

It is difficult to believe that it is a year ago that Richard Hunt handed the <sup>c</sup>CLOA reins to me at the national sports centre at Lilleshall – it seems a long time ago and much water has flowed under many bridges; and we at <sup>c</sup>CLOA have, I think, achieved much more than I ever expected.

The highlight for me is the securing of a £100K worth of funding from Sport England that will increase the understanding of the [commissioning agenda](#) amongst sport and leisure professionals. For this and the work throughout the year including organising the event today I need to thank Heidi. It is good to see some of the participating 8 authorities here today. I look forward to them sharing their learning with colleagues in the coming year.

We have deliberately chosen very different councils. A county and districts; a London Borough; large, very different, unitaries and single districts. We have engaged specialist advisers from very diverse backgrounds to work with these councils and Sport England in order that we can demonstrate the opportunities for colleagues nationally.

Other highlights of the year include the series of [regional planning and sport practitioner events](#), in association with the Town and Country Planning Association. I must also thank Emma Wiggins and Duncan Wood-Allum for organising some very well attended member seminars in the [South](#).

[The role of culture and sport in improving health and well-being](#) was published with positive acknowledgements from a range of notable associations and bodies.

Mark, Diana and I spoke at the Culture, Tourism & Sport (CTS) Conference in Portsmouth and both Diana and I have attended a number of CTS Board meetings. In the coming year we will try and influence the LGA's conference content to reflect what we believe are the key issues for our sector.

Part of the work in the year ahead is to produce a forward plan in order that we can proactively lobby and influence future strategic policy direction. An example of this is the work that Polly Hamilton co-ordinated in relation to the Parliamentary Inquiry into cultural funding. Can I thank Polly for this work and I do hope that others will contribute similarly in the year ahead.

We held Executive Committee meetings at the Arts Council offices in Birmingham where Laura Dyer, one of the ACE Executive Directors, shared future arts thinking and David Sparkes from the Amateur Swimming Association outlined their future strategy and relationship with local government.

We met Sport England earlier in the year and we hope to go to The National Archives in September to meet with their new CEO.

I don't want to spend too much time talking this morning, but I need to add my personal thanks to Mark, Diana and Heidi for the time, effort and support they have given to <sup>c</sup>CLOA and to me in the last year.

As you can see, we have an excellent agenda for the day and by the numbers attending clearly you are all interested in the seeing the Velodrome and hearing from Sean Dawson, the Chief Executive of Lee Valley, in relation to the Olympic journey; Joel Lavery with the inspirational story of British cycling and their success and then after lunch we have Lyndsey Swift talking to us in relation to the Cultural Destination Programme, followed by a double act of Sam West and David Brownlee on the 50p for Culture Campaign.

Starting this morning's session can I introduce Clive Efford, the Shadow Minister for Sport, who will be discussing the policy challenges that would face a Labour Government and the future importance of local authorities in sport. Tanni Grey-Thompson said to me last week, if there were medals awarded for red tape, bureaucracy and talking a good story – then Britain would have more medals than anyone in the world.

We have a myriad of bodies who, if they took action instead of talking about it, would mean that more funding and opportunities would be created for our local communities across the leisure and culture sector. <sup>c</sup>CLOA had an excellent relationship with the previous Secretary of State for Culture Andy Burnham who now has joined up his previous position in Government with his shadow role as the shadow health secretary and is advocating the role of culture and sport in preventing a range of medical conditions. I hope Clive will pick up this mantle and promote the role of Local Authorities in Sport, Health and Leisure.

**Iain Varah, Chair of <sup>c</sup>CLOA**