by the fact that in one of your evidence sessions you asked whether legislation was needed. While I am clear that we should have a strategy and bring that together within the next 12 months, the common theme is having a vision and strengthening co-ordination. It does not necessarily in broader terms need primary legislation. Of course, we are obligated, particularly ahead of Euro 2028. I do not know whether Michael wants to add anything to that point.

Michael Livingston: As the Minister says, some events, including the Euros, require us to bring forward primary legislation. Where there are gaps that the sector identifies, we will always be keen to engage with sector bodies to understand whether this is a gap that requires primary legislation. The work the Minister talked about in the roundtables, bringing people across sectors together to hear more of that and understand those challenges, is important for us going forward.

Chair: Obviously, you cannot talk about specifics in the King's Speech, but, if there were to be a legislative vehicle going through, it feels like that would be a good opportunity to add on anything else that might be required more broadly for this sector.

Q236 **Vicky Foxcroft:** How well do the Government work with the devolved institutions and local authorities?

Stephanie Peacock: I think we have a reasonably good story to tell on that. I acknowledge the evidence you heard from Scotland and the fact that both Scotland and Wales have strategies. I think we can point to a couple of different examples of major events that we will be hosting and simply could not do alone. If you take Euro 2028, back in November I chaired a meeting with the four Sports Ministers. For example, we are already talking about the legacy that will reach the whole of the United



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Kingdom. If you take something like the Tour de France, I have had a lot of work liaising with the Scottish Government. We have had events in both Edinburgh and Leeds. You can point to different examples. You heard evidence about how local mayors and leaders can provide that vision, particularly in Liverpool. There are probably specific examples from some of the events that give tangible, practical ways in which we have worked together over previous years, because there is a lot of experience in the Department in running major events here.

Jonathan Martin: Absolutely. One thing we did in COP26 back in the day was close engagement with Glasgow city council and the wider Scottish Government in maximising the benefits of that event, particularly locally, working with local partners. We have continued that in the most recent period, engaging really strongly with Liverpool in particular around the lessons learned from various parades to see what we can maximise. They have been brilliant in being so open about that; they have spoken to the Committee. We have also engaged with West Midlands and Greater Manchester, again making sure we have that tie-in. Again, Arts Everywhere is looking at how we fund particular festivals within that. In Manchester, that has funded individual areas as well as festivals. With those kinds of things, we are trying to learn what those common challenges are. I know you have already picked up that that kind of joint partnership working at a local level is critical to how you deliver these events. That will still be important for things like the Commonwealth games that are coming up.

Michael Livingston: With the devolved Governments, it is a real area of strength. The Minister engages with her opposite numbers, but we work on a daily basis with our opposite numbers at official and operational levels. Our arm's length body UK Sport works hand in hand with EventScotland, Event Wales and Tourism Northern Ireland. While some political objectives for hosting these events across different parts of the UK may vary, we agree on those shared objectives and drive towards successful delivery. The Euros, Tour de France and our bid for the FIFA world cup in 2035 are all collaborations across Governments.

Stephanie Peacock: I met with Mayor Kim McGuinness last week. I have met with mayors, and when I have been out and about doing visits I regularly meet my counterparts, often on a very practical level but also to talk about shared opportunities. When I attended the Olympics and Paralympics, there was a Sports Ministers meeting. We will host that again to coincide with the Commonwealth games. There is an obvious opportunity to tie in this engagement around those major sporting events, and we are very keen to do that across Government as well. You have probably heard that that is an area that could be improved. For example, for the women's rugby world cup in Sunderland, we had the Business Secretary in attendance for the first match. There was a business event hosted in Sunderland. I think there is a good story to tell. There is always room for improvement.



Q237 **Vicky Foxcroft:** Do you think there are lessons we could learn from the Scottish and Welsh Governments?

Stephanie Peacock: I heard the evidence they gave and I was quite struck by some of the details. They talked about their pyramid of events. There was perhaps a sense of caution. They welcomed a UK strategy perhaps, but they did not want to cut across it. That is something we hear from both the regions and nations on anything from the UK Government: they want to complement and not cut across. At official level, I do not know whether Jonathan wants to add anything. There is a lot of ongoing day-to-day working between officials at both levels.

Jonathan Martin: Again, it is about trying to make sure we have understood their understanding of the barriers and thinking about how we can make a wide response to some of those. We all have shared challenges around stewarding and other things that came up in evidence in this Committee. The point is that we do not want to turn up and tell them what they should do, or vice versa. It is about how we let this grow organically, share that knowledge and be that kind of co-ordinating function to ensure we have learned from them and, similarly, where events are held across the country, that we are able to do the same.

Q238 **Vicky Foxcroft:** We know that in terms of creative industries more widely we have a deficit of working-class participation. Major events are one of the really big opportunities to showcase stuff. Do you ensure that the voices of working-class people are a part of major event strategy planning? Far too often, we find their voices are not involved in stuff.

Stephanie Peacock: That is an important question and resonates with me as MP for Barnsley South. It is something I think about often. I can give some clear examples of where legacy planning starts from the outset and we think about how we can get as many people involved as possible. I went to the figure skating in Sheffield and met some of the young volunteers from across the city who were taking part in that major event and building skills. I think volunteering can be a huge opportunity. There are probably some examples you can give where, over the years, you tie in volunteering to opportunities to jobs and skills. It is really important. There are tangible examples where we get people involved, but it is very important to me that it is not just a certain part of society; it is every part of society.

Michael Livingston: I can offer a few examples. We hosted the groundbreaking 2021 Rugby League world cup, which was moved to 2022. That reached parts of communities, particularly across the north of England where Rugby League is the heart of the community. It reached people of all backgrounds, and the impact programme that ran alongside the world cup was particularly focused on reaching people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The Minister referred to the jobs and skills programme in Birmingham in 2022. That was volunteering not for the sake of it but to open up a route into employment for people who might not otherwise have those opportunities. Obviously, what the Department



and Secretary of State really champion is taking our City of Culture model, which reaches people of all backgrounds, and launching the Town of Culture programme. That will ultimately reach towns where the demographic class background will be different and lower.

Stephanie Peacock: We have had huge interest in the Town of Culture programme, as I am sure you are aware. We have had more than 400 applicants. That is incredibly welcome. One recommendation of the predecessor Committee was to give that money up front for the City of Culture, which has been done. I referenced the fact that we are hosting the world's biggest sporting event in the form of the Tour de France and Tour de France Femmes. That is one of the most accessible major sporting events. I think it is within an hour's drive of 60% of the population. Of course, people can come to the end of their street, cheer and get involved. I saw in my own constituency in Barnsley back in 2018 and 2024 how much young people got involved with their schools and community groups. There is huge opportunity and I am really committed to it. If the Committee has any ideas about how we can make it more accessible to everybody, I am really open to that. It is something I care about very passionately.

Q239 **Vicky Foxcroft:** It could be that we end up making a recommendation. While volunteering is good, not everybody can afford to take up those volunteering opportunities. It is quite important to make sure those voices are at the heart of the planning in organising major events.

Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge that point.

Q240 **Mr Alaba:** We met Nick Bitel, representing the Major Event Organisers Association. He mentioned that for a lot of organisations working on Euro 2024 things were seamless across multiple nations, but with the UK they had to work with every single Government Department so it multiplied their efforts. Do you accept that this creates difficulties for organisations wanting to operate in the UK?

Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge that up front. You heard from him in particular but also a number of witnesses about better co-ordination, better access and being a clear front door into Government. That is something I am committed to improving. At the start of this year, the Department began more work on that. In a second, I will hand over to Jonathan to share some of the detail on that, but that was the driving force behind my organising the roundtable. I think that in evidence you had reference to the short-lived Sports Council, launched in 2017. As tempting as it was to give my roundtable a name ahead of appearing in front of you, I do not want to do that because I want it to be constructive; I want people to come together, in terms of industry and Government. I think DCMS has a good story to tell in working across Government, but clearly from the evidence you heard that is not quite cutting through. We need to improve that. Perhaps Jonathan can give some examples of how we have worked across Government fairly effectively.



