

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Major cultural and sporting events, HC 259

Thursday 18 November 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 18 November 2021.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Alex Davies-Jones; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; Simon Jupp; John Nicolson; Giles Watling.

Questions 254 - 349

Witnesses

I: Nigel Huddleston MP, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; Carrie Cooke, Deputy Director, Unboxed and City of Culture, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; and Sian Joseph, Deputy Director, Ceremonials, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Nigel Huddleston MP, Carrie Cooke and Sian Joseph.

Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and this is our inquiry into major cultural and sporting events. We are joined today by Nigel Huddleston MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society, Carrie Cooke, deputy director, Unboxed and City of Culture, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and Sian Joseph, deputy director, ceremonies, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Sian, Carrie, Nigel, thank you very much for joining us today.

Nigel Huddleston: Good morning.

Chair: Before we go on I will declare an interest because we will obviously be discussing the events of this week in cricket. I am the chair of the Lords and Commons Cricket Club. I have also received as part of the Events Research Programme hospitality from the ECB and Surrey County Cricket Club. Does anyone wish to declare any interests?

Simon Jupp: I am the chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hospitality and Tourism.

Damian Green: I am a member of the MCC and Surrey County Cricket Club.

Q254 **Chair:** Thank you. Nigel, like the rest of us, you were watching the events of Tuesday with Mr Rafiq. What did you make of them and what do you think is going to happen next?

Nigel Huddleston: First of all, I should praise the Committee, as I did in the Chamber earlier on today, because you were able to give an appropriate platform and stronger voice to Azeem and others. The testimony was harrowing. I saw most of it. I am still catching up on some of it, but what I saw was alarming enough. Obviously, I have seen the report and extracts from the report as well, but the human testimony, live, and the emotional element of that was pretty alarming for everybody to see, including all of you. It was difficult to hear and difficult to watch because it was so alarming.

In terms of where we go from here, then, I have had conversations with Tom Harrison at the ECB. The Secretary of State has spoken to Lord Patel as well just this week over at Yorkshire. I think what we all want is for cricket to put its house in order and get its act together and sort this problem out. It is alarming, as you pointed out this morning, Chair, that some signals and indications of problems in the past have been highlighted with various reports that do not seem to have been adequately acted upon. Then the speed with which Yorkshire seems to have responded to Azeem Rafiq's concerns seems to have been extraordinarily slow and, therefore, that raises questions about how



HOUSE OF COMMONS

seriously the sport takes the issues that were raised and, indeed, some process issues about governance.

There are quite a few things to look at. I have had assurances from Tom Harrison that he will do whatever it takes in order to correct the wrongs. I think he and many people involved in cricket are frustrated because there were elements and there were people genuinely trying to do the right thing in terms of inclusivity and equality, but we have seen many of those efforts fall by the wayside, given the racism that we have heard about this week and at previous times.

Of course, it is not just about the ECB, it is about county level as well. I have had extensive conversations with the Secretary of State, Nadine Dorries, and she has been very clear to me as well that if we do not see sufficient action being taken, then we as a Government will intervene by whatever means is necessary.

Q255 **Chair:** What interventions can you envisage?

Nigel Huddleston: There are a variety of things that could be proposed. There is always, as we are looking at and considering in football, for example, an independent regulator. There are obviously financial flows that go into cricket. This is one of the problems with sport overall, which we all face, it is private entities, self-organising bodies, largely self-organising and doing their own thing, which often works well but then when the problems arise the Government does need to intervene.

There is financial flow through Sport England and, in some cases, UK Sport into cricket. Interestingly, most of that money is going into the very initiatives that we all applaud, which is about equality, diversity and inclusion. Some people are saying we need to pull all the funding from cricket. I think that we have to be very careful about that because the money that is being put into cricket through Sport England and other means is doing the very things that we all want it to do. I would be careful there but, of course, we need to be very conscious about how Government money, taxpayers' money rather, flows into cricket and make sure it is doing the right things.

Then, of course, we all need to work together in highlighting, socialising and increasing awareness about the issues that are there and holding those in positions of responsibility to account to take appropriate action in the way that you are doing as well as a Select Committee, but Government have a responsibility there as well.

Q256 **Chair:** When will the ECB report back to you on progress? Can you give us a timeline?

Nigel Huddleston: I do not think we have specified literally. I had a conversation a week and a bit ago and then last night with Tom. He has expressed a sense of urgency to me. He knows that he needs to act quickly. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at the detailed timelines. We are talking about weeks and months rather than years



HOUSE OF COMMONS

here, obviously. That is one of the issues and concerns that has been highlighted. The Fletcher report was in 2015.

Chair: 2014.

Nigel Huddleston: 2014, and this has been going on with Azeem Rafiq formally from about 2017. We have seen the fact that this has clearly been kicked into the long grass for years. That is not appropriate. We need a little bit of time for ECB and Lord Patel, who is obviously conducting his review, too, to think about what actions may be taken, but I think we are all impatient here, including myself.

Chair: It does not sound overly specific, but let's bring in Julie at this point.

Q257 **Julie Elliott:** Good morning. Do you think the ECB has the skills and capacity and capabilities to put this right?

Nigel Huddleston: I would like to believe that it does, and certainly we are hearing positive and sincere noises. I think you had Tom in front of you as well this week. You would have heard from him personally his absolute, sincere commitment that he understands the issues and he wants to fix them.

Q258 **Julie Elliott:** That is not the question. I do not disagree; the people from the ECB seemed genuinely concerned. Nobody could be anything other, having listened to the testimony. I had grave concerns about whether they have the capacity or ability or skills not only to deal with it but to know how to deal with it. What gives you the confidence, Minister, that they do have that in place?

Nigel Huddleston: To be very clear, I am not saying that I have absolute confidence at the moment. I have heard positive noises but we will judge them by their deeds and their actions. The ECB does have quite significant and substantial resources. Cricket is not one of the poorer sports. There are resources within the cricket ecosystem, and whatever is required in order to take action here directly or indirectly I suspect—well, I hope; I will require—they will get those resources together in order to take appropriate action. They should do because cricket is not without its cash.

I would say that if they do not currently have the skills and resources, and I am not in a position to say yes or no on that at the moment, then I expect them to get them and get them pretty soon. It is a perfectly fair question and I think that you and I will both be holding them to account. Over the next weeks as the ECB and others report back to me and others, that is exactly the kind of thing we will be looking at. If we do not think there is sufficient attention, if we do not think there are sufficient resources, then we have to think of alternatives.

Q259 **Kevin Brennan:** Is there anything exceptional about cricket, do you think, in this, as Minister for Sport, in comparison with other sports?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Nigel Huddleston: I think we are all concerned about racism and inequality and accessibility issues of sport generally. It has been an issue for successive Governments and progress has been made. Racism in sport is something that obviously football and other sports have been dealing with and are dealing with as well. When it comes to Yorkshire, there seem to be some particular issues with Yorkshire and Yorkshire cricket, partly on the demographics of Yorkshire and the relationship between the ethnic minority populations and others, which has been an issue for quite a while. I think there are some particular issues for cricket but I would not want to say that this is taking the eye off the ball and that cricket is not the only one with problems about racism.

Q260 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you think Yorkshire Cricket Club is institutionally racist?

Nigel Huddleston: I think it is to the extent that racist language was normalised and seen as acceptable and that some people do not seem to realise or recognise that what they were doing and saying was racist. I think that is probably the definition of institutional racism. To that extent, I am afraid—and very sorry to say so—that that probably is the case. I know that Sajid said so yesterday as well.

Q261 **Kevin Brennan:** You made the comparison with football, but in football representation of ethnic minorities at the top level has significantly increased since the days when I grew up watching football. Of course, as we saw in the recent European championships, there is still a lot of endemic racism in society that is reflected in football. Why is it, do you think, that in cricket ethnic minority representation has declined very sharply?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, I cannot give you a clear answer to why that is the case, and why that is the case given some of the efforts that have gone into trying to do the absolute opposite and reach out to broader communities within cricket. There is the issue of the extent to which there is genuine welcome. There is the issue of what age people get involved. Do they feel that they are being properly trained and supported as they go through the ranks at grassroots and then into the professional game? Football has probably been a bit more proactive in trying to make those efforts and has the resources to do so in a way that perhaps cricket has not, not that I am trying to find excuses for them. The whole route into the professional game is clearer in football.

There are definitely issues. Obviously, there are issues at Yorkshire as we are hearing, and as you revealed in the Select Committee this may go beyond Yorkshire and into some other counties as well.

Q262 **Kevin Brennan:** Finally on this, then, you did say that as Minister for Sport you require appropriate action. What will that consist of, what you are requiring them to do, so that it is clear?

Nigel Huddleston: This is one of the challenges of the sport ecosystem. Sport in the UK is not nationalised. We do not have direct control over it.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kevin Brennan: You did say earlier, and it is on the record, that you would require appropriate action.

Nigel Huddleston: Exactly, because if they do not get their act together, then we have the nuclear option of legislating in order to bring in potentially an independent regulator. That is probably the route that if we absolutely had to we could go down, but as with the live debate going on in football at the moment, it is not easy, and then you have the debate about what the regulator should do. That is one of the key options and, as I say, the financial flows. There is also a convening, an influencing, a moral leadership element to this as well, which we all do in Parliament.

Kevin Brennan: All I would say, Minister, is that you are not outlining what the appropriate action is. You are saying what you would do if it is not taken, but you are not able to say to the Committee what you think that action should consist of. I do not want to hog the time. I shall hand back to the Chair.

Q263 **Chair:** That is a very fair point, Kevin. It is all very nice words, Nigel, and we do welcome the fact that, unlike Tom Harrison, you do recognise that Yorkshire has been institutionally racist in this episode. At the same time, the Committee is a little bit disquieted that there does not seem to be an actual list of what you think should happen, unless you now wish to produce it.

Nigel Huddleston: Sorry, I should have been clear. There are multiple elements here. Timescales are definitely required, for example, on the time in which a complaint is made and then the response to that complaint. I would expect changes there at both county and ECB levels. There is clearly an educational element to this as well and the Professional Cricketers' Association I think has a role here in educating and informing. It has done some work in the past, for example, on sexism and clearly that is needed as well on racism.

