



# Olympic dream

The 2012 Olympics provides an unprecedented opportunity to create a sporting and cultural legacy for children and young people across the UK. *Joe Lepper* investigates what has been achieved so far

**T**he success of the London 2012 Olympics bid was grounded on a commitment to create a lasting legacy “for the next generation”. Among those with unwavering confidence in the pledge is International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge, who just last month said London had “raised the bar on how to deliver a lasting legacy” during his visit to the UK.

But 100 days before the launch of the Games, the strength of the Olympic committee’s commitment still divides opinion across the sporting, cultural and children’s sectors, particularly in a dramatically different economic and political environment to when the bid triumphed in 2005.

As a country recovering from recession and with a coalition government in power, shifts in policy and funding have led to some controversial decisions. The axing of £162m funding for school sports partnerships in 2010 created a furore among teachers and

sport stars alike. Created under the Labour government in 2006, the partnerships are based on collaboration between schools that increase participation and access to sport.

But Education Secretary Michael Gove questioned the quality of the partnerships and

instead pledged £47m to promote competitive sport through the School Games programme.

The Youth Sports Trust is involved in delivering the School Games programme and, so far, 12,000 schools have signed up to stage competitions.

While the trust is encouraged by the government’s commitment to find more ways of getting young people into sport, concern has been raised that the latest programme does not focus more on primary school-aged children in order to maximise the impact beyond the Olympics.

The trust’s chair Baroness Sue Campbell says: “Getting children aged between five and 10 involved in sport is crucial to their wellbeing.” She also admits that the School Games will not appeal to all children. While school sports are “terrific at engaging schools in sport, the danger is we will exclude some children”, she adds.

However, she welcomes the fact that more than half of school sports partnerships have survived – mostly as trusts or social enterprises – and calls for a continued ethos »

## LONDON 2012 FACTS AND FIGURES

**£1bn** will be invested through lottery and central government funding in youth sport over the next five years as part of the government’s Youth Sport Strategy

**6,000** community sports clubs will be created by local schools as part of this strategy

**60%** of government money handed out to national sport bodies will be used to support 14- to 25-year-olds

of collaboration at a local level. Baroness Campbell says the tremendous achievement of these partnerships can be demonstrated by figures collected by the Labour government in its PE and Sports survey. These show the proportion of children in Years 1 to 11 who took part in at least two hours of PE in school rose from 44 per cent in 2003/04 to 84 per cent in 2009/10.

But amid a backdrop of wider cuts to school and youth service budgets, Campbell is concerned the inspiration that the Olympics provides to young people could be lost. "The promise was that we will inspire a generation to choose sport, but is the provision there?"

### Access to sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) document *Beyond 2012*, presented to IOC members during their visit last month, promises to address such concerns. Among the funding pledges in the document is the £135m Places People Play programme, which promises to upgrade up to 1,000 local sports venues to increase access to sport.

A DCMS spokeswoman says: "We are improving links between schools and community sports clubs and many primary schools will have links with at least one local club. The School Games, in which competition is unapologetically at the very heart, will see tens of thousands of young people playing competitive sport in schools across the country. Sport in this country is in a better place than it has ever been and that is something we should build on, not knock down."

Councillor Guy Nicholson, lead member for regeneration and the Olympics in host borough Hackney, is in no doubt that the Olympics will transform the lives of children and young people in east London.

As part of the bid, Hackney negotiated for a new primary school to be built in the Olympic Park, complete with playing fields that will be shared with an existing nearby primary school. "We have taken a long-term look at the funding by ensuring that while the plans for the Olympic Park were being drawn up, it included open space and a new school," says Nicholson.

Access to the Olympic Park will be free after the Olympics, and a 6,000-capacity indoor arena will transfer to Hackney council, with Greenwich Leisure managing it as community and sports facilities. Greenwich Leisure will also manage the aquatics centre on the Olympic Park as a community swimming pool.