Jonathan Martin: I think that is a bit about taking what we have learned from having delivered some of these events. I worked closely with all those Departments to ensure that that event gets delivered. We are now looking to broaden that so we can understand what the industry concerns are, bring them in and have that kind of roundtable, as the Minister said, and start to hear some of those constant and consistent challenges. We obviously already have good engagement. I candidly ask for visas to be fast-tracked and various other things. I know and engage with those different bits of Government regularly. It is about how we broaden that to make sure it is a more sustainable point for not just those one-off events but more regular industry engagement, so we can start to build that. It is not a quick fix in that space, but one thing we are looking at is how we evaluate major events and demonstrate the economic benefits. We will start by publishing our own evaluations of individual events and work with industry to see how we build that clear narrative about the financial and social benefits that events can bring across the country. We are starting to build those sorts of things through engagement.

Q241 **Mr Alaba:** Michael, I will come to you in a second, but you are right. We are talking about £69 billion, which is what it is worth. Minister, you talked about social cohesion, growth and showcasing the best of the country. How do we get all the Departments around the table? How do we get them to understand that this is the way we want to go and that we want to have a much more seamless way for international organisations to work with us?

Stephanie Peacock: I think we started that with the convening work I have done across Government in the past few months; indeed, I will do it again before recess. There are some specific examples the Department can point to where we have worked with other Departments. For example, Minister McDougall from the Business Department attended that roundtable; we had officials from a number of different Departments. I am keen for greater ministerial attendance at future ones, because I want to respond to the points I have heard, from not just the Committee's inquiry but also my day-to-day working with the sector.

Michael Livingston: As Jonathan and the Minister said, for the one-off events we absolutely do pull people together. We are pushing at an open door, whether it is the events team in the Home Office that deals with visas and security, the protocol department in the Foreign Office, or the trade teams within DBT. We engage and try to make the most of these opportunities. We would want to maximise that and go further. I definitely empathise with Nick in his experience in 2021 with covid restrictions. It was challenging, but we learned lessons from that and continue to learn those lessons. On the Chair's point about whether we could do this for more recurrent events, not just the big one-offs, we acknowledge that. That is why the work the Minister is leading to embed that on a more ongoing basis to maximise those opportunities is so important.



Q242 **Mr Alaba:** At a Government level, I understand that. Flipping that case around, how do an organiser and operator know? What plans do you have to communicate with them on how they plan their events here?

Stephanie Peacock: That is a really good question. Communication is quite a challenge, and the Committee will presumably go on to talk about some of the specific challenges. How Government communicates could be improved. I am very happy to do more engagement. When I talk about cross-Government engagement, I am very happy to convene that with the sector. I can point to different examples in different parts of my brief, but if we are to have more streamlined engagement and a single front door, we need to think about exactly how we put that to industry.

Jonathan Martin: Some of those roundtables have those kinds of industry representative bodies. We want to make sure that we can plug into and then be able to share that. Obviously, there is existing guidance and other things like the Purple Guide, which you will have heard about, that goes out, to make sure we understand what best-in-class looks like.

There is a question then about how we maximise that in terms of thinking about the international trade elements and pulling all those things together. We are still at the start of that process. I am not going to claim that we are finalising it, but there is an awful lot of just making sure we have engaged with those industry association bodies really clearly—you have heard a lot of their evidence so far—to understand how we can advocate for and work with them to try to improve and make it a bit easier across Departments. I think we accept that we must make sure we have a seamless link through, so that you understand when you come in who you are going to. We can do some of that co-ordination for them. We cannot do it for everything, but it is certainly important we improve that seamless approach. As I said before, I have a vested interest in that. I run various events so, candidly, I want that slickness there.

Q243 **Chair:** Minister, you spoke about a single front door. Do you think DCMS as a Department has enough clout to be able to provide that, bring other Government Departments to the table and make sure they streamline the process as much as they can? Should responsibility fall on a more co-ordinating Department? Should it be the Cabinet Office, for example?

Stephanie Peacock: I think the short answer is yes. It has been acknowledged by a number of the witnesses you have heard that DCMS has huge expertise. The two officials with me today have years of experience of lots of different major events. I noted the different ratings that your witnesses gave for different Departments. I will feed that back to my colleagues, and perhaps have done so already, but there was generally positive feedback to DCMS as a Department. Clearly, there are other challenges with other Departments. That is what I am working to improve in terms of that co-ordinating body. As I say, business Department officials were in attendance.



Clearly, when we talk about ceremonial and state events, there is perhaps more of a role. Indeed, we work closely with the Cabinet Office on some of that work with some of that collective memory. I think the Department has a collective memory and can learn lessons. For example, from the previous question, I was proud to lead VE/VJ Day. Following the ceremonial event, we had all the outreach bringing people together. I made sure we had a meeting of officials to look at the lessons learned and, while the departmental team disbands into other things, how we can remember that, because when we come to the next significant VE/VJ Day, the 85th anniversary, it will likely be just before or after a general election. It is quite important that we embed that memory. What were the collective challenges? How did we make sure we delivered a successful and fitting memorial? What did we do in terms of community learning? For something like that, clearly it would work with the Cabinet Office and others, but there is a lot of expertise in DCMS as a Department.

Q244 Anneliese Midgley: Good morning and thank you all for coming in. Continuing from the Chair's question there, Steph, you talked about co-ordination in an earlier question, and, Jonathan, you spoke about working across Government as well. I am keen to understand in a bit more detail how that works and how you feel that is going given what the Chair said about the clout that the Department is seen to have across Government.

Stephanie Peacock: We have made some progress. The convening role that I played and the group that we brought together to talk about major events—both the shared challenges and the opportunities—with a number of different Government Departments have been welcomed. We of course have ongoing discussions with ministerial colleagues. I met with the Home Office Minister to talk about some of the questions that you will have and some of the points that I heard from the sector as well. There is a lot of official-level working. There is a particular meeting about to take place on visas and how that works across Government. I have individual meetings with Ministers and indeed, to the earlier question, around the nations and regions. I acknowledge that, clearly, more can be done, and that has been heard in the evidence you have heard. One example is the Farnborough International Airshow and the fact that the timely response to invitations and ministerial commitment is a natural challenge of government. Having heard that evidence, I reached out and am told that the Transport Minister will attend. It is a fair point, but there is a good story to tell.

Jonathan Martin: I have pretty much weekly chats with my opposite numbers in the Cabinet Office in particular, and we are very joined at the hip, not just on this but on planning for a multitude of different major events, as you might be aware. There is that backstop when we have needed it if we do have challenges, and it is the Cabinet Office role to do some of that multi-departmental brokerage if there is a kind of challenge. We work really closely with it to make sure we understand both what events are coming up and how, particularly in terms of ownership, that is



divvied out between Departments. We ensure that we have that clearer sense. We are committed to working with it. For some of the major events that I led, it might well be a Cabinet Office Minister who chaired some of the ministerial meetings, but it was very much us leading the delivery arm of that, and that worked pretty seamlessly over the last few years. That does not take away from our role to help co-ordinate that, but just adds the extra layer of support as well.

Q245 Anneliese Midgley: What would be the ideal way of working? Is the way it works at the moment the best way? Given that you have all been in the role and, Steph, you have been the Minister for some time now, do you think that there could be a different or better way of working? This is not just about DCMS; it is about other Government Departments as well.

Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge that it could be improved.

Q246 Anneliese Midgley: So the system is right; it is just that it could be—

Stephanie Peacock: There is a fair point that you have heard from a number of witnesses about the fact that we are world-leading in what we do but we could do more and better if we really engaged with the golden thread and had this UK-wide strategy, a clear vision and better co-ordination. There are some examples of where we are doing a good job on that. As I pointed out, eight out of 10 recommendations from the predecessor Committee were met. It is a challenge to work across Government, full stop, outside this space on any topic. This is clearly an area where the Government as a whole have so much to benefit and there is such an impact for the country that we are in a good place to pull people together.

Q247 Anneliese Midgley: Thanks. I will bring up a specific example. We had Adrian Lambert in from the Hay Festival. This is the National Year of Reading, and they were doing a big announcement on it there. He said that they had no communication with the Department for Education on that. What do you think of that? Is that an opportunity missed?

Stephanie Peacock: Yes, that is obviously disappointing. There is no point dressing it up, is there? That is the sort of thing we want to improve. There is a wider communication point. If we are going to be the front door to Government and people say, "Come to DCMS," if you are doing a particular event of whatever description or colour, we need to make sure we communicate that. I announced the intention of a strategy today. I want to do that in the next 12 months, and it is points like that that really need to be taken into consideration.

Q248 Anneliese Midgley: How would you make sure that those opportunities are not missed in the future, going back and having that learning?