There are steps like that that I would expect to see in terms of what I would require from cricket. I don't just want, "Oh, it's a problem, isn't it? Let's recognise it, acknowledge it" and no action taken. We want to see money spent and we want to see regulatory changes. I do mean practical changes in the way that complaints are handled and reported as well. Those are the kinds of things that I would require.

Q264 **Chair:** That is just a starting point, isn't it, surely?

Nigel Huddleston: It might well be and I suspect there will be other things that come up as well, yes.

Q265 **Damian Green:** Very briefly, one of the things after years of complaints about football governance was to set up a fan-led review, which we all expect to lead to an independent regulator. Do you think cricket has got to the stage where we need a fan-led review and some cricketing equivalent of Tracey Crouch to run it?



Nigel Huddleston: We have got to the point with cricket of requiring a fan-led review because it was pretty consistently shown that football could not get its act together by itself, on its own, of its own volition. If we are in that situation with cricket—and, as I say, the clock is ticking on this—then we might well go down that route as well, yes.

Q266 **Giles Watling:** Good morning, Nigel. I am interested. Because this has come out through Yorkshire, is this just the tip of the iceberg? Are there other sports that you think we might be looking at, tennis, golf, and so on? Are you actively enquiring into other areas? Can you be proactive rather than reactive?

Nigel Huddleston: First of all, I am always concerned about racism anywhere, as I think every Member of Parliament is, and then in particular in sport because sport is the thing that is meant to be uniting. Sport is the thing that is meant to be the joyous celebration that brings people together rather than highlighted as divisive and excluding people and, indeed, over racism existing there. That is disappointing to the extreme that it exists anywhere in sport or, indeed, in society. The reality is that it does, and we have seen it this week particularly highlighted in cricket.

You are absolutely right, that should not mean that we are blind to where it exists in other sports. We have seen it online and offline in football in particular, but it also happens in other areas. We all get this at a community level, in our mailbags at a constituency level. Of course, the governing bodies are all expected and required as well to take complaints very seriously when racism accusations are brought to governing bodies in sport.

What I can say is that again where we have tools, and in particular where it relates to any money flowing from government entities through UK Sport or Sport England, as part of the governance code of sport obviously equality, diversity and inclusion is a key part of that. If you are getting money from the Government in any way, shape or form, we expect you to abide by certain core principles. UK Sport and Sport England will be bringing forward a diversity and inclusion plan that is an expected part of the governing bodies' practices going forward. Those are the practical steps we can take to make sure that they deal with the problem.

Then, of course, in other areas DCMS is also overseeing the online harms work at the moment. As I said, a lot of this, unfortunately, is live, face to face, it is not all online. I would not want the online bit, which is hugely important, to distract us from the offline activities that take place as well, which we also want to stop.

Q267 **Giles Watling:** Are you looking down the ranks to the grassroots as well on this issue?

Nigel Huddleston: Yes, absolutely. Again, many of the governing bodies have responsibility for both the elite and grassroots levels. When the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

money flows through Sport England in particular, it comes with requirements and expectations of ethical behaviour.

Q268 Clive Efford: First, thank you for your clear answer about institutional racism at Yorkshire. Unfortunately, that is a label that could possibly also be attached to cricket in general and the ECB. How they respond to this we will pay close attention to.

In answer to questions about what the Government expect, in order to give the ECB a racing chance of understanding what the expectations of the Government are, you said the ultimate outcome could be that you look at an independent regulator. That is quite a nuclear option. What does it have to achieve to satisfy the Government and they would not go down that road? I would support it if it was necessary, so I am not suggesting that it is the wrong thing to do. Clearly, the Government need to set out what they would measure that by. Will there be a statement from DCMS clearly setting out the markers down the road for the ECB to satisfy the Department?

Nigel Huddleston: I think the most appropriate thing is for us to hear more clearly from ECB and Lord Patel in Yorkshire about what they intend to do, and then we will see whether it is sufficient. We certainly have ideas and we are talking live, just as you are and just as we are around this table today, about what particular specific steps may be required. I do have my wish list in front of me today, not complete, though I have given an indication of some of the things I would be looking for.

As I said, in particular things like speed of response, formalising speed of response to complaints processes, and an independent board as well. Interestingly, cricket does have largely an independent board, which not a lot of sports do, but that is not necessarily the case when it comes to county and further down the cricket ecosystem. Independence is key as well so that they are not marking their own homework anywhere. Then I do expect significant amounts of money, time and effort to be put into educational programmes at all levels as well.

Those are the kinds of things, and I would like to make clear that I genuinely would appreciate ideas and suggestions from this Committee as well. Over the next few weeks, we will continue those discussions with ECB and if we do not believe it is sufficient, then we will say, "No, you also need to do X, Y and Z" and add that to the list. If it does not do that, then I am sure that with the full support of this Committee and the House we will go back and say, "Sorry, not good enough. We are going to have to move forward with those nuclear options".

Q269 Chair: Just to inform you as well, we will flesh this out very imminently but we will be continuing our inquiry into this over the coming weeks. We will be expecting regular updates from yourself and officials in double quick time in terms of your interactions, how many conversations you are having with parties involved and exactly what progress you think is being made. I am sure that you are aware that we are all on notice over this. I



HOUSE OF COMMONS

think that many of us have been complacent, myself included, and frankly it is time that action was taken rather than just words.

Nigel Huddleston: Yes.

Q270 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Briefly on this, before we move on to other issues, you mentioned UK Sport is coming up with a diversity and inclusion action plan to look at how we can resolve racism, misogyny and homophobia in all sports. One of the things that struck us the most, or struck me anyway, from Mr Rafiq's testimony on Tuesday was that he was sick of tokenism. He had been used himself to front a south Asian action plan. We have heard this before. How can we ensure, Minister, that this is not just more words and a tick-box exercise, this is not tokenism, that this leads to real change?

Nigel Huddleston: You are absolutely right and you are making a fair point there again. Nobody wants tokenism, particularly those most impacted. I should be clear that the diversity and inclusion action plan will be expected from each governing body of sport. UK Sport and Sport England have made suggestions on how that should work as part of the overall governance code when it comes to the distribution of money into those sports, but then the individual sports will be expected to come up with those plans and there will be guidance on how that should happen.

Q271 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Will they be held to account by UK Sport and Sport England and yourself?

Nigel Huddleston: Absolutely, yes. Again, there is no point writing a document. We want to see action. That sentiment is absolutely shared there, yes. Chair, I should say as well that I would be more than happy to give you regular reports.

Q272 **Chair:** Thank you. We do appreciate it. We do take you at your word in that respect.

Let's move on to our main business, the advertised business, if you like. Does the UK Government have a long-term strategy to map potential and actual forthcoming events, be they sporting, cultural, anniversaries or expos? Do you understand in such a mapping exercise the potential benefits that these events will deliver?

Nigel Huddleston: How long do you have? Yes, it is absolutely pivotal. I think that everybody recognises the value of these events in so many areas, and I am sure we will come on to it so I will not try to answer every element here. There is huge value in holding these major international sporting events: overt, economic, the massive impact in terms of the construction, the building, the run-up to these events. The number of jobs created is absolutely massive, the tourism element, but also the ability to inspire new generations, particularly in sport but that also applies—and we often underestimate this—to culture, arts and other events. There is huge value, which is precisely why in many of the major global events there is such intense international competition for them. There are widely recognised benefits.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

In terms of the timescales and what we are looking at going forward, certainly there is an eight to 10-year plan because for most of the major international events, those that require some kind of bidding, there is a fairly standard schedule to them. Obviously, the Olympics, a four-year cycle, Expo, a five-year cycle; other sports as well have various cycles. We have a good idea of what is coming up. We also have a good idea of what we are eligible for, because many of these international bodies have eligibility criteria where in a certain region you are not allowed to apply or, indeed, there are restrictions on timing and how things can go around. We have a pretty good idea of what events are available for bidding over the next 10 years.

Government can and do play a key role. We are actually one of the first countries in the world to have the gold plan of identifying on the sporting side these kinds of activities well in advance and putting in the resources of Governments—because it is not just UK central government in Whitehall—to support them. Then, of their own volition, sports entities and other bodies can also independently apply. There was very little involvement of Government on the T20 2030, for example. Where entities can go and do them without needing to rely on the public purse, great, go ahead, do it. We encourage and support in other ways as well.

On the arts, culture and creativity side, they are similar cycles, probably not so many as sport. Again, the sectors themselves often will come together, coalesce together, which is where we have a convening role to encourage and support that. Is there a written stated document saying, “Here is the event strategy”? Well, not so much other than, as I say, the gold plan is pretty clear. Somewhere in my document I have a whole list of the upcoming events that we have and all the ones that we may be bidding for. I am happy to share that with the Committee. It goes up to about 2030, 2032.

Q273 Chair: Does the lack of a formal list allow instances in which, in the phraseology, it would be big-footed by No. 10, where they may come in and say, “Oh, can we have some money put in the direction of scoping out a World Cup bid?”, for instance? Was that World Cup bid DCMS’s idea or was it No. 10’s idea?

Nigel Huddleston: I think it was everybody’s idea. In particular, actually, I suspect that it was Tracey Crouch’s idea originally, when she had the role of sports Minister. They do evolve. The genesis of ideas comes from all sorts of sources. What we have to do in government, then, is convene a group of people, bodies and groups, and, of course, all roads lead to the Treasury, as you know, in terms of making a case on why it is that we should move forward.

Some of them can be quite early stage. We have a team. We have an events team in DCMS that looks at the pipeline and work on these things anyway. That team is constantly looking at what potentially is in the pipeline before we necessarily set up a bid team formally with money attached to it. The process is that if there is going to be significant



HOUSE OF COMMONS

resources required above and beyond the existing core team at DCMS and, indeed, working with other Governments, that is when we go to the Treasury and say, "Look, this is of a scale that is going to require a formal bid. We need to put the formal bid team together. That is going to require money. Treasury, please give us some money". Of course, we have to put an economic case to that as well.

