After the Goldrush Seminar Series Summary

Seminar 1: The Sporting Legacy

Overview
- A London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (O+PG) must contribute towards the broader regeneration plans of the Lower Lea Valley (LLV).
- A London 2012 O+PG must be used to achieve an increase in sports participation. There are potential conflicts between increasing sports participation and elite sporting excellence. The sport community and other stakeholders need to agree priorities and develop distinct strategies for both.
- The evidence from past games shows that increasing public participation in sports has not been effectively achieved.
- Those involved in sport policy must act now to establish programmes and schemes for a sustainable sporting legacy.

Introduction
The seminar heard from 2 speakers: Debbie Jevans (Head of Sport, London 2012), who outlined the Bid Team’s current plans for achieving a sustainable sporting legacy; and Professor Fred Coalter (Institute for Sports Research, University of Stirling), who acted as respondent. The debate was then opened up to a roundtable discussion of around 50 people involved in sports policy. We are very gratefully acknowledge our project partners: British Waterways, Camelot, the Environment Agency, the GLA and Sport England.

Both the presentations and the subsequent discussion focused upon the opportunity that a London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (O+PG) could present in terms of delivering an increase in levels of sports participation.

There is a sense that sport must be used to secure ‘public goods’—to achieve broader social goals and that a London 2012 O+PG would provide a unique opportunity to deliver on this agenda. However, the evidence from past games in Sydney, Calgary and New Zealand presented by Professor Coalter demonstrated that the step-change in participation that the Bid Team are arguing a Games could secure, had not been delivered in the past.

These findings must, however, be balanced by other evidence presented by Professor Coalter. This research argued that the problem in the past had been that host countries had effectively expected the O+PG to automatically deliver a step-change in participation rates. In short there is little evidence of past host
countries proactively running schemes and programmes to capitalise on the opportunity their O+PG presented.

The focus of the round table discussion was on the issues that will need to addressed if the UK is to avoid these mistakes.

The discussion has been grouped under 4 themes:
1. Objectives
2. Funding
3. Governance
4. Need for immediate action

1. Objectives

There was a lot of discussion on what a London 2012 O+PG should be expected to deliver. Importantly, a lot of this discussion was focused on what a London 2012 O+PG should realistically be expected to deliver. Two themes stood out. First, it is important to get a shared understanding of the opportunity a London 2012 O+PG will present and the role of different bodies and organisations in helping to achieve this. Second, this expectation must be realistic in terms of both the claims made for what is achievable and the role of different bodies and organisations in achieving this.

There needs to be a clearer understanding of what the objectives are for a London 2012 O+PG. At least three were identified in the discussion: greater sporting excellence; increasing public participation in sports; and promoting healthy lifestyles. The relationship between each objective was not clear and it was also highlighted that the different objectives did not automatically support one another.

Professor Coalter presented evidence that past Games had not used an Olympics to promote public participation in sport and elite sporting excellence. For example, evidence from Sydney showed that the Olympics encouraged watching but not participating in sports as people were deterred by the high standards, beyond the reach of ordinary people. Equally, sporting excellence did not automatically bring benefits for promoting healthy lifestyles: the US is the number one in the world for sporting excellence yet also number one for obesity.

Separate development and investment strategies will be needed for all three objectives, and in the context of limited funds and facilities, prioritisation will be inevitable. The main focus of the round table discussion was how to increase public participation.
There was a general acceptance that there is an important division of labour at the heart of the London 2012 O+PG process:

- **London 2012:** it is the role of the Bid Team to emphasise the opportunities that a London 2012 O+PG would present. It is their job to win the bid and secure the necessary support – locally and globally – to achieve this.
- **The wider sports community:** it is largely incumbent upon the relevant bodies, authorities and organisations to help deliver on, and exploit the, opportunities a London 2012 O+PG would present.