Stephanie Peacock: It is having that forward look at what opportunities are coming up. It is having that regular and embedded ongoing engagement across Government. I have not formalised the roundtable that I talked about in January that I intend on convening in June, but I



am very willing to do so as we look to publish the strategy. The point that you make is very fair and we will take it into consideration.

Jonathan Martin: It is worth saying that we are effectively pivoting from that event-to-event approach to a more systemic approach. Our individual sector teams within DCMS will have engaged on the cultural side. It is how you then pull that into a more cross-cutting team. It is about how you can maximise the impact and benefits, and connect with the other Departments. We have those links within the major events world, so we can go and talk to people. We did some great work with DFE around both the coronation and VE Day recently. It is trying to make sure that we have those connections and can use them, in order to say that there are broader benefits.

Michael Livingston: I will build on that. There are great examples of trying to engage the Department for Transport in the Tour de France, and the opportunity that brings with active travel, and trying to engage the Home Office on positive male role models around the Euros, because football will cut through to different audiences. Those Departments are really keen to seize those opportunities. At any given moment, DFE is focused on its work with schools. I do not think it is that, when confronted with an opportunity, Departments do not want to engage. We recognise Government is sometimes slightly impervious from the outside, and we want to improve on being that portal in and facilitating those opportunities.

Q249 **Anneliese Midgley:** Do you think that things like the Hay Festival, the National Year of Reading and the Tour de France, as you talked about, can be seen as a bit of a “nice to have” rather than “this is essential”, so slip a bit down the to-do priority list for other Departments?

Stephanie Peacock: That is why DCMS is best placed to lead on it, because it is what we do day in, day out, and what we have, effectively, the skillset and the collective experience on. I would not say that it is a “nice to do” when I speak to ministerial colleagues. I gave the example of the women’s rugby world cup where we had the then Business Secretary, the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, who was there in Sunderland hosting an event with business. I can point to different examples of ministerial engagement. I very much acknowledge that we can make that more systemic and ongoing, and a matter of course, not the exception.

Q250 **Anneliese Midgley:** Okay. A final thing from me to the officials. How do you manage the resources of the Department to make sure that the surge impact of major events does not detract from other priorities?

Jonathan Martin: It is a very good question. It depends on what the event is. Where it is an immediate reactive event, as we saw with the late Queen’s funeral, obviously a lot of Government business ceases at that point, so the ability to pull people in and rapidly expand our response to it is really important. A big part of what we do is to make sure we have people to come in who understand what their role would be, because we



do not want to throw people in at the deep end without some form of engagement and training beforehand. One thing that my directorate does a lot is grow and shrink quite a bit in terms of bringing in people on short-term loans and other things. Once we know that there is a major event—say, something like the coronation—we can build in a much bigger team, pulling in expertise that has grown across Government, particularly in the last five years, in order to support that and grow the cadre of people who have that experience of major events and can continue to sustain it.

One thing that we are really keen to do is make sure that we continue that model so that people have a really good training set when they come in—it is slightly more specialist; a mixture, I always say, of project delivery and crisis management within that space—and make sure that people have that clear understanding. That flexibility to be able to shift people around is something that we do quite a lot of. It is something that we have a good track record of, and we have a great cadre of people who have been through that process. We are keen to make sure that we can sustain that going forward, and look at what those core skills are. We have a kit of parts, as we call it. If you are setting up a new major events project, it is how you have a starting point for what sorts of things you need to do about concept of operations, partnership working or some of those experiences that I talked about in terms of how we do really broad engagement, candidly, for not huge amounts of money. That is the point around that cross-Whitehall piece. It is quite difficult where you go and ask for really large chunks of money. If you say that there is a good chance to broaden engagement through some relatively small things that can make a really big difference, particularly outside London, that is important.

Q251 **Chair:** When an event happens unexpectedly—say, England did unexpectedly well in a global tournament—is it clear who should pick up the tab?

Michael Livingston: To use your example, that is something that we would not want to come upon us as if we had not planned for it. We obviously look at what is on the horizon and plan for different contingencies. The way that that has historically worked is working really closely together with the sporting body in that case, the local authorities where events might take place, and central Government. It would be the Government's objective for costs to be shared as well as planning and delivery responsibility between those partners. Exactly how it works will vary from event to event. It is not something that we wait for the moment to start planning for.

Q252 **Chair:** It is hashed out in advance and you work out who will bear what percentage of the cost in advance.

Michael Livingston: Ideally, yes.



Stephanie Peacock: Yes. I will share an example. At the women's rugby world cup, which we hosted last year, I convened a meeting ahead of the tournament to talk about different issues and challenges. One at the time was a possible hosepipe ban in certain parts of the country with training areas, which was a real issue. We talked about that. We reached across Government to deal with that. As part of that meeting, we also spoke about the celebration event, if and when it came to fruition. There was discussion and planning around the event that took place at Battersea Power Station. We horizon scan, look at what might happen and how we might do it, and have those conversations across Government on responsibility and cost.

Q253 **Chair:** There is probably a feeling among sportswomen that, had the men won the world cup or the Euros, the celebrations would have been significantly more expensive. Can I ask you about your roundtable? You spoke about the roundtable in January and another one that you are planning on having later in the year. Which major events are represented at those roundtables?

Stephanie Peacock: It was quite a big event, and we had Government Departments, Minister McDougall, and different regions represented. We had the lady who gave evidence to you from Liverpool—Claire. We had different UK events, the military tattoo and the Royal Horticultural Society¹. We also had arm's length bodies that I engage with regularly, such as UK Sport. It was the first roundtable. We tried to get a balance between both sport and cultural representation, as well as some regional representation. From memory, we had, as I said, representation from Liverpool as well as from Manchester. I am very open to that being not a set cast list and am keen to have greater ministerial engagement.

Q254 **Dr Huq:** I want to ask about the effect of regulation on the sector. With the Government engagement that you have with major event organisers, do you think that you give adequate consideration to the cumulative impact of recent legislation on the sector? We heard stuff about employment rights, which is an obvious one, Martyn's law on terrorism provisions, rising compliance costs, security legislation, and all those sorts of things. How often do you speak to them about those kinds of things?

Stephanie Peacock: There are ongoing conversations across Government with my ministerial colleagues, and I am aware that the Committee has taken evidence and heard examples about legislation that is owned by the Home Office as well as some that is led by the Department of Health and Social Care. There is the Employment Rights Act. We work really closely with the Home Office, whether it be on policing costs or Martyn's law. Officials liaised with the Home Office. I met with the Policing Minister, who has engaged with the sector and held

¹ Correction by witness: the Minister intended to say "We had member association representatives of different UK events like the Military Tattoo and the Royal Horticultural Society."



three roundtables to hear its concerns directly. There was a targeted consultation when it comes to policing costs, and with Martyn's law there is 12 months to implementation. As the DCMS, we want to engage with the sector to make sure that there is clear, concise and simple guidance. I acknowledge the point that has been put to the Committee by a number of different witnesses about the cumulative impact of different pieces of legislation.

Q255 Dr Huq: You have to have a CQC-qualified health professional on site. Some of these things are being seen as burdensome.

Stephanie Peacock: It is very clearly and openly acknowledged by a number of your witnesses and by the sector that we want our events to be safe and secure, and the shared aim behind those pieces of legislation is widely accepted. On the point about the CQC, which the Chair put to me as an oral question and we have spoken about subsequently, I reached out to the Health Department to meet the relevant Minister. It is a health lead. On that particular point, there is a question about communication and guidance. I know that the Department of Health and Social Care made a commitment on the Floor of the House on 15 April to make sure that that guidance is clear and that the sector at every level understands what is expected of them.

Q256 Dr Huq: I know you talked about the roundtables. Jonathan Martin, you said that you speak to the Cabinet Office all the time. Can you give some examples of how often you speak to ministerial counterparts in other Departments? I guess it needs to be pre-legislative so that you can spot things coming. In the evidence we have had, we have been told the Treasury is particularly bad.

Stephanie Peacock: I have some examples. I met with the Policing Minister to talk about a number of the different policies that fall to the Home Office. I do that on an ongoing basis. When I lead on tourism, I have done a number of sector engagements with the Treasury and Minister Tomlinson. As I said earlier, I note the feedback that your different witnesses have given to different Departments, and that is taken on board. I work closely with ministerial colleagues across Government to raise concerns and to reflect the issues that the sector puts to me. When we are organising major events or co-ordinating them, there will be ongoing dialogue and discussion. I don't know whether my fellow witnesses want to share any examples of how that works. They touched on some already.