Q274 **Chair:** It is abundantly clear that the scoping out of a World Cup bid was some sort of eureka moment across government at exactly the same time; of course, Minister, we will take your word for that. Considering that we only managed two votes last time and it ended up going to Russia and Qatar, this is just a nonsense. The World Cup bid is an utter nonsense. Give me the money if you want; I could just tell you that. We are never going to win it.

Nigel Huddleston: I do not share your pessimism, Chairman. We have had conversations on this previously. I think that it is absolutely vital, certainly given our history with football, that we put ourselves front and centre in making sure that we are on the world stage for hosting events.

Q275 **Chair:** That involved being a laughing stock last time. It was also at the same time as Wembley and the absolutely shocking scenes we saw at Wembley.

Nigel Huddleston: The whole FA process, or rather the FIFA process, was pretty unedifying. I think that everybody knows that. The system and the process and the transparency has now fundamentally changed, and I think that itself will change the system for the better. Last time, as you know, we were made promises by various people and then privately, behind closed doors, in a secret ballot, those votes did not transpire. That process has changed.

Q276 **Chair:** It is a familiar tale, though, yes?

Nigel Huddleston: Yes, politicians can appreciate that one. The process has changed. To be honest, if that process had not changed, I would probably share your scepticism as well, but the process has changed. We are also in a good position. We have a fantastic track record, in particular over the last 10 years from the Olympics, Commonwealth Games—

Q277 **Chair:** Despite Wembley and despite people saying that they feared for their lives at Wembley in the Europa final?

Nigel Huddleston: The incidents we saw in the Euros in Wembley, particularly the final night, let's not pretend for one minute that that would not do us harm. Everybody saw that on TV screens around the world. It was not great, but there were some pretty unique circumstances there as well in terms of timing, as we were coming out of Covid, and other matters. We can make sure that, going forward, we have learnt lessons there. Wembley and the FA are doing their review. The police are looking at their lessons learned on this as well. We need to give UEFA and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

FIFA confidence that those kinds of events would not happen again if we were honoured with the World Cup, and I am confident that we could do.

Other countries around the world are not without their issues and problems when it comes to fan behaviour as well. Of course, the vast majority of fans behaved impeccably throughout that and I blame those who participated in this unruly and despicable behaviour for undermining our national game and potentially undermining our ability to put a credible pitch forward for UEFA and FIFA for the World Cup.

That said, in the conversations we have had and the interactions we have had so far it is recognised that it was exceptional, that we can hold events very well, and I do not believe—and we have not had indications—that the events at Wembley in and of themselves are going to put the kibosh on our bid; in fact, not at all.

Q278 John Nicolson: Good morning, Minister. May I pick up on the question that I asked you a short time ago in the Commons Chamber? We were all delighted to see Josh Cavallo come out and become the first openly gay player in the world currently playing to come out. When you sat on this Committee, as you pointed out in the Chamber today, we conducted an inquiry into homophobia in sport. There is still not an out gay player in the professional game in these countries. Why is that?

Nigel Huddleston: I would very much appreciate your views on this as well, Mr Nicolson.

John Nicolson: They are scared.

Nigel Huddleston: There is a whole variety of factors, societal, that are not necessarily unique to sport, but as it relates to sport it is unfathomable that there is not a gay player in the Premier League at the moment. We just know that there—

John Nicolson: There are loads of gay players. They are just too scared to come out.

Nigel Huddleston: It begs the question of what the environment in the locker room at the clubs is like to make people not be comfortable with who they are, publicly at least because I think some in private are probably a little bit more open. Of course, everybody of their choosing should have a private life.

If they are feeling constricted that they cannot come out, then that concerns me. Those who have in other sports—and Tom Daley is obviously one of the most vocal and high-profile here—once they have made that move they do send a signal that it was probably not as daunting, not as scary as they thought, and there is an outpouring of support when they do so. In some sports we are seeing that happen but not in football. Why is it not in football? I think as well the money and sponsorship in football is such that there may be a fear that it is not



HOUSE OF COMMONS

consistent with their brand or the image that perhaps some of the sponsors would—

John Nicolson: Of course, a lot of people say that the first footballer to come out will make an absolute fortune, as it happens.

Nigel Huddleston: I hope so and wouldn't that be great, yes.

Q279 **John Nicolson:** When we had the boss of the English Football Association here before us, if you remember he said that he did not think that the Football Association could protect—that was his word—a gay footballer who came out. Now we are four or five years on. A lot of people criticised him for saying that, but I thought it was quite an honest thing when he said it. I do not think he was saying it was a good thing, he was saying it was a bad thing, but he was just saying what he thought. What message does that send to kids up and down the country if they think powerful, wealthy footballers living in big houses, behind gates, are too scared to come out? What does that mean for me as a kid playing soccer in a housing scheme?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, I completely agree with you. It sends completely the wrong message. Where we are able to take action, where we can take tangible action, we are trying to do that. With online harms, in so much of the Twitter abuse on ethnic minorities, and you see it with women and the LGBT community, there is a lot more, a disproportionate amount of abuse. We want to put a stop to that. That is partly societal but we are going to have to move as well, working with the social media companies and legislating on that. It is unfortunate that we have to get to the point of legislating. In the offline world, of course, many of the types of abuse that we are talking about are currently illegal, but it is not always being pursued through to the courts in the way that we would like to see. Some of that applies to some of the online abuse as well at the moment. It is illegal.

Q280 **John Nicolson:** Is there anything you think that you can do as a Minister in order to put pressure on the English Football Association to focus more on this and to change this appalling situation for the better?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, as with some other sports but in particular with football, they are a relatively wealthy sport and they have a responsibility to be inclusive. In the efforts that they make through their distribution of money through the pyramid, and in particular with Premier League, for example—I am sure we will come on to the rights extension that we recently allowed—putting more money into inclusivity is exactly the kind of thing that we expect them to put money into. Of course, there are other bodies, Kick It Out and so on, doing good work on racism. We need to make sure that we have the appropriate focus on the broader inclusivity agenda, and it does come with some expectations of money.

Q281 **John Nicolson:** Do you have a timescale? If you are back before us in a year or five years and no one has come out, what will that mean, do you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

think? What will that say?

Nigel Huddleston: I think it would be a pretty disappointing situation, there is no doubt about it. Society has moved on massively. The problem is that sport and football has not moved at the same speed as society, which is slightly odd because sometimes we look at sport as leading in diversity, but not when it comes to football and not when it comes to LGBT players. Interestingly, it is the men's game as well because the women's game, of course, is much more diverse.

Q282 **John Nicolson:** Indeed. Can I move on and talk about events and legacy? When we look at the legacy of the Olympics in east London, for instance, there were such high hopes, weren't there, that it would spread prosperity and it would help our underprivileged areas? I have Rightmove in front of me and I am looking at the Olympic Park house prices. If you remember, that was one of the big arguments, that it would be accessible for the local community and it would help them get better housing. Do you know, out of interest, what a one-bedroomed flat costs in the Olympic Village now?

Nigel Huddleston: I am not prepared for that question, Mr Nicolson, this morning. I don't know. A one-bedroomed flat in the Olympic Village?

John Nicolson: £800,000.

Nigel Huddleston: Right, okay.

Q283 **John Nicolson:** What does that say about the legacy?

Nigel Huddleston: You could also look at that the other way. There has been a massive economic improvement in and around the Olympic Park. There is an affordability issue of London houses, which is, I am afraid, way beyond my—

Q284 **John Nicolson:** Local people have been driven out, haven't they?

Nigel Huddleston: Yes.

John Nicolson: That is the problem. They were promised that this would be of benefit to them. It has certainly been of benefit to housing developers.

Nigel Huddleston: I can tell you, Mr Nicolson, lessons learned from that are exactly why we are not repeating that mistake when it comes to the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. As you know, the Perry Barr development is particularly focused on making sure there is a significant amount of affordable housing there.

Q285 **John Nicolson:** Which is exactly what I was going to ask you: what are the lessons that you have learned from that so that that particular problem can be avoided for other legacy events?

Nigel Huddleston: The development there is separate but linked to the Commonwealth Games budget, but part of the development. Perry Barr



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and Birmingham City Council are working with, as it was then, MHCLG. Substantial amounts, hundreds of millions of government money, was also pumped into that, but it is on condition that large chunks of it—of course, in any mixed land use development you need some of the private houses as well in order to subsidise and pay for the rest, but that is exactly the lesson learned when it comes to housing and housing provision.

Q286 Giles Watling: We have some major events coming up. We have the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Unboxed, which is billed as a ground-breaking celebration of our creativity. Prior to the reshuffle, we knew which Ministers to go to. We knew who to approach. My understanding is that we do not at the moment; it is not on the website. What is happening there? Who is going to be responsible?

Nigel Huddleston: The websites often give a high-level indication. My understanding is that it is very clear that I am the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, even though, interestingly, it is not in my title. On the website, you will see that Commonwealth Games is part of my remit.

Giles Watling: Perhaps you should upgrade your title.

Nigel Huddleston: It is long enough already. When it comes to the other elements, on the website I do believe that Ceremonial Events is specified under Lord Parkinson. He is also the arts Minister and, therefore, the other elements, including Unboxed, do fall within that. Maybe we just need to specify to the next level of detail on the website a list of ministerial responsibilities.

To be honest and fair, I think that most Ministers or MPs know who to come to on those things. Certainly, we have PPSs and the mechanism within Parliament to aid people in the right direction. I sometimes get the impression that everybody comes to me for DCMS on everything anyway, so I can always send them in the right direction.

Q287 Giles Watling: I can remain reassured that there is a specific Minister for each?

Nigel Huddleston: Sorry, I do not mean to sound flippant. There is, and it is very specifically on sport, me, and on the other major events it is Lord Parkinson, yes.

Q288 Giles Watling: These are major events with a long tailback. How do you manage to ensure that you are not reinventing the wheel, that the learning curve that people have been through is not lost?

