

MINISTERIAL WRITTEN STATEMENT

Monday 26th JULY 2010

Department for Culture, Media and Sport's arm's length bodies

The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt):

DCMS is responsible for a number of sectors which people are passionate about. From sports through to television, and live music through to museums, DCMS and its public bodies make a real difference to the quality of people's lives.

Despite being one of the smaller Government Departments, we are responsible for a network of more than fifty public bodies.

In my first few months as Secretary of State I have made it my priority to examine our network of public bodies critically with the aim of improving accountability, transparency and value for money.

In line with the commitments set out in the Coalition Document, I have been applying the Government's agreed tests to each of our bodies: does it perform a technical function?; does it need to be politically impartial?; and does it act independently to establish facts?

This forms part of the work being undertaken across Government, and led by the Cabinet Office, to restore proper accountability for activities funded by public money. Public bodies which do not meet one of the three tests outlined will be bought back into departments or devolved if their function is necessary or abolished if not. This work will reduce the number of public bodies, increase the transparency and accountability of the remaining few, and ensure more effective delivery of public services.

As a result of this review, I am today announcing my intention to make a number of changes. This will include:

- the abolition of the UK Film Council;
- the abolition of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council;
- the merger of UK Sport and Sport England;
- the merger of the National Lottery Commission and Gambling Commission¹;
- the abolition of the Advisory Council on Libraries and the wind up of the Legal Deposit Advisory Panel.
- the abolition of the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites and the declassification of the Advisory Committee on National Historic Ships.
- Declassifying the Theatres Trust so it can act as an independent statutory advisory body.

Further work will be done in discussion with the bodies concerned and other interested parties over the summer to finalise the details and timing of these proposals.

Where bodies are to be abolished we will look to transfer key functions to other existing bodies so as to continue to support our sectors and preserve the necessary expertise. In the case of the Film Council, for example, this will include their current responsibilities for the distribution of Lottery funding for films, which will be maintained, as well as support for the certification process which is critical to the film tax relief, which will also be maintained. We will maintain a strong relationship with the British Film Institute.

We will also continue to explore further opportunities to improve the accountability and coherence of our public bodies landscape.

We are looking closely at our responsibility for Heritage and the Built Environment and so are currently considering the role and remit of English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Additionally, we are considering the role of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and exploring opportunities to consolidate its functions. We will also be discussing

¹ Subject to a business case.

with the Church of England the merits of declassifying the Churches Conservation Trust so it has greater operational freedom.

In addition we have reviewed the status of the two public bodies set up to help us deliver a successful games in 2012 – the Olympic Delivery Authority and the Olympic Lottery Distributor – and have concluded there is no need to change our existing plans to wind up these organisations following the Games.

The Olympic Games provide a huge opportunity to boost inbound and domestic tourism and we continue to explore the best way of realising our ambitious goals in this area. As part of this we are considering the status, role and functions of Visit England and Visit Britain. A final decision will be made on this in the autumn as part of the Spending Review.

Any necessary legislative changes will be made through the Cabinet Office Public Bodies Bill, which is due to be introduced in the autumn.

Where proposed changes have implications for the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland we will work closely with them to finalise proposals.