Nicholson says the council is keen to ensure that local enthusiasm for the Olympics continues long after the games. With this in mind, the council has created its own "ambassadors" programme where children from primary and secondary schools are

## LONDON 2012 ORGANISING COMMITTEE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMMES

### YOUNG LEADERS

One hundred young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have been recruited to promote the Olympics in their areas. All have completed a leadership and communication course as part of the programme, sponsored by BP. All those selected are based near one of the oil giant's main UK bases. The Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust, volunteering organisation V and the Aberdeen Foyer are supporting the programme.

### CHILDREN'S PROMISE

Around 700 children born on 20 December 2004 (the date being 20/12 during the bid process) have been promised a role in the Olympics. They and one parent or guardian have been offered tickets to the opening ceremony of the Paralympic games. They will take part in local ceremonies involving the Olympic torch's journey across Britain.

### GET SET PROGRAMME

More than 23,000 schools have signed up to this education programme, which offers teachers Olympic-themed activities and lesson resources. The focus is on promoting Olympic ideals of friendship, courage, determination, excellence, equality, respect and inspiration.

### INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION

As part of the bid, a pledge was made to provide sporting opportunities for children around the world. The target is to support 12 million children in 20 countries. UK schools are encouraged to form partnerships with schools globally and share experiences of sport.

### YOUNG GAMESMAKERS

This is part of the committee's pledge to create volunteering opportunities around the games. More than 2,000 volunteering opportunities for 16- to 18-year-olds have been created to take on roles ranging from ball boy or girl at beach volleyball, to admin roles with the technology team.

chosen to promote the Olympic ideals among their peers across the country.

"We need to make sure the motivation the games has brought continues, which is why we will continue with the ambassador programme," Nicholson says. "We are already linking up with schools in Glasgow, which is hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games."

Newham's young mayor Abraham Male says the Olympics is now part of daily life for young people in the borough, another host of the Games. "Of course it has an impact on our lives," he says. "For example, all the schools in Newham are really pushing the Olympic values of determination, excellence and friendship. I have seen a big increase in young people getting involved in sporting events and there is much more interest in sport."

But Moira Sinclair, Arts Council England's 2012 lead, admits that using the Olympics as a catalyst to promote sports and the arts is "more challenging the further out of London you go". To counter this, the Arts Council has sought to target its Cultural Olympiad funding on events "that will stimulate local interest".

This has included an event in Nottingham that will bring artists aged between 16 and 24 together, focusing on the global ethos of the Olympics and a procession in Coventry during the Games, where children will follow a 10-metre-tall puppet of Lady Godiva powered by cyclists.

Sinclair says all the projects that the Arts Council funds are asked to provide evaluation to prove that they are changing local people's lives, increasing participation in the arts and inspiring young people.

But she concedes that cuts of £457m to the organisation's budget between 2011 and 2015 have "moderated our ambitions" on what they had hoped to achieve around the Olympics.

### Joint partnerships

The Youth Sports Trust's Baroness Campbell urges all those involved with children and young people's sport and arts programmes to follow the lead of London 2012 host councils and create partnerships between schools, councils and the voluntary and private sectors to secure Olympic legacy-themed funding, citing Dorset as an example of where this has worked well (see box, right).

Moira Swinbank, chief executive of the Legacy Trust, says such collaboration has been crucial to getting the most out of the £29m Big Lottery and £5m Arts Council money it received to support sporting and cultural projects.

"Our focus throughout has been to gain match-funding and form these types of partnerships around culture and sport," she says. "The Olympics has been a powerful catalyst to achieve that and we have already doubled our investment."

## SUCCESSFUL OLYMPIC PROGRAMMES: SAIL FOR A FIVER SCHEME IN DORSET

The Sail for a Fiver scheme has been among the most successful Olympic programmes for children and young people in Dorset, which is hosting the London 2012 sailing events.

Launched in 2005 by the sailing charity Chesil Trust, Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre and the National Sailing Academy, the programme will continue after the Olympics.

So far, 9,000 young people have taken part, including a group from east London following a link-up with the London Livery Company's Worshipful Company of Dyers.

Adam Greaves (pictured), 15, from Portland, Dorset, took up the offer to sail for a fiver when he was 10, became hooked and is now an assistant sailing instructor.