Nigel Huddleston: There is a whole variety of processes. As I say, we do have a specific events team within DCMS and there are legacy civil servants in particular who have huge amounts of experience in this within DCMS. It is one of the jobs of the organising committees and bodies to



make sure that when they scale down they hand over learnings on what can be learned and improved next time. There are also formal evaluations, legacy in particular, and impact assessments that are done for all the major events, whether that is sport, culture and everything else. They are usually out there as public information.

Trying where we can to get the same people in doing the next one is also incredibly handy. Many of the people involved in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, which was hugely successful back in 2014, are now also involved in the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. That institutional memory is vitally important and cannot be underestimated.

I would say that there are some soft elements in terms of the same people but there are formal review processes and reports that are also a core, required part of the outcome of these major events.

Q289 Giles Watling: You are quietly confident that nothing is going to go off half-cocked because of lack of information?

Nigel Huddleston: I don't think anything will go off half-cocked because of lack of information. Events may get in the way of me being 100% confident that everything will go 100% as planned, but that is the world we live in.

Q290 Giles Watling: Thank you. I have one more thing. It has been suggested that DCMS is underresourced for such major events. What is your take on that?

Nigel Huddleston: For example, and maybe this is a point where I can bring Carrie and Sian in, when it comes to—

Giles Watling: I thought we could bring them in; that would be very useful.

Nigel Huddleston: Yes. When it comes to the resources at DCMS, because of the way that many of these events are structured some external body is involved and, of course, many towns and cities as well. For example, with the Commonwealth Games, there is a team of about 55 or 60 at DCMS overseeing the Commonwealth Games, but that is on top, of course, because we have various legal responsibilities and duties for reporting to Parliament and so on. The main team, which is hundreds and it will go much bigger as we get closer and closer to the games, is the organising committee. It has responsibilities as well. Then tons of people in Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority are also focused on the games.

The responsibility is shared, but I am quite comfortable with the organising structure, the reporting structure, the governance structure. I chair, for example, the strategic board and there are clear lines of responsibility. That model again is a fairly well tried and tested one. There are some changes, different again, learning from the Olympics, but certainly the model that we had at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow



HOUSE OF COMMONS

was a real learning point. I am sure that we will learn lessons and modify it next time as well.

Q291 **Giles Watling:** I am pleased that you are comfortable with the structure, but I was actually asking about money.

Nigel Huddleston: Sorry, the money as well again is a mix. In terms of the Commonwealth Games, it is £778 million. A huge chunk of that, 565 I think, was central government money; the rest Birmingham. Then on top of that is sponsorship, ticket sales, a whole host of other things as well coming in. In order to make sure we have a strong legacy, other entities are piling in; Sport England, £30 million to make sure we have a good sporting legacy.

The money comes in from various sources but the legal requirement when we get a deal is often very contractual, it will often require legislation, but that is not necessarily the whole picture because others come in, particularly when it focuses on legacy. There is not a lot in the Commonwealth Games contractual requirement on legacy, for example, but if we want to get full benefit out, then we work with local authorities and other bodies to make sure that we put the money in there as well. It is a long way round of saying it is a mix. It is confusing, I know, on the outside but it genuinely works.

Giles Watling: I am pleased to hear it. Are there any comments from Sian perhaps?

Sian Joseph: I absolutely agree with what the Minister has described. In DCMS we have lots of expertise from doing these types of events before. My own team, which is responsible for the Jubilee, last year delivered VE and VJ Day commemorations; before that the World War One commemorations. That expertise is really important to ensure that we have the lessons learned.

Of course, it is not just DCMS that delivers these events. We work with other Government Departments, particularly the Ministry of Defence. As you saw only just recently with Remembrance Sunday, together we know how to do these sorts of events really well, to put on a fantastic show for the UK and overseas. Likewise with other partners. In London, we are very lucky that we have the support of Westminster City Council, the Royal Parks, the GLA and the Metropolitan Police. We are used to working on events together, so over the course of the last couple of years and beyond and onwards we will continue to deliver events in a co-ordinated and joined-up way.

Giles Watling: Thank you. That is very reassuring. Carrie, do you have anything to add?

Carrie Cooke: I would support everything that has been said. The only thing I would say is to expand the point about all the expertise and the partnerships that we have.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Obviously, all of our arm's length bodies are used to doing events like this, as is the sector. We have a huge depth of experience in our sector, who run events like Edinburgh International Festival and others. We work in partnership with them as well and our colleagues in the devolved Administrations. Unboxed and City of Culture are both UK wide, so it is not just the DCMS team. We have officials in the devolved Administrations and their own events bodies as well, like Events Scotland and Creative Wales, which bring their expertise to this as well. It is small and lean and agile in DCMS but the friends and family is a much broader picture. Everybody is leaning in with years of experience to this.

Giles Watling: That is good to hear. Thank you.

Q292 **Chair:** Just to press you on one thing, Carrie, before we turn to Damian and his questioning, Unboxed was previously Festival UK* 2022.

Carrie Cooke: Yes.

Q293 **Chair:** During the course of the inquiry you have had a name change?

Carrie Cooke: We have, yes.

Q294 **Chair:** It is all going a bit wrong, isn't it?

Carrie Cooke: We think it is going right.

Q295 **Chair:** Do you?

Carrie Cooke: Yes. Festival UK* 2022 was always a holding name. Martin Green would have spoken to you previously and said—

Chair: He is full of enthusiasm but—

Carrie Cooke: He is very passionate.

Q296 **Chair:** Yes, he is very passionate, but by the end of it we did not quite understand what Festival UK* 2022 was. I certainly do not know what Unboxed is.

Carrie Cooke: All right. I will help, I hope. Festival UK* 2022 was a temporary name because we went about this by putting out an open call to the sector. We decided that the best way to do this, the whole point of this, is we are showcasing the best of our creative and innovative sectors. We, therefore, wanted to ask the sectors what they could create. Coming up with a name before that felt a little bit like cart before horse because we would be naming something when we did not know what it was. We wanted the name to properly capture what the events were. What we also want is a name that is exciting, that is going to capture people on the street. Festival UK* 2022, if you saw it on a billboard and you were thinking about whether you wanted to take your six year-old kid to it on a Saturday afternoon, maybe it would not be exciting.

Chair: I would be thinking that it is a packaging company, Unboxed.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Carrie Cooke: I hope not. There is going to be huge amounts of branding with this. You will potentially have seen it on billboards. The “o” in the middle of Unboxed is live, it is digital. This has been designed to be both static, so when you walk round stations you will see billboards, but also to work on social media. It is currently on Spotify. It has been designed with evidence behind it to engage the people who we want to come out and go to the events.

Q297 **Chair:** Does it pass the Lord Sugar test of saying what it is on the box, so to speak?

Carrie Cooke: Creativity Unboxed? I think it is a creative name but there are examples of other events like that that also do the same. They do not necessarily say what they are on the tin but they capture the imagination. For Contains Strong Language, I think originally the working title was “UK-Wide Poetry Festival” or something like that. Again, people looked at it and thought that was not a very exciting title. Contains Strong Language is and it has engaged people. It gets huge engagement. That is the BBC’s one. There is precedent out there for picking more creative names.

Q298 **Chair:** I am just struck, Carrie, by the fact that in front of this Committee we were told of these enormous numbers of engagements that we were going to see across the country for what was Festivals UK* 2022 and is now Unboxed. We are five months out and, as I understand it, the programme has just been announced, hasn’t it?

Carrie Cooke: Yes, the programme is out there.

Chair: We have a name change.

Carrie Cooke: Yes.

Chair: Is this just basically the Millennium Dome on wheels, so to speak?

Carrie Cooke: Goodness, I hope not.

Chair: So do I.

Carrie Cooke: We would not be doing our jobs if it was. No, I have confidence that it is not going to be that. It is going to get engagement. The teams themselves are out there. We have 10 teams and they are all starting their engagement now. Now that the programme is out, we have engagement in schools. For example, About Us has already launched a poetry and coding competition in junior schools across the whole of the UK. Tour de Moon has put out 850 bursaries to young people who will be creating content for the event. That is just two examples.

There is engagement from the teams. There is engagement from the festival company, Creativeworld, EventScotland, Belfast City Council, who will raise it up a level, and there is obviously engagement from us. There will be a multi-layered marketing and communication plan for five



HOUSE OF COMMONS

months, which we hope is going to capture people. Much like other events, as you get nearer the time you plan your weekends out over the course of next year. From the start of next year, we will really see a push on places and dates and getting people hopefully booking them in their diaries and coming along.

Chair: I am going to unbox Damian Green now.

Q299 **Damian Green:** I have to say that I am in slightly “come off it” mode. I assume the name has been changed because you did not want it called the festival of Brexit, which was not going to be the most unifying title.

Carrie Cooke: It was never our title. That was a media title for it. You are right, that would not have been a very unifying name, would it?

Q300 **Damian Green:** Possibly not. Let’s not have that debate here in this Committee. Seriously, Unboxed, genuinely, it does not mean anything. I am not quite sure I take this, “You need a creative name”. There are really dull names. The Glastonbury Festival is a very dull name. It is a hugely successful event. The Edinburgh Festival is a dull name. It is a very successful event and it has been for the best part of a century. Are you sure you can engage people in this, that this will feel like some major event and not some weird, slightly—

Clive Efford: Brexit Unboxed?

Damian Green: The name I was thinking of was Consignia. The post office did that; it just did not mean anything to anyone and they rapidly retreated. Are you sure that you can get the name “Unboxed” into the public imagination so that it becomes a big event next year?

Carrie Cooke: We think we can. I would say for some of these other festivals they also do not say what they are in the name. Glastonbury does not say it is a music concert. Edinburgh does not say it is a programme of creative events. We know what it is now because we associate it and because the brand is so strong and it has worked. That is what we want to achieve for Unboxed, too. It will also build over the year. Once we launch in Paisley in March, once people have seen how amazing that event is—and we will get it out there—people will think, “I want to come to the next one, I want to go to the next”. I hope exactly that, by the time we get to October next year and we have had six months of events, when you say “Unboxed” people are going to know exactly what it was because they will have been and they will have a great memory of it, as we did for the Cultural Olympiad. You talk to people all across the country and they will say, “Yes, I went to that local event”, “I saw the torch come through my area” or, “I saw a pop concert”. That is what we want. We want everyone to come away having had a moment that they remember, and then they will know what Unboxed is, we hope.