An interesting challenge for the Bid Team will be how to generate the buy-in across the UK in a way that does not raise expectations through promises which a London 2012 O+PG cannot deliver, or causes cynicism with people dismissing the Bid Team’s claims as unachievable. The need to set realistic and achievable targets, whilst recognising the huge opportunity a London 2012 O+PG presents, was a major theme of the discussion.

**Expectation**
- A London 2012 O+PG must be used to achieve an increase in sports participation

**Organising principles**
- A clear case must be made for how the UK as a whole is going to use the O+PG opportunity at the local level
  - The whole UK must back the bid process, so the Bid Team must also consider the potentially negative impacts of a London 2012 O+PG
- National sporting bodies must commit to delivering a sustainable O+PG legacy
  - A key challenge for a sporting legacy, therefore, is the early involvement of national sporting bodies in the bid process
  - Another key challenge is to increase participation by children in sport
- The LLV requires new, long-term, sporting facilities whether the bid wins or not. Currently, swimming is the only mass participation sport with a significant investment planned whether the bid succeeds or not

**Suggestions**
Identifying the correct targets to gauge the success, or otherwise, of a London 2012 O+PG was another significant topic of discussion. There was some argument that targets should not be used at all – the O+PG are a catalyst and should not be expected to deliver certain sporting targets on their own. More prevalent was the call for
the use of easily identifiable and achievable targets. There was some suggestion of moving beyond the broad aggregate targets used under the government’s PSA approach, towards incremental targets for individual sports. This is discussed further in the ‘governance’ section.

Two specific targets were suggested during the discussion. It was felt that a London 2012 O+PG could be judged a success by:

- A higher percentage of 17 year olds deciding to continue participating in sport in 2012 than do currently
- The participation rate at sporting facilities in the LLV would have doubled by 2012

Other suggestions to help increase participation were:

- There must be a ‘sports legacy champion’ in a powerful position within the organisational structure of a London 2012 O+PG to ensure the sports legacy issues are sufficiently considered
- Regional sports boards and national sporting bodies must react to the opportunity of the Olympics by developing radical ways of delivering sport and exercise. For example, new ways of engaging the youth and health agendas
  - Cost is a fundamental issue for many people – one suggestion was that making sport free for children would be such a radical proposal, but would be worth funding
- The UK tends to focus its attention on role models. There needs to be a mix of promoting national sporting heroes and more support for local role models who can develop on-going relationships with local people and communities

2. Funding

Many contributors saw a successful London 2012 O+PG bid as a unique opportunity both to lobby the government for enhanced spending on sport and consider alternative sources of funding. There was also some mention of broader development issues and how and where money should be spent. But overall there was a clear sense that to maximise the opportunity a London 2012 O+PG would present, there would need to be additional spending on promoting sports participation, not only on new sports facilities. It was suggested that conditions should be attached to any new funding – for example requiring sports associations and individual clubs to do more outreach work and encourage new members.
**Expectation**

- A London 2012 O+PG presents a unique opportunity for the funding of sport in the UK – at both grassroot and elite levels

**Organising principles**

- There is a need to invest in the physical and organisational structure of sport in the UK as there has been too much under-investment for too long
- New sources of money, including increased levels of funding from central government, need to be identified
  - Finance from sport development funds should not be diverted to the Olympic bid
  - Local authorities cannot be expected to cover the costs of new development and participation schemes from existing funding
- Investment should not be imbalanced to favour high performance/low participation sports
- Given the IOC will undertake opinion polls in the country at large, there must be economic benefits to the UK’s regions and these must be well publicised
  - There was some disagreement over whether funding should be focussed in the LLV, or spread more evenly across the UK
- Local councillors are concerned that development will be along the lines of the London Docklands Development Corporation. They argue that the emphasis on local-led regeneration must remain for the East End to receive maximum benefits

