

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Olympic Games generates lots of enthusiasm and great expectations. More than simply a sporting event, hosting 'the greatest show on earth' is seen by some as a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' to provide new infrastructure and deliver benefits to local residents and communities. Those organising the London 2012 Bid are no different, claiming a Games would deliver a legacy of new sporting facilities, thousands of new jobs, new businesses, a 'step-change' in the nation's physical activity and ultimately a transformation of the East End of London.

But an analysis of past Olympic Games reveals that there is no guaranteed beneficial legacy from hosting an Olympic Games. While the cost of hosting a Games is significant – currently estimated at £3.6 billion for London – this is only a relatively small proportion of London's annual GDP (currently around £162 billion). And there is little evidence that past Games have delivered benefits to those people and places most in need. What is clear is that those cities that have benefited most – and Barcelona is the clearest example – have entrenched the Olympics within a broader urban strategy. The challenge for London is, therefore, to embed the preparation for and hosting of the Games into a broader social policy agenda from the outset. Given the levels of disadvantage in the East End of London, this is especially important.

A sustainable social legacy

There will be a significant amount of new development in the Lower Lea Valley whether London hosts the 2012 Olympic Games or not. This does provide the opportunity for a significant amount of regeneration, but the detail must be right. In the past flagship regeneration projects have tended to prioritise change as a good in itself, with development *in* the area taking place rather than development *of* the area.

Games-related development must be embedded within existing projects, agencies and partnerships and could provide an opportunity to bring additional resources into the area. Securing such local involvement early on will be key; delivering a sustainable social legacy will require significant involvement from the bottom-up, and too often in the past the social legacy has been an afterthought. Another fundamental part of this process must be the setting of realistic ambitions, around which some debate is encouraged. If these issues are addressed, a London 2012 Olympic Games and the redevelopment of the Lower Lea Valley provide the opportunity to develop a model of best practice for regeneration.

A sustainable employment legacy

A London 2012 Olympic Games will offer an opportunity to provide employment benefits, but this will require significant planning from the outset to achieve. Despite being the UK's most prosperous region, London has a low employment rate, with East London suffering from particularly low rates. The employment problem is not due to a lack of available employment, but rather due to significant 'supply-side' problems (for example, low skills and employer hiring practices).

If Games-related development is to provide new employment opportunities to those who are currently unemployed, then detailed work is required with both employers and potential employees. The employment opportunities must be identified, employers' recruitment techniques need to be better understood and individuals, often with low skills, need to be readied so they can access these opportunities. Without such proactive measures there is a real danger that any new employment opportunities will solely be accessed by well qualified individuals travelling from across the South East.

A sustainable environmental legacy

The IOC's stated aim is that hosting an Olympic Games should have no negative net impact on the environment. No previous Games has met this tough challenge – not even the so-called 'green games' in Sydney. It is a challenge that London could and should make its own

– adding both to the distinctiveness of its Olympic Bid and its legacy value. London should adopt the twin principles of avoiding/reducing negative environmental impacts and where this is not possible, off-setting them with an appropriate environmental benefit.

A sustainable environmental legacy for London's Games also needs to go beyond the minimum of a one-off greening of the Olympic site and facilities. Instead, it must help boost capacity to start closing the gap between environmental targets and actually delivering on them across the whole of the UK. This challenge is less a technical one and more a matter of breaking through cultural and institutional inertia. This will require a proactive, interventionist, public interest-driven delivery process and a strong emphasis on developing the market for green technology.

A sustainable sporting legacy

For a London 2012 Olympics to deliver a sustainable sporting legacy it must contribute towards an increase in sports participation across the UK. Past host cities have tended to expect the Olympics to automatically deliver this. However, the evidence shows that past Olympics have failed to bring with them a sustained increase in participation. To avoid a similar mistaken expectation, a London 2012 Olympics must only be one element of the broader sports participation agenda.

The challenge will be to convert the increased interest that an Olympics would bring into sustained participation. To achieve this, a 2012 London Olympics must focus attention on grassroots sports. A partnership approach will also be an imperative as schools, clubs and sport agencies work effectively together. And fundamentally, an imaginative and proactive approach is required to capitalise on any interest as soon as possible.

A sustainable cultural legacy

If a London 2012 Olympics is to realise the IOC's aspiration to place culture and education on an equal footing to sport then it will have to go beyond simply using culture as a marketing tool. A sustainable cultural legacy would represent an opportunity to build lasting links

amongst a disparate cultural sector and foster new forms of partnership working with schools, organisations and individuals throughout the UK and overseas. If this is to be achieved, the whole of the sector will need to be engaged, including its disruptive fringes.

The combination of culture and the Olympics represents a chance to learn and investigate ourselves as a nation, rather than just presenting a summary in an opening ceremony. If this is to be lasting, the use of cultural programming in the Games will have to contribute directly towards widening access to culture and participation in it and in so doing increase our ability to better understand ourselves and one another. Only if this is achieved could the Games be considered 'culturally sustainable'.

A sustainable London Olympics

To secure a sustainable legacy, the challenge is to minimise the frequent mismatch between the infrastructure and investment required to run a successful Games and the longer term needs of the host community. To achieve this will require a proactive approach. It is clear that a significant element of a sustainable legacy will be secured before the Games themselves. In doing this, three organising principles will be fundamental.

First, the Olympics must be embedded within existing mainstream programmes and policy agendas that start well before 2012 and continue well after. There are policies, programmes and initiatives at all scales of government that are relevant and provide opportunities. Second, the Olympics uniquely mobilises people, interest and resources. There is an opportunity to strategically use this 'Olympics effect' to suspend some elements of 'business as usual' and deliver higher environmental quality, sports participation rates and levels of volunteering. Thirdly, for local communities to fully benefit from any opportunities, there must be an investment in community capacity and ownership.

The nine policies ideas outlined below aim to contribute towards securing a sustainable legacy. They do not represent a wish list and are careful not to make unrealistic claims on public finances – indeed

some are designed to generate extra resources. Overall however, there must also be a recognition that to deliver a sustainable Olympics long-term spending must not only be on hard infrastructure (for example, new facilities) but also softer social infrastructure. As one of our interviewees put it: 'Delivering the legacy will be a people issue. Do not for one minute think it will only be facilities issue.'

Our proposals are:

- Community Enterprise Endowment Fund
- Off-Setting Programme
- Employment Taskforce
- The Street Olympics
- Codifying a Healthy City
- International Olympic Corps
- Volunteer Programme Plus
- An Annual National School Olympics
- A Cultural Resource for Open Learning