Q301 **Damian Green:** Is it designed to happen everywhere, so there will be small local events all over the place?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Carrie Cooke: We have places all across the UK very deliberately. I think only one of our 10 commissions goes to one place, and that is because it is an offshore platform so a little hard to tour it. Everything else goes to multiple places, but it is also very deliberately designed to be both live site but also online and broadcast engagement. We do not just mean if you cannot make it you can see it online, we mean genuine engagement. If for any reason you do not want to go to a live site, you can still take part where you are. Yes, there should be something for everyone and something accessible to everybody if they want to do this.

Q302 **Damian Green:** I wanted to pick up on Giles's questions about the resourcing of the Department, not so much about money but about people. You make the case that it is all done in partnership and I am sure and in some cases I know how good your civil servants are. It has always struck me as a very small Department and, therefore, it needs outside support. Does it feel too small for these enormous tasks you take on, international tasks?

Nigel Huddleston: I will say that I think we are sufficiently resourced at the moment. As a former Minister yourself—

Damian Green: Don't ever say that. The Treasury might be—

Nigel Huddleston: I was going to say that if the Treasury was so inclined we could always do with more resources.

I would say that we are incredibly effective and incredibly efficient. The way that DCMS works, because it is not one of the big-spending Departments, it distributes money, resources and so on primarily through arm's length bodies. We are very good at that and very experienced at that and very good at working together with ALBs and other third parties and, indeed, as has been said, with other Government Departments. In the delivery of the Commonwealth Games, for example, we are entirely reliant on many other Government Departments and I have ministerial groups where we are working on that.

We need to make sure that we are positioned to ensure that the governance and the structure of delivery is as clear as possible without necessarily owning every single element. It does work. We are incredibly efficient and effective as a Department. I will be able to send over, Chairman, probably after this a breakdown of the number of people at DCMS working on each event if that is useful to you. The 55 or 60 people at DCMS have a job to do, but they do it very well. They can only do it because there are good lines of communication and absolute clarity on who is responsible for what. It does work.

Q303 **Damian Green:** Are there constraints on the ambition of what you do? You say you have a list of what we are going to bid for over the next decade and, indeed, there will be internal activities like Unboxed—I will keep trying to plug it—that we want to do. Particularly for those where we are competing internationally, do you ever feel, "We would love to do



that but we just can't because we are not big enough"?

Nigel Huddleston: You are raising a fair point about Government Departments and government budgets and whether you can do everything you would like to do. Quite frankly, the answer is no. There are lots of things that I would like to do on top as well, but there is a role for Government and there is a role for the private sector in many of these things. We need to make sure the right balance is there because we should not be spending government money if the private sector can do some of it. There is a right balance there.

Where we are able to say, "We would like to do more here. Can Treasury give us a little bit more money?" we have done that incrementally. For example, with the Commonwealth Games and the tourism and investment programme that Andy Street pushed, we said, "There is money here that we could use really usefully to promote tourism and investment and make sure that we get the best bang for the buck from the Commonwealth Games but we need a little bit more money to do it". We had to do that additional case then into the Treasury and we got the extra £20 million in the Budget last year. That does help as well; that does work. I think it is fair as well for the Treasury, because it is public money, that we need to build a business case for each of these elements.

Q304 **Damian Green:** I am thinking almost a step back from purely the money aspect. Inside Whitehall, it has always seemed to me, the sort of stuff DCMS does is undervalued in terms of how much society values it. As a result, there are constraints over and above the financial constraints, that it is just seen as the cherry on top of the icing on top of the cake. A lot of the things you are responsible for personally but that the Department more widely is responsible for are the things that people think makes life worth living, and that is underrated structurally.

Nigel Huddleston: On that I will agree with you, without stretching my collective ministerial responsibility as a Minister of the Crown too much here. I do agree with you. We still have work to do on DCMS. You face this as a Select Committee. This Select Committee probably gets more public awareness and more publicity than any other Select Committee, for good reason because you focus on the things people care about, that make life worth living as you said, but also when they go wrong are really big and important, whether it is digital connection or creativity.

The number of jobs that the DCMS sectors oversee, and in my portfolio alone nearly 4 million just in tourism, a million in the charities sector and civil society, hundreds of thousands in sport and others, that is greater than the MoD, the Department for Education and health combined. We do not always recognise quite how big the economic footprint is, as well as all the societal and cultural and other elements of DCMS.

There is increasing and growing awareness. In particular, with Covid, which struck these sectors more than anywhere else, in the arts and the culture and the museums and so on, there was a recognition that these



HOUSE OF COMMONS

are really important to save, which is precisely why there was so much government investment and support for these sectors. I would say that awareness has never been greater, and I will continually encourage you as a Committee. My heart is still here because I came on to the Committee straight after being elected in 2015. The DCMS Committee does a fantastic job at highlighting those very things. I am in agreement with you and I am sure we can jointly have those conversations with the Treasury.

Q305 **Damian Green:** Yes, but I still think the point about the size of the Department and its recognition inside Whitehall is an important one. I have walked into Departments and seen hundreds of people and thought, "What do they do all day?" and have occasionally left those Departments still not sure what hundreds of people are doing all day. You presumably have the opposite thing. You walk in and think, "My god, this is a small number of people doing a huge number of things".

Nigel Huddleston: Doing 10 things, yes. I suppose I can't agree with you more.

Q306 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Minister, have the Government appointed a special representative for the big events next year, such as the Platinum Jubilee and Unboxed, as they have previously for other big events?

Nigel Huddleston: I will ask colleagues to come in here. I don't believe so on this and I think you are referring to we had special ambassadors for 2014-2018 and so on. We have done that in the past. The sports things are probably slightly separate—so I will defer to colleagues in a moment—because they tend to be very discrete where we need a CEO. That is a very clear position and there are ministerial responsibilities aligned to that. I will ask Carrie and Sian to come in on the arts and culture things.

Sian Joseph: You are absolutely right; a 14-18 NOW initiative was set up and established for the 2014-2018 World War I commemorations. The jubilee is slightly different. We are following the same model that we used for the Diamond Jubilee. The BBC is doing a fantastic concert on the Saturday night and Rosanna and her team, who you spoke to a couple of weeks ago, are delivering the pageant, a similar group of people who did it so successfully in the Diamond Jubilee. It is a slightly different operation but we are lucky that we have so many creative individuals and institutions that will all pull together.

The programme of the events over the weekend is just part of the jubilee, one small bit. There will be loads of stuff going on in your constituencies, Rotary clubs, schools, youth groups, faith groups all doing a lot of activity that we want to encourage because it is hugely important.

Q307 **Alex Davies-Jones:** My concern is that we have somebody leading all that and ensuring that no part of the United Kingdom is missed out, so that all the Governments and countries are represented and it is a real



HOUSE OF COMMONS

celebration of the UK and of the Queen and everything she has achieved as well.

Sian Joseph: Absolutely. I have a keen interest in ensuring that Wales and other parts of the UK are involved in the jubilee. We have very good engagement, as they do on Unboxed, with the devolved Administrations. These moments are important and particularly after the last 18 months we have had we need the celebration and the party in 2022. It is a great opportunity, as you say, to celebrate Her Majesty and the country in all of those achievements over the last 70 years and her in particular. There is lots to look forward.

Q308 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you. Minister, if I could move on to sport and the Crouch review that has taken place. The issues we have had in the past few days with the Saudi takeover of Newcastle and the resignation of Gary Hoffman and the debacle that was Project Big Picture proved that the Premier League and these big clubs are incapable of self-regulation.

Nigel Huddleston: There is a lot of questions in that. The football ecosystem is not fit for purpose as currently constructed at the moment, which is precisely why all parties had a commitment to some kind of review of football and we followed through with the fan-led review. I have to be somewhat careful about what I say. We are a very short way from Tracey Crouch coming back with the recommendations and we thank her and the advisory team for their work. She has given a good indication of the kind of things she is likely to suggest in the letter that she wrote in July but we will be looking for the details. The questions raised about governance, what the role of a regulator is, the financial flows within football, the owners and directors test, all of those things were somewhat problematic to varying degrees. Tracey will be making recommendations and I am sure you and I will be looking forward to what she proposes. As I say, I have to be somewhat careful because I don't want to prejudice the outcome of Tracey's review either way. It is a genuinely independent review and the Government will formally respond. On the point you made about was it fit for purpose, no, transparently not and, therefore, action was required.

Q309 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you, Minister. Do you think the new owners of Newcastle are fit and proper?

Nigel Huddleston: We have to be careful about the role of Government on that kind of issue. They do not have a say in acquisitions of private sector entities unless there are legal concerns. In the case of Newcastle, it was right for the football authorities to follow their appropriate processes and due processes, including the owners and directors test, which they did. The elements of that test and what it includes is a live debate at the moment and I am sure Tracey will be making recommendations on that as well. I know this was a heated debate, I am well aware of the issues on both sides. Fans in Newcastle were quite happy with the outcome but I am aware of the issues raised. I think my job is to make sure I focus on how the processes can be improved going



HOUSE OF COMMONS

forward rather than a specific individual case, which I have to be careful about commenting on.

Q310 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Of course, and we all welcome the work that Tracey Crouch is carrying out on behalf of the football clubs and on the fan-led review. You mentioned that we anticipate the outcome of that review imminently, which is very welcome, but it is important—and I take you back to my earlier point—that this is not tokenistic. Can you commit to the Government making time for any necessary legislation and carving out space in the Government programme for the recommendations that come out of this review?

Nigel Huddleston: If there is legislation required I will be doing my job as a Minister to work through the usual channels to make sure that there is time in the legislative calendar. I am keen that we move as quickly as possible because I believe that there is a broad consensus across the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the country for there to be changes. I can't promise you the exact timescales at the moment. If legislation is required as an outcome I will work with the various entities to make sure that we get it.

Q311 **Chair:** To follow up on Newcastle, if after the football review there was a situation where another state—I can't think of many states that act in quite the same way as Saudi Arabia, but there we go—that chose to try to take over a football club, would it be disappointing to you if they succeeded?