Michael Livingston: At event time, we would always look to arrange for the Minister to bring together all the Ministers who have accountability for delivery to provide assurance before the event goes live. On the issues that you referred to there, the natural way of these things is that we will engage at official level first, at working level, at senior official level with Jon and me and colleagues representing other DCMS sectors, and look to make sure that our sectors' voices are heard in those conversations. I am sure if you speak to the Home Office, it will confirm that that that is the



case. We will escalate it so that, when both the Minister here today and other DCMS Ministers have those bilaterals with others, they raise these issues at the right time. We have that escalation. The conversations happen. It is part of our role to represent our sectors' views to others in Government who may not have the same structures in place to engage as readily with DCMS sector organisations.

Jonathan Martin: I will add a particular example around Martyn's law. We engaged with the Home Office to try to get a bit of input into the guidance that it recently put out. We are committed to continuing to work with our sectors. We have a hugely broad range of venues that it might cover. You can understand that there is a lot of complexity in terms of what is or is not covered by bits of Martyn's law that keeps coming up. We are working with them—you heard today of parkruns and other things as well that come up—to make sure that we have that shared understanding. The intention of the legislation is not to be overly burdensome but to give a genuine sense of how you evacuate people and the training that you have—all those things that as an event owner I would be really keen to have in my event. It is making sure that what you do not get out there is uncertainty. Am I or am I not covered? What am I doing? How am I doing it? There is something around continuing that engagement, trying to work through the individual cases as they come up to make sure that we have a clear, simple response about what you expect from it. That goes for any bit of legislation where it spreads out across different sectors and different organisations.

Q257 **Dr Huq:** I guess it is unintended consequences. Obviously, employment rights legislation is a good thing, but for those ad hoc one-off things the contractual relationship is going to be more difficult.

Jonathan Martin: What you see in the events industry, a bit like with TV and film, is lots of people moving between events on short-term contracts, so I can understand why that employment rights process is important. They live and breathe on their reputation of how they have done different events. If I am running a major event and somebody is sick, I definitely do not want them to turn up just because they feel they have to, to get paid. There is something around making sure that we have the resilience to be able to fill any post that for whatever reason somebody cannot do, and to enable those people who move from event to event to have that consistent support framework to be able to operate. That feels logical to me in terms of how you get really good people wanting to do events—there is a fantastic array of talent—and how you keep those people engaged and supported.

Q258 **Dr Huq:** The last category of event that I want to ask you about is the non-static ones. This is things like the golf Open or the London Marathon, which we all saw over the weekend. Nick Bitel said to us that "it is sometimes difficult to see the Government's understanding of those". They are slightly different from your standard event; they even move location. What would you say to that?



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Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge the huge contribution that they make. I was pleased to volunteer at the London Marathon this Sunday, thanks to the Parliamentary Knowledge Foundation. Along with colleagues, I spent a couple of hours giving out medals, which was a hugely humbling experience. Having run the marathon a few years ago, I remember what it felt like to cross the finish line. It is the world's biggest participatory sporting event. It raises a huge amount of money for good causes. It is hugely important not just for the country but also for the City of London. I absolutely acknowledge the contribution that things like the London Marathon make. In terms of the kind of practical co-ordination of the organisation of that, do you want to add anything on that, Jonathan?

Jonathan Martin: In those events that have a really wide footprint, we have that engagement. We are used to dealing with some of that in terms of a large ceremonial footprint, which is a very similar one. We have a very strong relationship with the Royal Parks and others where the end point of the London Marathon tends to be, and how we understand what that means in terms of the stewarding requirements and all those other things about the health of that industry and how you support that.

Q259 **Dr Huq:** Is there any truth to the rumour that it will be expanded to two days next year?

Stephanie Peacock: That would be a question for the London Marathon.

Dr Huq: As a London MP, I would say yes to that.

Stephanie Peacock: Noted.

Q260 **Jeff Smith:** If we step outside the perimeter of some of the big events that we have into what has become known as Zone Ex, which is a concept that lots of people understand but there is not really a common definition, do the Government have a definition of Zone Ex? If not, should they?

Stephanie Peacock: I was struck by the evidence that was given. I have had conversations with Home Office Ministers on this. The key point is that one size does not fit all. I appreciate that more than one witness said that it depends on what the event is. That is why it is important for it to be event-specific; it will depend on where the venue and the transport hub are. I appreciate the challenges around that, and I think the Home Office does as well, from the conversations that I have had. Michael, do you want to give any examples of where we have worked on that?

Michael Livingston: Jon may come in as well. In terms of sports grounds, the SGSA in its Green Guide sets out understandings and expectations on organisers, and how they should work together with the local area. Our consistent view is that with these things it is really important that they are locally led and that there is local understanding, because what Zone Ex is for one venue and one type of event such as



those types we just heard about is a very different event footprint from what it would be if it was in one stadium. It will vary, so it is important that those local experts have a shared understanding. It would not be for us in Whitehall to define what it is for every single event or venue across the country. We need to have confidence in a system that local stakeholders running events can come to a shared view of what Zone Ex is in each individual place.

Jonathan Martin: If you look at what the Green Guide from the SGSA has said, which is echoed in the Purple Guide, there is the sense that it is from your main point of access to the venue. We do not want to be overly prescriptive of that because there is a huge amount of variety. For something like the coronation, you have multiple tube stations where you would expect people to be coming into it. How wide you go with that needs to be a conversation with, in that particular case, Westminster council and other boroughs, with the police, Transport for London, Network Rail and those kinds of areas, to make sure that we have that balance right. That principle of saying, "How do you get to and from the venue?" is effectively what that Zone Ex covers.

Q261 **Jeff Smith:** I can certainly see how that ambiguity would be helpful in being able to make events locally led. We heard from some parts of the sector that think it is in the "too difficult" box and a definition would be helpful. In terms of responsibilities for local authorities, the discussions around funding for the police and that sort of thing, will you be prepared to work with the sector to come to a slightly more shared understanding of what Zone Ex will be and how it operates?

Stephanie Peacock: Is there a differing understanding of what it is, or is there a debate on how it is policed and how that is funded? When we talk about different events, Zone Ex will be different for different things, as in the examples given. We work with the Home Office, which I know is actively engaged on this issue. Those are conversations I have had with the Policing Minister.

Q262 **Jeff Smith:** Okay. Moving on to policing and funding, will the Government have the consultation on possible changes to how special police services are charged to events? Where are they up to on that?

Stephanie Peacock: There was a targeted consultation. It is a matter for the Home Office. When I met with the Policing Minister, she shared her experience of having three roundtables with the sector. They were co-ordinated along with DCMS. Her words to me were recognising that it needs to be proportionate and reasonable. Having had many conversations with the sector, I acknowledge—I see this as a constituency MP—the pressure on the police. I also want to make sure that our world-leading major events and sporting events are able to deliver what they do best. Michael, do you want to add anything on policing?



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Michael Livingston: The Home Office's position is that no final decision has been taken. Our role is very much to ensure that the views of our sectors and the potential implications for the events, that they need to be run safely and successfully into the future, are taken on board before decisions are taken.

Q263 **Jeff Smith:** Do you see yourselves as the voice of the sector in this negotiation? You seem reluctant to agree, but I think that is fine.

Stephanie Peacock: No, I am not reluctant to agree. I have met with the sector a number of times over the last 18 months, and I am very aware of its concerns on this issue. As I say, I acknowledge and understand the pressures on policing. Particularly over the last 15 years I have seen that, as I say, in my own constituency. We acknowledge the cost particularly of football policing. It is about £70 million per year. I understand the point from both sides. The Home Office is very clear that it should be both proportionate and reasonable. Of course, it is a matter for the Policing Minister. We work closely with her. She was not able to appear today, but I am sure she would be willing to write to the Committee.

Q264 **Jeff Smith:** Do you work closely enough with her to give us an idea of when we might expect some further progress?

Stephanie Peacock: In civil service terms, we would say the summer. I will reflect the comments of the Committee to the Policing Minister, and I will ask her to write to the Committee.

Q265 **Jeff Smith:** Okay, that is helpful. In terms of possible extra challenges, we heard from a number of organisations that they would be concerned, and they are bodies like the LTA in this sector. What about non-profit events where there is not a lot of money being brought in to pay for police charges? Have you had any discussions on how they might be affected?

