



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 6188 website www.parliament.uk/cms

Gareth Davies
Comptroller and Auditor General
By email

22 September 2022

Dear Gareth Davies,

Unboxed

My Committee, earlier this year, expressed concerns about the Unboxed festival. The Committee thought that the project was vague about its aims, had little real traction with the general public, and an outrageous stretch target of engaging 66 million people.

The House magazine recently ran a story that would suggest that the Committee's concerns were justified. The engagement looks to be a small fraction of the stretch targets and there would be few people in the country who would be aware that the festival has started and is ongoing. It would, to the untutored eye, appear to be a fiasco in the making and an excessive waste of money during a cost of living crisis.

My Committee will be inviting the Department to come and talk to the Committee about the Unboxed festival as soon as it can make witnesses available to us and we address some of the media froth and whether the Government currently considers the festival to be a success.

The Committee would welcome the National Audit Office undertaking a value for money investigation into this festival. We would like to know whether there have been failures of management, whether political pressures kept the project alive when it should have become obvious it should be shelved and whether the Government knew (or should have known), when it responded to our Report this year, that the projections presented to us were almost completely fantastical.

We recognise that you will need to fit this into your programme of work but would welcome early notice of whether you intend to conduct an inquiry and when this might be completed.

Yours sincerely

Julian Knight MP
Chair, DCMS Committee