Nigel Huddleston: I think we have to be somewhat careful. I am aware of the debate and discussion over the ownership structure for Newcastle, but we have to be very clear that we welcome investment in sport and across many entities in the UK.

Q312 **Chair:** It wouldn't make you think that perhaps we have failed if another Saudi Arabia—

Clive Efford: Or North Korea.

Chair: —or North Korea took over a football club?

Nigel Huddleston: I would want to have confidence that there is an appropriate process in place that includes a test on ownership and directors that is acceptable. I am talking generally here and not about the specifics of any particular situation. I think that is really important but—

Chair: That is not clear, Minister. I am sorry, that is not clear.

Nigel Huddleston: I think you are trying to get me to comment on something that I am not going to.

Q313 **Chair:** Let's use the example that Clive suggested of North Korea. North Korea comes in and tries to take over Crystal Palace for instance—maybe it just likes the colour of the kit—would that be appropriate?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Nigel Huddleston: There are broad legal aspects about who can invest in the UK and what we can invest in overseas. There is always a legal element for international acquisitions and trade, which is important and already exists and we need to follow that. On top of that, the governing bodies and institutions, the regulatory framework within sports have their own tests, which I expect to be applied rigorously.

Q314 **Chair:** Isn't it the reality that the Saudi takeover got under the wire before football regulation? Isn't that the reality of the situation?

Nigel Huddleston: The particular situation in Newcastle has been going on for a while. It has been up for sale for quite a while, but I can't prejudice the outcome of Tracey's review at the moment. I know what you are getting at but I can't comment further.

Q315 **Simon Jupp:** We have talked about some events that are happening next year—Unboxed, the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, the Platinum Jubilee and some of the events that will be taking place as a result of that. Will I need a Covid passport to go to these events as advertised?

Nigel Huddleston: I think that you are well aware that we have a plan B that has been articulated and we will move to plan B if required, if we believe that hospitals and so on are being overwhelmed. None of us wants to get to that point, so I am very hopeful that we will have full stadia next year. It is vital that we have full stadia because we need it for the country to lift the mood and showcase Britain to the world, but also many of the tickets have been sold already and it is important that we get that revenue in. I am very keen and very confident that we will have full stadia.

On passporting, for quite a while we have been suggesting, recommending and encouraging sports, particularly large sports venues, to use the Covid pass of their own volition. After all, it might be implemented at some point and it makes common sense to test operationally what it would mean for major sporting stadia. Of course some of this has gone forward already in other nations in the UK. I have had conversations with the sports Ministers in the devolved Administrations. We have specifically discussed what is and is not working and the overall message I have been getting is that broadly it has worked quite well without major challenges. If we need to go to plan B and some of the sporting events, indoor and outdoor, and other events, nightclubs and so on, require passports, I am confident that we will handle it perfectly fine.

Q316 **Simon Jupp:** In England it is plan B. We have seen Wales introduce Covid passports, vaccine passports, whatever you want to call them, Scotland fairly chaotically and Northern Ireland as well now. When you are organising events like Unboxed, which will take place in all the nations and regions, it must be a logistical nightmare considering that there are different rules in different parts of the country.



Nigel Huddleston: I can talk for the Commonwealth Games and I will ask colleagues to come in here. We are doing a lot of scenario planning, as you would expect, what ifs and so on. We have plan A, what we hope will happen, but then we are considering as part of the planning—and this is just part of being professionals—what we may need as an alternative. On passporting and so on, while it is inconvenient for some people—and I know that some people would refuse to use their passports and that is their choice; it would mean that they would not be able to get into these things but, again, that is their choice—we are confident that we would be able to manage it from a logistical point of view.

Carrie Cooke: For Unboxed, which as you say will have events across all four parts of the UK, we are confident that we can do this logistically very well. We have a lot of expertise in the festival company and the other delivery bodies that have done major events before. It is not uncommon to do an event with many locations and what you need to get into a particular location might be slightly different, but as long as we communicate that very clearly to people who have tickets to their events, which will obviously be part of the plan, we feel that this is completely handleable. We have the expertise and the experience to be able to do this.

Q317 **Simon Jupp:** These events are big showcase events for this country but it is rather confusing for visitors who come here and have different rules to adhere to in different parts, whether they are in one place or another in one nation or region. That is flummoxing for most people, isn't it?

Carrie Cooke: I don't know. I can't speak for a tourist coming in and how they would feel, but of course they may not do all 10. People will choose which they go to and they will do other events as well, I assume. If a tourist comes to the UK they will not just do Unboxed. They will do some of our other attractions or sporting events and they will have their own rules. That is part of the new world. We have to make sure we know what we need to do as individuals and I think our communications will be on top of that and we will make that clear to everyone.

Sian Joseph: As somebody who lives in Wales but is currently in England, I think Carrie is right that the answer is clear communications. I was in the Millennium Stadium a couple of weeks ago for the New Zealand match and it worked well. It was clear what you needed to do. Obviously the result was not what we needed or wanted, but the getting in and the logistics of the stadium worked very well. We need to be very clear on what is needed for these events. We hope that next year we will be in a better position Covid-wise but we have plans in place if we need them.

Q318 **Simon Jupp:** Unboxed is a big event to showcase our nation but are we truly comfortable saying to some people that they can't take part because they won't use a vaccine passport or perhaps can't have the vaccine?



Nigel Huddleston: This is a broader debate here about plan B and the whole of vaccination. The message that I think all of us want to send to everybody is just get vaccinated. It makes sense for your health and it is the socially responsible thing to do for the health of others as well. If you can't we are looking into what alternative mechanisms could be in place. The key message is: get vaccinated. My colleagues are right; in the communication about ticketing we will be getting information and gathering e-mails and so on so that if the situation changes we should be able to communicate to people, so there should not be any confusion. Most people coming in from overseas are very aware of what the requirements are and the same when we go overseas. I don't see that as a hold-up or indeed an excuse not to proceed with some of these things if it was deemed appropriate to do so on health grounds.

The key message we all need to send out is: get vaccinated; if you can get vaccinated, get vaccinated. Why wouldn't you? I just don't understand those who do not want to. If you can get vaccinated, you should get vaccinated. That is the key message.

Q319 **Simon Jupp:** When do we expect some clarity on the alternative for those who can't be vaccinated? I am not talking about those who won't—that is their choice and I respect that to a point—but those who can't and their ability to access events like this one.

Nigel Huddleston: If we go to plan B, as you know there would be a process in Parliament and this is exactly the kind of thing that we are looking at. I say "we" as in across government.

Q320 **Simon Jupp:** It is uncertainty, isn't it? For a big event next year and a selection of events that we have discussed in this session, it is uncertainty for many people who feel that they could be excluded from events based on their health status.

Nigel Huddleston: The key thing is if you can get vaccinated, get vaccinated, and we don't want to go to plan B. That would be inconvenient and all sorts of things but we hope we won't get there.

Simon Jupp: I will leave it there.

Q321 **Clive Efford:** I will come in on the World Cup bid. When I was told by our then Sports Minister that we were bidding for the World Cup I said to him, "You won't win because you're not corrupt enough" and I was proven right but let's hope the new system of voting at FIFA will give us a better chance.

On our visit to Birmingham we met the director of legacy and also the chief creative officer and they both commented that there was no funding for either legacy or the creative programme in the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Do you think that was the right decision or, with hindsight, do you think that they should have been funded?

Nigel Huddleston: I think I partly answered this earlier on. With the legislation and the initial signing of the contracts, you sign a contract—in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

this case with the Commonwealth Games Federation—saying that the city will deliver these things, the Government will do these things, and the whole legislation that I put through Parliament had the key amounts for what was needed to be spent on the delivery of the Games per the contract. On top of that, to get the best value out of the Games legacy and focusing on having a creative package around it was part of the plan all along. It was not part of the signed contractual agreement with the Commonwealth Games but it was always the intention to do them. It is not uncommon, by the way, for some of these other elements, the more creative elements, to be supported by other means, whether it is local government or additional central government funding or private sponsorship. That is exactly what is happening. It is not unusual or unreasonable.

There are all sorts of players focused on legacy, not least on the pure sporting angle Sport England, and there are significant sums going into that. Yesterday we announced how part of the £30 million that Sport England is putting into the Commonwealth Games will be spent: £3.5 million literally on physical assets and physical provision and £3 million on promoting sport and motivating engagement on activity levels. That was part of the process all along but, you are right, it was not in the contract. It is not unusual; that is not singled out.

Q322 Clive Efford: Your response is that in the round it was part of the intention of the Games to deliver on the cultural programme and legacy but there was no money attached to that from the Government side in that agreement?

Nigel Huddleston: In the contract, you are right, but there is additional money coming in through various funds to deliver it. That is the same for most games that have happened in the past.

Q323 Clive Efford: On the sporting legacy, one of the big mistakes that was made in 2012 was that we lost all the data and took two years to sort out the problems for the Games ambassadors. There was a whole load of volunteers that were lost who potentially could have assisted with the legacy. In addition, sports clubs were not readied for the increased demand to join clubs and get involved in sport. Would you say that there is money going in from Sport England and other sources of funding around the Commonwealth Games so that we are ready for the legacy and demand?

Nigel Huddleston: We are, and because of the lessons learned previously, for example on volunteering. I will push back on some of this. There is a lot of cynicism about the legacy of 2012 but there is a huge amount of legacy of 2012 in all sorts of ways, including on volunteering. I was in Coventry a few weeks ago and met people who told me that they had got into volunteering because they signed up to be volunteers at the 2012 Games in London and now they are volunteering at City of Culture. There has been some communication. On lessons learned, it is a very joyous thing, we were absolutely overwhelmed with volunteers for the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Commonwealth Games. We will need 13,000 and there are thousands of others for whom we will be making every effort to find other volunteering opportunities now and going forward. Some of those lessons learned from logistics and data and all those things will be considered.