Stephanie Peacock: My understanding is that, as part of the Policing Minister's engagement with the sector, she has spoken to a range of different organisations, including those. I will clarify that point to make sure that is accurate. Michael, I do not know whether you want to add anything in terms of the wide discussion that we have with the sector.

Jonathan Martin: There is a lot. For example, within the football world you would have the risk assessment of what the match will look like. In my experience, having worked on a police force, you would do the same for a wide variety of events. The police are understandably quite sympathetic to those that have voluntary and community angles. Candidly, they tend to be lower risk in terms of the crowd behaviours piece, and that is always what you are looking at when you are assessing risk associated with a particular event. Historically, the police have been less keen to charge for those things. I am not saying they would not or could not, but there is a genuine understanding of saying you follow where the risk is, the primary risk of where crowds may be challenging



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and how you manage that to make sure that you have the right facilities in place to be able to successfully manage that.

Q266 Natasha Irons: We will move on to safety advisory groups. We heard evidence from Nick Bitel about the patchwork of inconsistency and the confusion that was causing within the sector. He gave a quite interesting example. He said, "We see very, very different security advice on events where we think that they are at the same level, but in one place we will be told we have to have full barriers and for an event on exactly the same footprint, we are being told that we do not have to." What work are the Government doing to improve consistency of safety advisory groups in relation to their expertise, timing and interpretation of risk?

Stephanie Peacock: I was really struck by the evidence that he gave. I listened to that session that the Committee held. He talked through the history of them, how they emerged from Hillsborough, particularly around football, and the acknowledgment that there is benefit for all major events. Clearly, it is a concern that, over the last just under 40 years since they emerged, there have been organic changes in some of the issues they deal with. That inconsistency clearly is of concern. There are two pieces of work to point to: the UK Resilience Academy review on training for chairs and the HMIC review on the thematic issues facing SAGs in general. Those two reports will publish and come back in the summer. It is an issue that falls across Government. It is something that I discussed with the Home Office. I am keen to see the outcome of those reviews. As a Government collectively, we need to respond to that. Michael, I do not know whether you want to give any detail on that.

Jonathan Martin: I work with SAGs quite regularly in terms of event delivery, and I find they are a really crucial part of understanding the local context. In particular, when it comes to things like road closures, they understand the geography much better. When we are doing major events, we have a SAG, but I also would have a group above it looking at how we would resolve any issues that come out of that meeting in order to minimise those risks. There is a bit of that structure for really big Government-led events. The important thing is to be proportionate about how you approach it. That local-level understanding is crucial to get the right structures in place.

Q267 Natasha Irons: Is there an argument for the Government to put in place or propose national standards for good practice and a framework for SAGs?

Stephanie Peacock: I would be very interested to see the outcome of these two reviews. I am not ruling that out. It is a policy area that falls across Government. We have an interest, as do the Home Office and Cabinet Office. There clearly is a concern shared by industry and by the witnesses from whom you have heard about those inconsistencies. There was also an overwhelming acceptance that SAGs are a good thing; getting people in a room to talk about safety and security is welcome. Being locally led often is much better placed because they will know the



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issues that are likely to come up. One witness said whoever sits on them should add value and have something to contribute, and that will potentially differ in different parts of the country. Where they give significantly different advice and outcomes, that is of course a concern. I am not saying no, but I am keen to understand the outcomes, as I am sure other Departments are, of those two reviews.

Q268 Natasha Irons: Finally, one of our witnesses said that they did not want the Maccabi Tel Aviv affair last year to lead to throwing the baby out with the bathwater when it came to SAGs. As the Minister responsible for major events, have you had any conversations about changes to the system in general off the back of that?

Stephanie Peacock: We would all agree with that. Of course, there were mistakes made and lessons need to be learned, and that is really important, but as I said just now, they are inherently a good thing. I discuss the issue across Government. I have spoken to the Home Office about it, and we have agreed very clearly that following those two reviews we need to collectively come together as a Government and take a decision about whether changes are needed.

Q269 Jo Platt: The new National Licensing Policy Framework reshapes how licensing is applied. Are you confident that the framework will improve consistency in things like event caps, operating hours and safety conditions between councils?

Stephanie Peacock: I hope I am not mischaracterising the theme of the evidence that the witnesses gave, but I think it was broadly welcomed, and that has been my experience when talking to the sector. The basic aim behind it was to remove barriers at all different levels. Through that taskforce, the Government accepted the recommendations. I believe there is also a pilot taking place in London. We want things to be clearer and more flexible. Jonathan, do you want to add anything more specific to that?

Jonathan Martin: I sat through a licensing hearing for the coronation in Westminster. The need to present your case and have a clear understanding of the event you are doing and how you make that understood and easier for people to navigate is good, but we do not want to fundamentally shift that process.

Q270 Jo Platt: You said it is broadly welcomed. Jon Collins, chief exec of LIVE, told us he is optimistic that the NLPF will help to deliver more consistency, but it is only to be noted at the minute. He thinks that it might need more teeth. Sorry to break that to you. Do you think it has enough teeth to operate effectively as it is?

Stephanie Peacock: That is a very fair point. From my engagement with the sector, it has been welcomed. The Government accepted the recommendations, but I appreciate the points being made. If there are specific things they think that the Government should do more, and



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indeed across Government, I am happy to take away those recommendations.

Jonathan Martin: We would agree. As you introduce anything, there is always the fear of whether it has enough teeth until you see what it actually ends up in. There is something about where we could support more.

Q271 **Jo Platt:** To pose another point, is there not a risk that it becomes a postcode lottery, where different authorities do things differently, because it is guidance and not mandatory?

Stephanie Peacock: We probably need to keep that under review. I pointed to the pilot taking place in London. There is that balance between giving power to local areas and letting them do it in the best way that suits them, which can sometimes lead to some doing it better than others. It is an area where I am very keen to see how it rolls out. If it needs more teeth, I am happy to take that away.

Q272 **Jo Platt:** Have you made any representations to the Department of Business and Trade about the impact of the framework on sporting events?

Stephanie Peacock: We speak regularly to the Business Department. I have pointed out that Minister McDougall has been engaged in a lot of ongoing discussions.

Michael Livingston: We engage where individual events have licensing applications, etc, and obviously liaise with our colleagues across Government on that on a case-by-case basis. That goes to your point. Currently, there is inconsistency. Vested interests in one council area versus another may lead to a different licensing decision on event cases and applications that might ostensibly be the same. That is where the framework should help. Yes, it is guidance, but it should bring greater consistency and understanding across the system, and help communities and the nation to run these things more consistently.

Q273 **Liz Jarvis:** Good morning to you. Eastleigh is one of the towns competing for Town of Culture, and I am very proud of that. Thinking about competitiveness, given how important major events are to our economy and growth, is it not incredibly disappointing that the UK is ranked 113th out of 119 countries for price competitiveness for travel and tourism?

Stephanie Peacock: I do appreciate that there are pressures on the sector. I am not familiar with those figures. I have engaged with the tourism sector a lot in the six months that I have been the Tourism Minister. I appreciate the cumulative pressures on the sector. I heard that at first hand. Talking of cross-Government working, I have met with the Treasury. My predecessor as the Tourism Minister announced the ambition for a tourism and visitor economy growth strategy. I will be publishing that later in the year. I acknowledge the challenges. Of course,



they are reflective of the wider economic challenges. As a Government, we want to do what we can to support the industry.

Q274 **Liz Jarvis:** There is obviously an impact on local communities, which is incredibly important. It would be good to see some sort of plan of action to make this happen.

Stephanie Peacock: Yes, of course, it is really important to communities. A few weeks ago, I was in Devon and Cornwall, areas that are particularly affected and benefit from tourism. You mentioned the Town of Culture. Representing Barnsley, I am very aware of the particular challenges where towns are concerned. Where we have this ambition to attract more people to the UK, we really want to make sure that they stay longer and travel further. There is a synergy. We have seen that through some of the advertising campaigns, with a great campaign using film and television to attract people to the length and breadth of the UK. I can share an example. I was in Glasgow for the Commonwealth Sport Coordination Commission dinner in August, and I talked to a gentleman from Australia who had come across the year before to the Olympics. Because he was such a big fan of Shetland and he had seen the advert, he travelled across to Shetland simply to see it. That is just one small example. There is certainly much more we can do in terms of advertising and showcasing the UK.

