

# From the Department

## Question Time for Tessa Jowell

While most departments of state are concerned primarily with service delivery, the DCMS is different. From its early days as David Mellor's 'Ministry of Fun', the now-named Department of Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for many of the 'quality of life' destination issues with which Locum Destination Consulting is most concerned. Tourism, Culture, Regeneration, Architecture, the Lottery, Heritage, Sporting Events - all fall into the lap of the Department, and of its Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell. On these issues and more, Locum has drawn up a list of questions for Ms Jowell. Here, exclusively in Locum Destination Review, are her replies.

### BRANDING BRITAIN

Do you think that the image of Britain has made positive progress since the false dawn of 'Cool Britannia'?

I think 'Cool Britannia' missed the point. It was a well meaning attempt to codify what makes this country special, but it was doomed to failure because it tried to codify a culture. And if you codify, you ossify.



*Fistral Beach*



*Pop and Politics*



*Sport*



*Silverstone*

Britain can, of course be 'cool', for instance to those who wish to go clubbing in Leeds or surfing on Fistral Beach in Newquay. But it can also be traditional, for instance for Japanese tourists wanting to learn about our royalty or visit our stately homes or even the homes of Beatrix Potter or Wordsworth. And we offer unrivalled sporting occasions,



Simon Rattle

ranging from Wimbledon to Silverstone and Premiership Football to the Open. Other visitors prefer to explore our market towns and rural life, relax in a seaside resort or go climbing or walking in the Highlands.

The important thing for a country as diverse as ours is not to project one single image but to establish what our visitors want and ensure that each individual can easily find out how to meet

their needs. That is why VisitBritain carries out so much research into what visitors want and is making great strides in developing better ways to provide them with relevant product and destination information. For instance via EnglandNet, which will also soon allow on-line booking.

Our mission is to make it easy for visitors to find out what they can do here and then ensure that their expectations are met or exceeded when they arrive.

### Which destinations in Europe really excite you as examples of good cultural development practice?

Berlin comes naturally to my mind as I went for two days recently. Having shortened my visit last year in January, I was really looking forward to meeting a variety of key players in the German cultural life and experiencing at first hand the very close cultural relations existing between our two countries. An excellent example of a good cultural development practice is the initiative of Simon Rattle, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, to link Berlin's socially deprived schools with the Orchestra. I saw him conducting 200 young people from diverse communities, in a new choreography of Ravel's ballet score *Daphnis et Chloé*. I was impressed by the scale of the project and how children gave their best in this creative environment. Through such life-enriching experiences, children develop the essential skills to improve their social behaviour at school and to build up their future with more confidence. I would like to see, by 2005, a similar project flourishing between London schools and world class artists.

### SPORT AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

#### How do you think London's bid will benchmark against Sydney's achievement, particularly the Sydney stadium facilities complex?

I think London's proposals compare well with Sydney. Of course the Sydney Olympics were a fantastic showpiece - they showed the world how the Games can be run. London's bid is a very strong one. Hosting the Olympics here, for the

first time since 1948, would be a fantastic coup not just for the capital, but for the whole country. It would, of course, not only provide a springboard for sport but also a huge economic boost for tourism, with millions of people being encouraged to come to the UK around the time of the Games.

The bid also combines the development of new sports facilities - such as a magnificent new Olympic Park to rival Sydney's stadium - with existing world class venues such as Lord's, Wimbledon and Wembley. One of the crucial aspects of the bid has been that each new venue has been conceived to meet long-term needs. The Sydney Olympic stadium has struggled since 2000 and it is lessons like this that we have taken on board as the bid has been developed.



#### Are the Olympics capable of making a success from the Dome?

The Dome could play a key role in the Olympics if they come to London in 2012. The venue is set to stage gymnastics, basketball and handball finals and would boost its profile enormously as a future sporting venue.

### TOURISM

Why do you think that tourism is best left within the DCMS remit, rather than being transferred to DTI where any Government intervention can take its place along with other growing sectors of the UK economy?



Whilst tourism is an important industry, it is also distinctive and policy towards it has to recognise its particular characteristics. It has important links with the cultural, sporting and leisure sectors: our assets in those areas are an integral part of the tourism product, and tourists in turn form a vital part of the economy of the cultural and leisure sectors. We have learned a great deal from studying the DTI sponsorship model, but it requires some adaptation to fit the special needs and opportunities of the tourism industry.

Since April 2003, Regional Development Agencies have been given strategic responsibility for tourism. This allows tourism at the regional level to sit at the centre of economic development and to be linked to all related policies and strategies, including skills, transport and planning.

## CULTURE

The cultural sector has been trying desperately hard to demonstrate its economic worth and contribution to the country. However, many of the social, education and 'quality of life' benefits delivered by cultural projects do not 'tick' the basic 'income and employment' outputs demanded by the main public funders (particularly the RDAs). What is the government doing to ensure that these 'novel' projects, which can have enormous regeneration benefits, are assessed in a meaningful way by the public funding agencies?