**Suggestions**

- Both HM Treasury and DfES should be approached to obtain funding to improve grassroots sports participation. A London 2012 O+PG would provide an unprecedented opportunity to make this case
- Sponsors might have a long-term commitment to facilities in the Olympic Village – for example, they might sponsor the naming of the new facilities
- A Sport Endowment Fund could be set up with donations from visitors and corporate sources
- The new facilities will require large amounts of public funding, the whole site could be placed in a trust after a games to ensure that any profits are reinvested into maintaining the facilities

3. **Governance**

Governance can be something of an enigmatic issue – it is in some ways an easy, cheap criticism to say that ‘governance structures must be improved’, yet effective governance is a significant factor in
delivering policy objectives. A London 2012 O+PG will be no different. The discussions at the seminar suggested that a key challenge will be to establish an effective organisational structure that engages the relevant authorities, agencies and bodies in a way that promotes a holistic yet focused approach that identifies, plans for and meets the different needs before, during and after a London 2012 O+PG.

**Expectation**

- Effective governance structures that identify, plan for and meet the different needs before, during and after a London 2012 O+PG.

**Organising principles and suggestions**

- The over-riding theme here was the need for more engagement
  - The 4 boroughs must be more engaged with the LDA
  - Sports’ governing bodies need to engage better at the local level
- The actual terms of this improved engagement by sports’ governing bodies was a significant theme of discussion
  - What is their specific role?
  - What should they be expected to deliver?
  - Resonating with similar points made under the Objectives: suggestions sub-section (page 4), should the governing bodies have specific participation targets set as part of any public funding received (N.B. Sport England is already actively considering this)

4. **Need for immediate action**

Given Professor Coalter’s identification of past host countries’ supply side failures – that there is little evidence of effective programmes and schemes being established to maximise the opportunity of an O+PG – it is unsurprising that this emerged as a key theme. There seemed to be a near universal agreement that for the UK to capitalise on the opportunity a London 2012 O+PG would present, action must be taken now.

**Expectation**

- We cannot afford to wait to hear whether London’s bid is successful. Sports development strategies must be established and embedded now if the full opportunity of a London 2012 O+PG is to be realised

**Organising principles and suggestions**

- There were few early initiatives before the Commonwealth Games by the local authorities to increase participation. London must learn from this missed opportunity
• The Olympic bid has already generated much interest in Newham and Westminster that the respective councils are proactively trying to exploit
• Sports’ governing bodies must exploit the opportunity be using early branding strategies

Conclusion

When O+PGs are discussed, much of the debate often focuses upon infrastructure questions. As the well publicised problems faced by Athens demonstrate, the challenge of providing the necessary sporting infrastructure is a huge task. Building 11 new facilities for a London 2012 O+PG will be a similarly challenging task.

However, the evidence presented by Professor Coalter demonstrates that a focus on providing this infrastructure could mean that significant opportunities will be missed. A key challenge is to develop the adequate ‘soft infrastructure’ to deliver sustainable increases in sports participation and the Bid Team’s aspiration of ‘a step change in the nation’s physical activity’.

The contributions made at this seminar demonstrate that it is important there is a clear understanding of what this ‘step change’ should realistically look like and how it could be delivered. Therefore, an immediate challenge is to develop an agreed expectation of what a London 2012 O+PG could deliver, so:

• There is a clear understanding of the opportunities a London 2012 O+PG presents towards increasing sports participation
• The relevant authorities and bodies better understand their role in delivering increases in participation
• There is a clear understanding of what the relevant authorities and bodies across the UK need to do to secure benefits from the games
• It is easier to make the case to HM Treasury for increased funding
• It is better to establish programmes early enough to maximise the benefits of an O+PG
• It is easier to make a strong case for amendments to O+PG facilities to better reflect community sporting needs where necessary
• If the bid is not successful, a legacy of closer working and more clearly identifying how sport is useful in contributing towards other social objectives, is left

A clear and realistic account of what a London 2012 O+PG could deliver based upon a frank assessment of past games’ impact could reflect well with the IOC. This would demonstrate that national
support had been secured around realistic expectations, themselves based upon a critically assessment of past games.

Contact
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