Michael Livingston: The point is that securing these events, particularly in sport where there is often a bidding process, is an increasingly competitive field. Certain regions or nations now are very deliberate about trying to secure events, in the way that we have over the past 15 or 16 years. Staying at the forefront is really difficult. It is telling that we still secure these events. The UK Sport work that I referred to still refers to the UK as being good or excellent. The majority of rights holders said we are a good or excellent place to host events. They know it might be a bit more expensive here than in some countries, but people still want to host their events here because of our world-leading reputation and the infrastructure that we have in place. That does not diminish the cost implications for those delivering events or attendees. That is where what we already have in place to deliver them successfully means we still have that latent appeal.

Q275 **Liz Jarvis:** What is the Government's plan to ensure the UK has a competitive offer to continue to host major international sporting, cultural and business events?

Stephanie Peacock: It is everything that we talked about this morning. I am committed, in the next 12 months, to a clear UK strategy. All the different examples I have given from cultural investment—I am not the Arts Minister, but it is my Department—to the sporting pipeline, which is very exciting, is a vote of confidence in the UK. We have individual strategies for different sectors. We acknowledge they have different challenges, but there are also shared opportunities. We want to tie that together. We have acknowledged there are areas where we do it really



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well, but there are also areas that we recognise can be improved such as the particular point around communication and co-ordination.

Q276 Liz Jarvis: One witness told us that an event decided to move from the UK to Barcelona last year, citing the reasons as mainly Brexit bureaucracy and that it was too difficult and expensive. We have heard a lot about red tape and the impact on cultural touring and so on. What are the Government doing to address these concerns?

Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge those points. I know you took evidence on business events, and that particular example was shared at the roundtable that I hosted. In my role as Tourism Minister, I opened the World Travel Market, attended for the whole day and did a number of different engagements there. We also hosted an event at the Cabinet War Rooms. As the Minister for Tourism, I appreciate that it is such a big event to the country to showcase us on that global stage. Different Departments can engage with that as well.

Q277 Liz Jarvis: Are you currently working on any mutual recognition agreements with the EU for events?

Stephanie Peacock: I visited Spain in January. My conversations with the Spanish Tourism Minister laid the foundations for an MOU. Across Government, we continue to engage with the EU.

Q278 Liz Jarvis: What engagement do DCMS and the Home Office have around visas for events? That is something that has come up in my constituency, where we have a really well-known cricket ground and players have had difficulties getting visas to come over.

Stephanie Peacock: I acknowledge the point on visas. It is something that I spoke to the Home Office about when we met. It is a Home Office lead. As a Department, as has been acknowledged, we work regularly with it on specific examples. In terms of the set policy, that is owned by the Home Office, and I am sure I can ask it to write to you with specific examples or if you have specific questions to put to them. Do either of the officials want to come in with some clear examples of where we work with the Home Office on an ongoing basis on visas?

Jonathan Martin: We work in terms of the events that we run and engage in to make sure that we have a clear understanding of what those visas are required to have. We have engaged particularly in terms of the ETA, understanding what the process is and to make sure it can be fast-tracked where required. That is on a case-by-case basis. As for the system itself in terms of how it is operating, the Home Office will tell you it is working. It is more the case that some things are being looked at, to make sure that it is really well understood—for example, some of the criteria that you can meet in terms of genres around those engaged in music, sport and those kinds of things, where you can get a longer-term ETA and permission to work.



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Michael Livingston: To reassure you, our teams are probably in daily contact between events and the key team in UK Visas and Immigration on issues like this. If there are less high-profile events that do not have those connections and are struggling, they should reach out to us. It is helpful to raise these issues to send that message that we are keen to help break down some of the challenges here. Ultimately, we have a visa system, but if we can make it run more smoothly for event organisers, that is what we are here to do.

Q279 **Chair:** That may be the aspiration, but it is not necessarily what is happening when the rubber hits the road. Yesterday, a few of us went to visit the F1 HQ in Biggin Hill, and they said that, when it comes to visas, those whom the Home Office may regard as having lower-end skills and therefore are not prioritised for visas actually have skills that are, in sectors like F1, particularly niche, and need to be given weight and not put to the back of the pile. Quite often, they struggle. They say that, almost uniquely in Europe, when it comes to putting on the British Grand Prix, obstacles are put in their place when it comes to visas for what might be regarded as the lower-ranking members of staff but actually are absolutely vital to their operation. Could you, Michael, expand a little further on what you just said about visas?

Michael Livingston: We are certainly aware of some of those cases. Particularly with F1, it often relates to those supporting hospitality, which is a key service that they provide. I am aware of cases showing up previously. We will always work with F1, the organisers at Silverstone and the Home Office to try to cut through those issues. Obviously, I will not talk about individual cases. Ultimately, we have to work within the visa regime that the Government have in place, but we engage and are keen to support where we can.

Q280 **Chair:** This goes back to my obsession with the fact that there is not a full understanding across Government of the economic firepower of the events industry, in a nutshell. The British Grand Prix is the biggest major event annually in the calendar, with the greatest number of people attending. F1 as a sector is reportedly worth £12 billion because of all the race teams that are based in the UK. It feels to me that there is not a recognition across Government of the seriousness of events like this and what they represent to the British economy.

Stephanie Peacock: I totally take that point. I say it from the outset that I very much acknowledge it, as does the Secretary of State. We were both in attendance at the Grand Prix last summer. I was at the Motorsport Awards in January and I have met with F1 about the points that you have put to me. As well as the Committee visiting, I believe the Business Secretary also recently visited and acknowledged what a massive British success story it is.

On the specific points on visas, I am very happy to take that away and continue the ongoing conversations with the Home Office.



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Q281 **Chair:** It is not just the visas, though, Minister; we also talked about the challenges in moving equipment across Europe. The cabotage issues that you have heard us talk about before when it comes to touring are biting. We heard it from other witnesses in relation to moving musical equipment. To what extent is your Department gripping with these things? We have heard about an MOU potentially with Spain. Has that moved any further forward? I appreciate that you take these things seriously. For what it is worth, you are a very good, competent and engaged Minister. You genuinely care about this sort of thing. But your Government have been in power now for coming up for two years and nothing has changed. In some cases, things have got worse. Can we see some evidence that someone is beginning to grip this now and drive some change here?

Stephanie Peacock: That is a completely fair point. When you talk about touring and music, and moving equipment, Minister Murray leads on that. I met with him ahead of this Committee. I will put the points to him that you put to me. We engage across Government and we engage on an ongoing basis with the EU, which is led by the Cabinet Office.

Q282 **Chair:** Is there any update on the memorandum of understanding with Spain on this?

Stephanie Peacock: I will have to write to the Committee on that point.

Q283 **Damian Hinds:** Minister, what role do you think major events play in promoting and supporting British soft power and development of international relationships? Assuming it is a positive one, how could we make more of it?

Stephanie Peacock: I reiterate the point that I opened with. Major events are about our self-confidence as a nation. They are about showcasing the country on the global stage. All the different examples that we have talked about, whether it be F1 or Wimbledon, and whether it be the ones that we are hosting such as the Euros or the Tour de France, are important opportunities to showcase the country and bring people together. There is also a really important point in not just hosting those major events but making sure that the legacy and the impact on communities is lasting and felt by everyone in that community.

Q284 **Damian Hinds:** We have talked a few times about how everything is pretty good—very good perhaps—but we just lack a strategy and do not have a golden thread. If you had the ideal strategy that had a golden thread, what would be different?

Stephanie Peacock: It is the points that you heard from a number of different witnesses. We host the events, we do that really well and there is a vote of confidence that we have such an exciting pipeline of events, but clearly we could go further and make more of those benefits. Particularly when it comes to the legacy of Euro 2028, I mentioned the meeting that I convened with Sports Ministers in November when we were already talking about the legacy and the investment in the legacy,



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and how it will impact communities up and down the country. I am very keen that it goes back to the question that the Member for Lewisham put to me about class and about making sure that everyone, not just some people in society, are able to get involved.

Q285 Damian Hinds: Give me an example of what that means in practice. What could be different if you had the ideal strategy and the golden thread?

Stephanie Peacock: It is all the things that you have heard—that we can be greater.

Q286 Damian Hinds: Just nail it down. Be a bit more specific. What would this strategy give us IRL?

