



National Audit Office

Comptroller and Auditor General
Gareth Davies

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

Julian Knight MP
Chair
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Date 30 September 2022

Dear Mr Knight,
DCMS: UNBOXED

Thank you for your letter of 22 September setting out your Committee's work to date in scrutinising the Unboxed Festival and requesting that the National Audit Office undertake further work on this topic.

I have now considered how we could best support the Committee in further work on this topic and I propose in the coming months to publish a short, focused report on Unboxed which could act as the basis for future questioning during a Committee session with DCMS.

You suggested that the Committee would like to know whether there have been failures of management, whether political pressures kept the project alive and whether DCMS knew that its visitor number projections were unrealistic when it responded to your Committee's report earlier this year. We will now need to scope our inquiry and consider the key questions to address. I expect that we should be able to report on the costs and benefits associated with Unboxed; its management as a programme including accountabilities and decision-making processes; and planning work undertaken, including forecasting of visitor numbers.

On timing, I recognise your Committee's active interest and that the Department's arm's length subsidiary company, Festival 2022 Ltd, will be winding up its activities in the coming months. I expect to be able to publish my report by the end of 2022. I will be able to share further details of our proposed scope and timetable once we have completed planning work in the next few weeks.

I hope you find this helpful. Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

GARETH DAVIES