He says: "Sailing has also given me skills that I can use away from the water. The novice sailors have to trust you when they are out on the water and you need to show that you are calm and confident in order that they place their trust in you. These



Adam Greaves caught the sailing bug when he was 10

are not skills that always come naturally to a 15-year-old boy."

Angus Campbell, leader of Dorset County Council, says the scheme is a good example of how groups are working in partnership to ensure the county's London 2012 status leaves a sporting and cultural legacy for children and young people.

A 2012 board, including representatives

of Dorset County Council and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, has been created to co-ordinate funding bids and organise events.

Campbell, who chairs the board, says cuts across local sports and arts budgets, including a halving of Dorset County Council's sports team budget, give added impetus to the board's work.

He says: "Dorset agencies are doing all they can to offset this by bidding for other funds and working with partners across the county to deliver programmes for our young people."

Among funding already secured is £150,000 from London 2012 sponsor Adidas to build the Adizone free outdoor gym and sports area at Redlands College, Weymouth.

Government Olympic Executive funding is being used to run the Dorset Special Schools Beach Festival for 300 disabled children during the Paralympics and to erect a free sports arena on Weymouth beach during the Olympics.

So far, 600,000 children and young people have participated in Legacy Trust activities. Regional programmes include the trust's partnership with the Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU) in the North East of England, running 15 projects under the title NE Generation.

To date, 3,300 young people have taken part in projects in the region, such as Dale Force, which was set up to involve young people living in rural areas in arts projects. The Five Ring Circus initiative teaches young people circus skills and the region's Urban Alchemy scheme supports young people to develop creative spaces.

Swinbank says the RYWU was selected because of its track record in targeting and supporting disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people. "What we didn't want was to run projects for the usual suspects who were already involved in the arts and sport," she says.

**"I don't deny it will be increasingly hard to get funding to keep that motivation around the Olympics going, but those working in partnership will find it easier"**

Moira Swinbank, chief executive, the Legacy Trust

Swinbank hopes the trust's regional focus on partnerships, with local museums, councils and funders such as the Arts Council, will secure funding for years to come: "I don't deny it will be increasingly hard to get funding to keep that motivation around the Olympics going, but those working in partnership will find it easier."

The Legacy Trust has set up a fund to help some of its projects make this transition to self-sufficiency. "Projects will be invited to bid this month and it is hoped that around five will get that money to carry on up until the end of the 2013/14 financial year," says Swinbank.

### A lasting legacy?

But for those organisations that have already taken a hit to budgets, the future is more uncertain. Geraldine Blake is chief executive of charity Community Links, which is based in host borough Newham. She says that since 2010, her charity has been forced to close 10 of its 26 community centres.

"In the context of the current financial situation across the UK, I think it would be enormously difficult for the Olympics to have a meaningful legacy for young people," she says.

But despite her pessimism, Blake concedes that for those in Newham and the other host boroughs, a genuine legacy has been created. She says: "There is a greater chance for a solid legacy for young people in Newham as the Olympics has brought regeneration and jobs. Elsewhere, though, I'm not so sure it can have a lasting impact."

One example Blake gives of the potential for sport and the Olympics to improve the lives of young people was a joint project between Community Links and the Great Britain hockey team, where players offered coaching to a group of 11- to 13-year-olds from some of the borough's most deprived housing estates.

She says: "This has already left a legacy and transformed the lives of those who take part. These children had not picked up a hockey stick before. One of those involved is now looking into taking a sports coaching course and others have taken placements with sports coaches. The hockey team has also carried on."

Community Links's legacy in breaking down the postcode barriers that gang territory has created in Newham is another bonus of the scheme, says Blake. "The young people now travel freely to other areas, such as Tower Hamlets, with confidence."

This example shows how "sport can be a powerful tool to inspire people" says Blake, but with youth unemployment high and funding cuts rife across youth and children's services, she warns that it will get increasingly tough to use the Olympics to motivate young people when the event is over.

As the country gears up for the onset of the 2012 Games, programmes attempting to engage young people in sports and arts will undoubtedly reach a peak, but only time will tell whether that momentum can continue and produce a meaningful legacy. ■