Stephanie Peacock: A stronger, clearer vision, which I have set the scene for, and clearly, better co-ordination so that, for the organisations that you have put to me today, whether it be F1 or others, we can do a better job at communicating and having a clear front door into Government so that it is easier and simpler to do business with the UK and to host those events.

Q287 Damian Hinds: You would like to have, in the jargon, a single front door, a named contact in central Government whom I as a major event organiser could come to and who could not necessarily solve all my problems immediately but, whether it is a road closure, a security question, visa blockages or whatsoever it might be, I have a single account manager I go through.

Stephanie Peacock: Yes, in essence, I would like to get to that point. I announced the intention today to pull together the strategy. I am not here to run through all the specific details of it.

Michael Livingston: On the soft power point, there are some great examples of where we have leveraged the hosting of events to leverage our soft power, whether it is the ceremonial moments when the whole world is watching and Heads of State and Heads of Government come here. We saw that with the final of the women's rugby world cup. Mark Carney was here. He met the PM because he was here and met the Secretary of State at the match. Next week, we have the World Team Table Tennis Championships here, commemorating the centenary of that event. The chief exec of Table Tennis England went to China with the PM on his mission out there because it is such a massive opportunity to leverage the Chinese market. To take your point, some of these are tactical. It is not embedded. It is not obvious to everyone in Government or everyone in the sector to take advantage of these moments. A strategy and more of that co-ordination mean that it can be more embedded. It is not necessarily that we would change how these things go, but, rather than it being tactical, it is that the right people at the right moment make that connection and seize the opportunity. It is making that part of the system and systemic going forward.



Q288 Damian Hinds: Can I come back to competitiveness in general, including price competitiveness, which Liz talked about and, Michael, you also mentioned? I think you effectively said, yes, we cost more but people still keep buying from us anyway. I think you would probably agree that there is only so far you can stretch that argument.

Minister, when Liz told you about being 113th out of 119, you said you were not familiar with those statistics. That is quite a commonly quoted number from the World Economic Forum report on global competitiveness of tourism. As a Department, do you benchmark unit costs? I am particularly thinking of inbound international visitors. These all come from different Departments, of course, making it more complicated, but I am thinking of VAT on accommodation, visa costs, ETA costs, the highest air travel duty in the world, and soon possibly/probably a new bed tax.

We also just talked about policing charges. We are in a competitive world where lots of national and regional Governments will put up large sums of money just to attract an event to their area. We are not usually in that business, apart from the Olympics and so on. Are we harming our price competitiveness in these international markets by some of these actions? They are not from your Department; they come from across Government. How price competitive are we?

Stephanie Peacock: I appreciate that point. The fact that we have such a strong pipeline of events is a vote of confidence in the UK, and it is about striking the balance. The majority of the ones that you referenced fall outside the Department. As I have reiterated throughout this session, we will work with different Departments to, hopefully, get ahead of challenges and to reflect issues that the sector puts to us, and to make sure that their voices are heard. As a Government, we can respond to some of those points. In terms of specific competitiveness, do either of you want to give any examples?

Jonathan Martin: No. On the connectivity, we have things to learn from some of our mayoral combined authority groups. The West Midlands and others have engaged a bit more in that sponsorship, and how you engage businesses and those wider cultural events as well. Within Government, we are slightly more limited in what we can do in that. I saw in COP26 the sponsorship element of that. I know DBT has quite a strong engagement on that.

Q289 Damian Hinds: In terms of market share, it is difficult to measure these things precisely for events, but it is probably fair to say that, #despiteBrexit, we still do well compared to other European nations on major events. In the middle east and in south-east and eastern Asia, there is a lot of growth, and we may well be losing global share. On tourism in general, although the absolute numbers may be in growth, we are losing global market share because international tourism is such a growth market. Is that a fair characterisation?

Stephanie Peacock: I appreciate the challenges faced by the tourism sector, and that is why, as a Government, we are committed to the



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tourism growth plan—the visitor economy growth plan. I engage very regularly with the sector, chairing the Visitor Economy Advisory Council and going out and meeting with a range of the sector up and down the country. In the last few months, I have been everywhere from the north-east through to Cornwall. I acknowledge the points that you put to me and the cumulative challenges.

Q290 Damian Hinds: You still need to be price competitive. The visits are great, but you probably need to attract people. Finally, coming back to the point about ministerial attendance, not so much at motor racing or football, as it is always easy to get attendance for those things, but particularly at business and trade events, you said you attended the World Travel Market, I think, this year and last year. Chris Bryant did as well. You are both to be commended for that. Is it fair to say that with the British Government it is not really an accepted central part of Government Ministers' core role to confirm early that they are going to be attending these key events?

I say "early" because that is the key thing, which means you can then say to other delegations' representation from around the world, "Our Minister is coming. Your Minister should come," and that elevates the thing. If that is the case—I put it to you that it is—how can we change that? It is not a party political thing, by the way; it was just as big a problem when we were in government. British Government Ministers should say, "I am there to fly the flag for Britain. It does not matter if there is a running three-line Whip. This is the most important event"—in your case, the World Travel Market—"going on in my life and my diary today."

Stephanie Peacock: The simple answer is yes, we can absolutely do better on that point. I share the example from my portfolio of the World Travel Market and I cover a wide range of sectors, as I am sure the Committee is aware. I make a personal commitment to make sure I am there representing the Government and the Department. I was struck by the evidence that I referenced earlier about the Farnborough International Airshow. I am assured that the Transport Minister will be in attendance, if that has not been done formally. He confirmed that to me this morning, so I will make sure that is done in writing. Short of me phoning up my ministerial colleagues and reminding them to reply, I will take away the point about how we can get ahead of that and make sure it is more organised and co-ordinated. I point the Committee to the example of the women's rugby world cup and the business event in Sunderland that I talked about. From a departmental point of view, we launched the women's sport taskforce in Brighton. There are opportunities for broader engagement with the sector, and to showcase the country at these events.

Q291 Chair: The Secretary of State meets with all the other Secretaries of State weekly at the Cabinet meeting. What is to stop her having a list of the business events that impact all these different sectors and are coming up that we think, as a nation, it would be vital that they should be at, for



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soft power, global trade and underlining the importance of that sector? Can we recommend that the Secretary of State for DCMS instructs other Ministers on where they should focus their attention?

Stephanie Peacock: I do not think she has the power necessarily to instruct, but it is a great idea for her to go Cabinet with a list of events or with ideas. I cannot speak on behalf of the Secretary of State, but I know she engages very regularly with colleagues, and therefore I am sure she would be very open to something like that.

Chair: It is a great opportunity.

Stephanie Peacock: Totally.

Q292 **Chair:** The Farnborough International Airshow is coming up in July. "Guys, this is the British defence and transport sector. It is worth X billion pounds to the British economy. Secretary of State for Transport, are you going to be there? Secretary of State for Defence, are you going to be there?" Bosh.

Stephanie Peacock: It is a great idea. I agree. I will put it to her later today.

Chair: Perhaps you could feed that in.

Q293 **Mr Alaba:** Keeping on the export and soft power theme, what support do you give event organisers who are looking to export their products abroad? Do you periodically review it? Is there a Department lead?

Stephanie Peacock: The Committee heard some evidence on this, and there are some good examples of where events have been exported. In terms of the practical ongoing support, there will be official-level engagement. Jonathan, do you want to share some examples of that?

Jonathan Martin: It is very much led through DBT at the moment. You know the Hay example of how that has been able to get international engagement. We saw the evidence from the Edinburgh Tattoo and some of the Australia/New Zealand side for it. We are also conscious that a lot of the event management companies that I work with on delivery now have offices across the world, to recognise that skillset that we bring. There is something about strengthening that over the next period of time. One of the things that we are talking about is how, if we are acting as that front door, we enable and support people to make those connections, particularly with our colleagues in the Department of Business and Trade and its international trade engagement.

Michael Livingston: I echo Jon's point. There is exporting the event—having Hay International or whatever it happens to be. Also, we have this world-leading sector. A lot of it grew out of London 2012 and a lot of that has gone to other major events. DBT has had a large focus on Saudi Arabia, which is hosting an increasing number of major events. It is working with Morocco in advance of hosting the FIFA world cup in 2030. A



number of people who worked on the Olympic and Paralympic games have set up companies that are now world-leading in their field, and the Government, albeit not our Department but our colleagues in DBT, work with them to take them out on trade missions and ensure that our economy is benefiting in tens, if not hundreds, of millions as a result of those arrangements that they can put in place with other event-hosting nations.