Sports provision is exactly what Sport England is tasked with and it is focused not only on the West Midlands but on how we can use the Games to encourage the motivation of activity levels right across the country as well. We will have inspirational performances and we saw a lift from the outstanding performance of our athletes right across the country in the Olympics and the Paralympics. We are expecting the same from the Commonwealth Games and we are looking at how we can ensure that there is sports provision for everybody. You have seen the investment that we have announced in football and multi-sports facilities, in tennis and also the work that we are doing with schools to open up school facilities. There is a huge number of sporting facilities across the country but they are locked behind school gates at a time when they shouldn't be, and we are working with the Department for Education on that. I can assure that you that we are looking at all the points you raise and we take them really seriously.

Q324 Clive Efford: I am an Olympics borough MP and I was shadow Sports Minister when the Olympics took place. I am fully aware of the legacy of the Olympic Games and where it was and wasn't successful. One of them was in capturing the volunteering and another was in the preparedness of sports clubs for the interest that was generated by 2012. There are also opportunities for us in the 2024 Paris Games and the facilities that we have here in the UK. Is there any plan for us to offer camps for athletes to be hosted here in preparation for the Games?

Nigel Huddleston: It is an important point. There are no plans at the moment, or at least any meaningful plans, but I have already had some conversations about that. We are likely to have some interest from other countries as well who are coming to Paris but may want to locate here first before they go over to Paris. We are announcing some of the pre-Commonwealth Games and during Commonwealth Games camps pretty soon. In fact, I think, Chair, you might have got a letter this morning on some good news in your own constituency. There are plans to make sure that we take full benefit of this. We are not France but we are in close proximity so let's get some benefit out of that as well.

Q325 Clive Efford: There is a plan from the Government?

Nigel Huddleston: There will be a plan to see how we can leverage. By the way, that is for sport but it also goes for a bunch of other things. We will have people flying in from around the world for Paris and we want to have engagement and discussions with Ministers and investors from business links and tourism links from Paris.

Q326 Clive Efford: Will you be talking to colleagues in the Home Office to make sure that people can get visas and come now that we have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Brexited?

Nigel Huddleston: There is ongoing conversation all the time. I want as many tourists to come here as possible.

Q327 **Clive Efford:** We were also asked to raise the issue of what will happen with the equipment of the Commonwealth Games. Are any arrangements being made for that to be distributed and used?

Nigel Huddleston: Absolutely, 100%. It is a core part of the legacy of the Games, plus as part of the important environmental commitment of the Commonwealth Games from a sustainability point of view. It is always the case that every time we have a major sporting event there is some equipment surplus to requirements. We want to make sure that that is used well. Conversations are going on with the organising committee and Sport England about where that equipment could be best deployed. There is need for local schools and sporting bodies around the West Midlands and beyond, so they are live conversations.

Q328 **Clive Efford:** I am a trustee of a youth club that has the sand from the beach volleyball.

Nigel Huddleston: All of it?

Clive Efford: A lot of it. We have a lot of sand. I won't go into that. We also visited Alexander Stadium, which is very impressive and they are moving ahead with that but, as with all these large facilities, when the mayor's parade moves on are you confident that a business plan will be sustainable and that they have the right plans going forward?

Nigel Huddleston: I am. It is not directly within my remit but in the broader element of legacy from the Games absolutely. As you know, the stadium is a significant update. It will have new seats and be world-class and it has some new facilities. It will be able to host conferences and diversify the revenue stream. There is already a commitment going forward for the harriers and from university as well as UK Athletics to be located there. I think they have a decent diverse revenue stream, plus being in a much better position to bid for future events and games. I am sure that will be an important legacy that is well used, and similarly with the aquatic centre.

Q329 **Clive Efford:** I was going to ask you about the aquatic centre because we were not able to visit it.

Nigel Huddleston: I understand, but I hope you will be able to go again. I understand that was unfortunate circumstances on the day.

Clive Efford: Are you confident that they are on time with the aquatic centre and it will be ready for the Games?

Nigel Huddleston: I am really glad you asked that because I have not had the opportunity yet to say that we have to remember throughout this that we took on these Games really late after Durban was meant to have them. We have had to do in four and a half years during Covid with



terrible weather conditions for two winters what everybody else has had seven years to do and yet we are on time and on budget, so huge credit to everybody involved. I was there to lay the very first tile in the swimming pool and I am assured it is still there although I wonder if somebody came in afterwards and put it on slightly more professionally. I was really impressed because the first time I was there was the first visit I did when I was appointed Sports Minister, and it was literally a hole in the ground with a lot of water in it and 14 or 15 months later it is still a hole in the ground but in a much more structured manner.

It is impressive and everybody involved—the construction team and the project management team, everybody—has done a great job. We lost an incredibly small amount in lockdown and we are due for it to be handed over at the right time. There are supply chain issues and concerns, but I think that we are 75% through now and with most of the supply chain issues that are impacting some other things, because we have the contracts in place and we had them in advance, I am very confident we will handle it. I know the OC was sorry you were not able to visit, but I know that it has extended an invite for you to go to back and I encourage you to do so because it is impressive.

Q330 Clive Efford: There was a lack of bids for the Commonwealth Games and it is likely that future Commonwealth Games will not be as big. Is there any potential for the UK to become the permanent host in the future, every four years a Commonwealth Games that we put on as a huge sporting celebration in this country?

Nigel Huddleston: I think that it probably would be inappropriate for us to be the permanent host because in normal times there is quite robust competition for the Games, for all the reasons we talked about earlier. They are good for the nation and can often deliver economic benefit. Gold Coast and Glasgow proved that, and I am confident that Birmingham will prove that as well. Largely because of the situation in Covid and the uncertainty around that, there is no doubt that a lot of decisions on international sporting events and government commitments of public money have been put on hold for a while. My understanding—and again this is more a question for the Commonwealth Games Federation than for me—is that they are looking to change the model and look at being quite flexible. As with many games and events around the world, we have seen models change, where it is not just an individual city or indeed an individual country, but multiple countries bidding now.

Certainly I would encourage the Commonwealth Games to look at alternative models because it is right that we need to make sure that all members of the Commonwealth feel they could have skin in the game and potentially the opportunity to host. We need to make sure it is not just always the UK, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. It is great, we will step up to the plate and we love to welcome everybody around the world and do these things, but wouldn't it be great if other countries could also be part of the mix? I know they are live conversations with the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Commonwealth Games. It is looking at alternative models going forward. Also, I wouldn't be too pessimistic.

Again, I am not privy to all the conversations, but I understand that there is considerable interest for the next games, but obviously Covid, as with so many other things, has disrupted some of the discussions and commitments.

Q331 Chair: To follow up, in response to Clive you mentioned volunteering being a great legacy of 2012, but as I understand it, when we visited Birmingham they told us that they were not following that because the 70,000 volunteers in 2012, all their details were deleted.

Nigel Huddleston: Again, I don't think all of it was deleted. Even if there were issues with the central database, the one thing that it did do at a community level was lead to people volunteering and saying, "I have volunteered once and I will do it again". At the end of the day, that is exactly what we want.

Chair: Minister, it was used as an example of poor legacy. It was an incredible resource. We all saw how fantastic the games-makers were, how absolutely wonderful they were and how engaged they were, but their details ended up being deleted.

Nigel Huddleston: That is not the intent going forward. There are issues with data and data-sharing, but in terms of impetus and the spur for volunteering as an activity, it was a success.

Q332 Chair: Are you going to take personal ownership of what happens to the data once the games are completed? Because the 13,000 who are going to be front and centre volunteering at the games in Birmingham are going to be an enormous resource that could be deployed throughout the West Midlands and more widely.

Nigel Huddleston: Precisely, so we are having conversations. We are in an environment where data are used with the permission of the person who gives the data, so that is in the volunteering contracts, when you sign up and say whether you would be willing to do X, Y and Z, but we are in conversation about how, with permission, we can ensure that although there may be no opportunities for the Commonwealth Games because we were over-subscribed, there may be other volunteering opportunities in the areas where people live. We are looking at ways to do that. Perhaps the data of the people I met in Coventry was deleted from the database—I don't know whether it was—but they were spurred on to volunteer then and maybe they are still volunteering nine or 10 years later.

Chair: Despite their data being deleted?

Nigel Huddleston: It didn't stop them from being active and getting involved and putting their name forward. That itself is a legacy and a positive one.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q333 **Chair:** Carrie, Unboxed: we understand that in terms of engagement, 66 million is the target globally though fortunately not in the UK, because there aren't 66 million adults in the UK. Who will pay for that? The British Council said it is not going to do it, so who is paying for it?

Carrie Cooke: The 66 million is a stretch target for people who engage with it.

Chair: Stretch target? That means it is nonsense.

Carrie Cooke: No, it means it was set by Martin Green and his team as an aspiration for how many we want to reach.

Chair: Aspiration, okay.

Carrie Cooke: But it is being paid for out of the commissions themselves, because how we reach people is either they come and visit and they go to a live event or they choose to engage through online or broadcast. We count all of those as genuine engagements with the festival. Some of them will, as you say, be people in the UK, some of them will be people overseas and we hope that there will be 66 million of them.

Q334 **Chair:** So whenever we refer to the 66 million target, we are going to refer to that as an aspiration—aspiration/stretch target—which, frankly, means that it is just basically pie in the sky. If we want to send some of our work abroad, however, DCMS is paying for that, is that right?

Carrie Cooke: That, we hope, will be one part of our legacy. We would love some of the content that is put on here in the UK in 2022 to travel abroad. We are talking and in active conversations right now about how we do that, where it might go and when. There is potential for DCMS, but also we are talking to GREAT, VisitBritain, FCDO and DIT about what might go where and how it might support wider government aspirations. I am absolutely certain that our colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be doing the same, because we all have wider—

Q335 **Chair:** There is no firm plan yet?

Carrie Cooke: Not yet. It is in progress at the moment and we can obviously—

Chair: All right, so we have a stretch goal, an aspiration and no firm plan.

Carrie Cooke: We can update the Committee as the plans are—

Chair: Plenty of positivity though, definitely plenty of positivity, but—

Carrie Cooke: Genuine positivity and genuine goodwill to do this. I believe it will happen. We will update you, if you would like, as the plans are firmed up.