Liverpool wins the European Capital of Culture bid

I agree that getting the right language to capture cultural outcomes in any feasible way is difficult, but I am convinced of the transformational effect of culture in the regeneration of neighbourhoods, deprived areas and entire cities. I am equally aware of the lack of cohesion in the assessment of the benefits of cultural projects. For this reason I have committed myself to issuing a document which identifies the success factors that make culture a central driver of regeneration, and to making sure the lessons are well learned. This document will bring together the key evidence and make the case for the vital place of culture in regeneration. It will also define the differing degrees of cultural presence in regeneration projects and argue for the validity of impacts which are not just economic, but social, environmental and creative. I think there has to be a balance between the purely economic outputs and those of a qualitative nature. These can be equally compelling in making the case for cultural projects, both large and small.

**After much encouragement by the Department to local authorities to develop local cultural strategies, the Department then seemed to change its mind about the value of such strategies and dropped the requirement. What is the current Departmental policy position on the value of cultural strategies at a local level?**

Local Cultural Strategies (LCS) were one of a huge number of arrangements considered during the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister's 'Plan Rationalisation' exercise that took place in autumn 2002. The reduced planning burden built on changes announced in the White Paper 'Strong Local

Leadership - Quality Public Services' and was a further important step towards a more enlightened and positive working relationship between central and local government. The fact that LCS were thereafter expected to be subsumed within Community Strategies should not be seen as a 'change of mind' in DCMS.

Developing a LCS offered local authorities the opportunity to improve their strategic view of the hugely varied cultural services sector and is often used as a launching pad for consultation and community initiatives. There is no statutory responsibility on local authorities to produce a LCS but DCMS and other strategic partners such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Culture and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), actively encouraged them to do so.

Despite the lack of statutory responsibility, local authorities continue to adopt LCS. The Audit Commission's focus on an holistic, corporate drive within Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) underlines their potential value as the 'cross-cutting' approach becomes increasingly common. Audit Commission statistics published in autumn 2003 suggest that well over half the 388 English local authorities have now adopted a LCS whilst others continue to work towards this goal.

The Department continues to support local authorities in their efforts to improve cultural services and, whilst stopping short of encouraging the adoption of a LCS, considers that this course of action can be of considerable benefit. Indeed many people throughout the culture sector have found that the transition to Community Strategies (which are a statutory responsibility) has been aided by their LCS experience.

DCMS has commissioned consultants who, working with colleagues across the sector, are developing a guidance document designed to encourage local authorities to give cultural services a higher profile within their Community Strategies and in establishing links with their Local Strategic Partnerships.

## REDEVELOPMENT

**Britain's local authority sports and leisure centres and swimming pools (mainly built in the 1970s and early 1980s) are coming to the end of their useful lives: what do you see as the strategic responsibility for this and are you satisfied with how redevelopment initiatives are being conducted?**

Sports facilities such as leisure centres and swimming pools play a massive role in communities, providing opportunities for people to keep fit and healthy, a place to learn and develop skills in a particular sport or simply a place for people to meet and mix. It is also true that there is a need for many of these facilities to be updated in order to have the maximum benefit. With this in mind we have made an unprecedented amount of funding available to improve sports facilities - over £1 billion of lottery money is going into improving sports across the UK. The benefits of this fantastic investment will be seen over the next few years as more and more 21st century centres crop up across the UK. And we are especially targetting young people, trying to ensure they have every chance to keep active and play the sports they want to.

With less lottery funds available to support new capital leisure and sport developments, what is the government doing to identify alternative sources of funds?



*The Don Valley Stadium in Sheffield*

As I've said, there is an unprecedented amount of money going into sport through the lottery - over £1 billion in improving facilities. And although ticket sales have indeed dipped, there will continue to be a considerable investment in sport from the lottery. And aside from that, central government money - more than £450 million - is being invested in transforming PE and school sport. We've also sought to take a strategic approach to the provision of facilities that will ensure best value for money. We are currently developing a database of sports facilities with Sport England and this will help provide local authorities with a useful tool for identifying what type their area will need. The database will also be made available for the public so that they can identify where their local sports centres, tennis courts and swimming pools are located.

We have seen a number of PFI schemes for schools, hospitals and roads, but very few for leisure or cultural developments. Is this simply a matter of the scale of developments involved or are there other reasons for the poor response from the leisure sector?

There are in fact a number of operational cultural and leisure facilities that have been financed via the PFI route - for example a new library in Bournemouth and leisure centres in Sefton and Uttlesford.

My department currently has an allocation of £210 million PFI 'credits' for the five-year period to 2005/06. Our 'credits' have been in great demand from local authorities. Most have now been allocated to cultural and leisure schemes, such as new central and branch libraries, sport and leisure facilities, swimming pools, an historical resource and cultural centre and for cultural and leisure facilities as part of wider school developments.

## REGENERATION

Which destinations in Britain do you think best demonstrate the synergy between sport, culture, media and city regeneration?

Many places are doing this but three that spring immediately to mind are:

- Manchester, where the whole city pulled together after a dreadful terrorist atrocity to rebuild the centre, make the most of its first-class cultural offering and host an excellent Commonwealth Games;
- Liverpool, which has deservedly won the honour to be European Capital of Culture amidst very tough competition, whose Albert Docks area includes both heritage and media attractions and where regeneration depends greatly on the spirit of its residents and the passion they have for their sport and music; and of course
- London, whose breadth and quality of all these types of attraction are unrivalled world-wide, which is why I sincerely hope that our plans for a successful Olympic bid, including regeneration of a significant area of north-east London, meet with success.