Q294 Mr Alaba: On that point, do you know the size of the market of exporting events organisations growing globally and how much income it generates?

Stephanie Peacock: The answer is no, and that is a challenge and somewhere we need to improve. That is why we want to do some of this work with the Cabinet Office and DBT. There are lots of figures around there. It is not a settled figure. We need to make sure that we have that. That is a fair point.

Q295 Mr Alaba: Minister, I welcome all the engagement that you are doing. Do we convene any of these organisations? Is there work coming down the line in terms of convening these export-focused events organisations?

Stephanie Peacock: That is something that the roundtable group that I referenced could certainly pick up. I will take that away and will reflect that point to DBT. We have our next meeting in July, but I will make sure that we pick that up. There is more we could do on that.

Michael Livingston: DBT has historically had a sport industry group where it does just that, and then it talks about target countries and what it can do to build on that. It very much sits with that Department.

Q296 Mr Alaba: I have one final point. We had a witness, Major General Brooks-Ward, whose company the HPower Group is a global equestrian consultancy. He said that, when he goes around the world into international environments, he feels that he has access to leaders and to Government officials within those particular countries, but often he does not really have a relationship with the British officials in those territories. We know that it is a great market. We know we have some world-class organisations doing the same. Is there anything we can and should be doing to facilitate our international events organisations on a country-to-country basis when they want to operate?

Stephanie Peacock: That is a point that I should take up with the FCDO. When I have done different visits around the world and have had conversations with different embassies, they shared their ongoing work in that particular country. It probably ties in with the earlier question about how engaged Ministers are at events and attendance of events, but also as a reflection of how important sporting and cultural events are to this country. I am really delighted that this Government secured the future of the Crucible in Sheffield. That was a result of engagement with me, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. We have good examples of where Ministers have engaged in sporting and cultural events in the UK.



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It could be better. In terms of co-ordination across the world, I will take that to the Foreign Office.

Chair: These are British exports in the same way that a fighter jet or submarine might be British exports, and they need to be treated in the same way. They are worth as much to the British economy. They are worth as much to our British global soft power. The Government, led by DCMS, need to really grip this and make the case. If we were trying to sell a military jet to an overseas country, our Ministers would be there, making the case and engaging. Our Foreign Office team would be there on the ground engaging. These events are just as important, and yet no one is there. We heard evidence, as Bayo said, from Simon Brooks-Ward that there is a disconnect between the Government and independent operators like him. It is appalling. We should be looking at what more we could do to export these events around the world. I would really like to see, when DCMS responds to our recommendations, that it shows that it is gripping this rather than having lots of little roundtables, which is everyone talking nicely to each other but nobody doing anything.

Q297 **Vicky Foxcroft:** I was going to ask a question about the roundtables. In terms of talking about roundtables that can do something, do you have disabled people and accessibility advisers to advise people on how they ensure that events are accessible for everyone? Did you have them on the ones you have had so far? If not, would you have them in the future? Making sure that our events are truly accessible for everyone is a major thing to be able to promote.

Stephanie Peacock: I totally acknowledge that. I do not want to convene the roundtable just for the sake of talking about it. I acknowledge the example that you heard in evidence from 2017. I think there was a similar group in 2019 that had a nice title and fell by the wayside. The whole point of doing this convening is to drive through action. I am not one just to have a meeting for the sake of it. I acknowledge the point. I acknowledge the challenges put to me by the Committee. I absolutely agree that we want to make sure that events are accessible to everyone and that there is access particularly for disabled people. Jonathan, can you share any examples of how, when we have hosted major events, accessibility has been central to organisation?

Jonathan Martin: Purely in terms of accessibility, we have done quite a lot to make sure that those with very different needs have them met, in terms of the individual events that we have run. That can be quiet spaces for those with cognitive impairments or other challenges around that. There is a lot around how we improve access for those in wheelchairs or those who cannot walk long distances. We learned an awful lot of lessons on that from the lying-in-state queue, to make sure that we have that access through. There is a lot about trying to work with industry to understand how it can approach this. For things like the coronation concert, there was a whole bank of accessible areas within the concert area. It was making sure we have that process through as well.



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Q298 Vicky Foxcroft: On that point, working with disabled people's organisations is quite important in terms of getting this right. Quite often, one thing that makes it accessible for someone can make it inaccessible for somebody else. Having that level of expertise, which is expertise by experience, is quite important to get it right. Do you have disabled people's organisations working with you on that?

Jonathan Martin: We do, and we have worked through our event management company particularly around the bridge planning in particular. Where we then used that at the coronation and other wider events, we engage quite heavily with those organisations purely to understand what that different set of needs is. As you say, they are quite different for each individual group, and people come with different perspectives of it. It is still a work in progress. We learn each time we do these events how we can do it slightly differently next time around. There are things like the quiet spaces, particularly in really crowded spaces that we see around some of that big ceremonial footprint, just to make sure that we can get that. Then we try to make sure that that becomes more of an industry standard as well. We should be leading the way as a Government event in those kinds of processes.

Michael Livingston: There is a similar but different dynamic for sporting events. We do not just seek to host the best able-bodied events; a big part of the work that we do with UK Sport is securing parasport events. At its heart, a lot of the people delivering the events in this country are sporting organisations that have a big parasport element to their work. It is embedded in their work that they work with disabled representative groups, because their wider work is making their sport accessible to people of different backgrounds and disabilities. Likewise, when they deliver an event, they have to do that. They bring those existing networks and expertise to that as well. I am sure it is not perfect, but it is reassuring that they have those connections.

Q299 Chair: On that note, have the Government made any progress in supporting the Deaflympics and our elite deaf athletes?

Stephanie Peacock: I met with them just over a month ago and had a discussion. They requested, from memory, about £3 million. I asked officials to meet them again: to set a date within a week of that meeting and meet within a month. I met informally one of the representatives last week at an event. I can follow up with the Committee about that official-led meeting. The reason I wanted a subsequent meeting is to do with the point that they put to me that I think you are familiar with: the £3 million to be able to plan and train for the next Deaflympics. We want to understand exactly what that £3 million is. If we look at all the things they need and it is £13 million, I do not want to make a commitment that as a Government we cannot meet. I appreciate, as I think the Secretary of State does, the point around equality and inclusivity on this issue. We are very keen to continue to engage with them.

Q300 Chair: I think they want parity with the Paralympics.



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Stephanie Peacock: Yes. I appreciate that there is a history about how they ended up separate in terms of Paralympics and the Deaflympics. I am very understanding of the points that they have put. We are working with them closely and at pace.

Q301 **Chair:** Do you think it would help matters if we were to hold the Deaflympics in the UK?

Stephanie Peacock: We saw that with the Paralympics and the Olympics in 2012, as we have talked about throughout this session. We are hosting the Invictus Games in 2027. We know that when we host major events it inspires the next generation. I appreciate the points around parity and I am working with them to see what we can do.

Q302 **Chair:** When you meet them again, will you speak to them about potentially hosting the Deaflympics in Britain?

Stephanie Peacock: I am very happy to have that conversation.

Q303 **Chair:** Okay. Will you feed back to us about the outcome of that meeting? It is really important that our elite deaf athletes are not disadvantaged compared to all the other elite athletes we have in the UK.

Stephanie Peacock: I totally appreciate the point. We have corresponded on it, and I know the Secretary of State is very mindful of it as well.

Q304 **Chair:** Thank you very much. Before we bring things to a conclusion, is there anything that I have not asked you that you wanted me to ask you, that you were secretly hoping, "I hope that the Chair tries to wheedle this bit of information out of me"? Is there anything that we have not covered?

Stephanie Peacock: No, I think we have covered a huge amount of ground. It is a very exciting space. We are world leaders in hosting major events. It is so important for every part of the country and all communities. There are so many different examples of that. There has been absolutely wild enthusiasm for the Town of Culture up and down the country and the different major sporting events that are coming up. I am really committed to making sure that legacy is lasting. I am particularly proud that we have been able to secure the future of the World Snooker Championship in Sheffield. As a South Yorkshire MP, that is incredibly important to me. I could give you lots of different examples of where I think we are doing really well. I very much heard the Committee's points put to me about where we can improve, and I am committed to delivering on that.

Chair: Lovely. Thank you very much. It was very good to see you all today, and we are really grateful for your time.