Chair: Yes, please do in that respect.

Nigel Huddleston: Chair, can I just come in here? I see you are enjoying yourself today. I get where you are coming from, but I don't think there is any problem with having bold and stretch plans for these things I was lucky enough just last week to go to Expo in Dubai. Because of our reputation for holding major events and showcasing things and our design and creative talents, the amazing people we have who do events management, the amazing people who advise and consult and do the construction and all of these kinds of things, the UK had £1.2 billion of export revenue because of Expo in Dubai.

It goes back to Damian's point earlier on. Often we do underestimate the power that the arts, the creative industries and our design and so on have. Yes, I am sceptical sometimes about stretch targets and these big goals, but I tell you what, it is very meaningful, because we do have to be ambitious because these are things we are very good at and we need to showcase ourselves to the world and then the money comes.

Q336 **Chair:** Minister, why is it therefore there have only been four bilateral DCMS meetings to allow EU travel for creatives and musicians, the people who are going to be taking this to our partner countries across Europe? Since 24 March there have been four meetings, one every two months. It is all very good having stretch goals, but if these people can't even travel, what is the point?

Nigel Huddleston: As I am sure you know—and I think my colleague answered some of this this morning—there have been lots and lots of meetings and discussions going on at ambassadorial and official level as well as ministerial level with the current Minister as well as the previous one, yes.

Q337 **Chair:** In your own letter to this Committee—not you personally, it was another Minister, you will be grateful to know—you just made the sort of assertion that effectively this fantastic Unboxed will be about international engagement, we are going to make all this money potentially as well, but not if we can't send anything and we can't have any people travel to do it.

Nigel Huddleston: As I said though, there is much activity. Just in the last few weeks in the sector, I have signed MOUs with other countries on exactly these sectors because they are so vitally important. We can't do everything at once, but I can tell you there are a large number of people at DCMS, as well as at FCDO and the British Council—

Q338 **Chair:** Who is the roadblock? Is it Lord Frost?

Nigel Huddleston: I think you are veering into another—

Chair: I have had DCMS Ministers and officials speaking to me on this topic over many months and they have said, "We are very, very keen to do this. In fact, our partner countries are very keen to do this because



they really value what we bring". Why is it therefore only four bilaterals with the same country—which, by the way, then led to an agreement—whereas no official bilaterals with any other country during those eight months?

Nigel Huddleston: Chair, as I am sure you will know, you are asking questions that are more appropriate for another Minister rather than me, but I can assure you that the Ministers are having conversations, as are the officials, and regularly. It is not all about meetings. A lot goes on between the meetings. But the point I wanted to make—and you are making a fair one, I am not disagreeing with you on this—is that there is huge economic value in all of these areas and we should not underestimate them.

Q339 **Kevin Brennan:** There is huge economic value, that is right, and I think what this subject shows up is that it is still not fully understood across government how important these sectors are to our economy, not just because of the contribution they make, but the fact that they are growth sectors. We now go back to this business of having an arts Minister in the Lords rather than understanding that the ecosystem of the creative industries and the arts are one and the same thing and that we should ultimately recognise this. We do not have a subsidised sector and a money-making sector; they are all part of the same ecosystem. If we are really going to maintain our comparative advantage on this, I think we need to get this right within DCMS and get DCMS as a Department—and I know you would agree with this bit—rightfully given its proper heft within government, but I won't go on too long, because there is a debate later on about this in Westminster Hall.

Sian, talking about positivity, are you going to the Wales-Australia game on Saturday?

Sian Joseph: Is that an offer of a ticket?

Q340 **Kevin Brennan:** Unfortunately not. I am buying one off my brother, so I am going with him. I have my Covid pass ready, because that is all that is required. I know this is the digital Committee and I have an analogue version of it, but that is all that is required. It is a very simple matter, isn't it, when it comes down to it? There is a huge fuss made about it, but having attended the same game as you did—sadly, the result wasn't very good—it is not that difficult a matter, is it, to have a Covid passport?

Sian Joseph: No, it is straightforward. You need to plan ahead and the guidance is very clear.

Q341 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay, thanks. Minister, what is your thinking or the Government's current thinking on the future of the listed events regime?

Nigel Huddleston: The listed events regime works and of course the purpose is to get that balance right between eyeballs and number of people who are able to watch some pivotal major tentpole sporting events and also enabling the sports to make some money out of it. There is a conflict because the commercial sometimes conflicts with total



HOUSE OF COMMONS

volume, but the listed events regime works. As you know, it has two categories, A and B. It is sometimes misinterpreted, as you will be aware. Just because something is listed does not guarantee that it will then be shown in the way that some people think it will be shown, particularly with highlights.

Q342 Kevin Brennan: That is a description of what it is now, but what is your vision for its future?

Nigel Huddleston: I am comfortable broadly with where it is at the moment. As you will know, there has been a consultation on various elements of it. Again, in terms of listed events, this sits primarily with another Minister. This sits under the broadcasting umbrella with Julia Lopez, but as sports Minister I have an interest in it.

Kevin Brennan: I would have thought so.

Nigel Huddleston: I would say in particular, as you know, we are looking at listing some of the women's events, which my gut reaction is that that would probably be a positive move. I think we do need to review periodically the listed events, but I would say it works.

Q343 Kevin Brennan: What is the impact of on-demand and digital going to be on the future of it as a regime?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, fair point. We constantly need to review the listed events, the nature of listed events, what is listed, what platforms things are listed in because the way that people consume content is fundamentally changing. But still, at the end of the day television is absolutely vital, public sector broadcast is absolutely vital here. It is still the way that most people consume the major sporting events. There is a strong and proud history with some of them in particular—the links with BBC and Wimbledon—and there is an emotional link there as well with the British public that I think would be challenging to remove.

Q344 Kevin Brennan: Yes, Wimbledon is. What about the Six Nations Rugby?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, I know in particular how important that is in Wales. As I said, I think the system works, but it is right that we review it every now and again.

Q345 Kevin Brennan: You know that the autumn internationals have been put behind a paywall on Amazon. Amazon, this incredibly massive multinational corporation, is so greedy and so mean that it has taken or refused to allow live rights to S4C, the tiny little broadcaster that is trying to keep the cultural jewel of the Welsh language alive in these islands. It has taken live coverage off S4C just because it can, because it noticed that quite a lot of people were watching it with the Welsh language coverage. Now it has put on some Welsh language coverage on Amazon, but that is not the point. The point is if you are trying to preserve a language that has miraculously survived into the 21st century and is a living language for hundreds of thousands of people, to then put it behind



HOUSE OF COMMONS

a paywall is pretty greedy, isn't it?

Nigel Huddleston: I will pass those comments on to Minister Lopez, but duly noted, yes.

Q346 **Kevin Brennan:** My criticism is extended to the Welsh Rugby Union as well for agreeing to those terms, but I think it is a pretty shocking state of affairs. Seriously—that is a serious point, obviously—on the matter of listed events, if we think about this debate we have been having about cricket this week and about what has gone on in cricket, in a way it kind of did fall off the live TV public awareness agenda for well over a decade, because the decision was taken at the top of cricket to take it out of public view and hide it behind a paywall and not keep anything live on terrestrial television. Do you think that that might be part of the reason why all of us are suddenly shocked to find out how the diversity problem in cricket has got worse in the last 15 years or so?

Nigel Huddleston: I don't think I am in a position to answer a yes or no to that question, but you are making a fair point. It is important that our major sports, cricket being one of them, has decent visibility and that people who are fans or potentially could become fans have a route into it, which is the purpose behind listed events. I would say some of the evolution we have seen in cricket over the last decade and a bit, some of the new games, some of the new formats, have also brought in new people and perhaps some of those wouldn't have happened if everything was listed. Again, this is always a matter of balance in listed events considerations, but again, I understand the logic of the argument that you are making.

Q347 **Kevin Brennan:** The point is broadly if these sports are to remain part of our national culture, then they have to be visible, particularly those who are not the richer sports out there.

Does the Government have the needs of the independent news media sector in mind, even at this early stage of planning ahead for the potential 2030 World Cup or other mega-sports events?

Nigel Huddleston: I think you raised this in a previous part of the hearing and I have to say I am not 100% on exactly what you are getting at. In terms of are the media part of the mix, are we thinking of what role they should play, that is always the case and always part of the business planning and the overall scoping of any bid, yes.

Q348 **Kevin Brennan:** There is a concern, isn't there, that major sporting events and news coverage of those sporting events is gradually being made more difficult because it isn't always the popular story that might be put out there? That is really what the issue is.

Nigel Huddleston: Right, I understand that, and of course it is the changing formats of interviewing stars and all of those kinds of things. Yes, I think again this is all part of the bidding process. I can say that in some of the bids or some of the bidding processes that I have had visibility of, one of the elements that are part of the criteria is making



sure that encouragement and support for that sport can be maximised. Again, it goes back to either the listing and/or how the news media are included in this would be part of that mix, ie what are you going to be doing if you want to bid for this event in this sport, how will you leverage it to get more people engaged and more young people excited about that sport? Media plays an important role in that.

Q349 Kevin Brennan: It should. Finally, going back to the listed events point, should sports that sell their event rights to subscription channels in order to maximise their revenue expect to get any support from the public purse in the future?

Nigel Huddleston: Again, it depends on the type of listing. Certainly with some of the category B, where there are highlight requirements, it is a slightly mixed model. Again, I can't say a blanket yes or no to that, but again I think it is the mix between commercial exploitation, so that sports can get value out of the intellectual property and the investment they put into it, while simultaneously trying to get as many eyeballs as possible is a good goal. Maybe we get it right and we get it wrong, particularly in the more fragmented media marketplace, but those are all elements of the consideration, yes. As I say, it is difficult here. Every single time there is a debate on listed events, all the points you are making are the things that we need to carefully consider because if we pull too far one way, it has a negative impact on the other side. We all know that, which is why it is so difficult.

Kevin Brennan: I enjoyed watching the Ireland-All Blacks game on Channel 4, which wasn't behind a paywall.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our session. Nigel Huddleston, Carrie Cooke and Sian Joseph, thank you very much for your evidence today.