

Written evidence submitted by Dr Helen Symons and Dr Verity Postlethwaite

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee – Call for evidence: Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors

Submission from:¹

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Executive Summary

How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

We have addressed the question above in relation to learning from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (London 2012) sports policy.

1. ***Ideological underpinnings:*** Recognise that the sector evolution after Covid-19 will be underpinned by dominant political and economic ideologies. During London 2012 a desired framework promoted by an international organisation was situated within a

¹ Full biographies available here: [https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/helen-symons\(f3498313-c205-430b-a9c2-872888b57df7\).html](https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/helen-symons(f3498313-c205-430b-a9c2-872888b57df7).html) and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/verity-postlethwaite-812155a9/>

national political context, e.g. the organising committee was a joint venture agreement between different key organisations (both national and international).

2. ***Development of sporting policy over the last two decades:*** Recognise that the sector might evolve in a non-linear and regressive way post Covid-19. During London 2012, we want to emphasise that sporting policy was more cyclical, e.g. use of focal point language ‘legacy’ or ‘convergence’ to match up the different areas of sporting policy and translate into the system. It is important in order to avoid ‘blame-shifting’ and foster ‘problem-solving’ between stakeholders.
3. ***Stakeholders:*** Recognise that the DCMS should support stakeholders and experts from a range of multi-agency and multi-sector approaches. During London 2012 there was a multitude of stakeholders, with centralised and de-centralised targets connected to hosting the Games. The infrastructure during this period was effective, e.g. the infrastructure around safety at construction sites. However, this is caveated with a sensitivity to political differences and territorial stakeholders connected to particular areas of, e.g. school sport and physical education.
4. ***Collaborative working:*** Recognise that after Covid-19 innovation can be utilised through joined up thinking, a collective goal, and emphasis on agreed deadlines. London 2012 was a collaborative effort as it focused on a common goal with a joint-fixed deadline. London 2012 provided the chance, within challenging economic position, for communities and other stakeholders to influence the situation and opportunities that became available through policy design and decision making.
5. ***Monitoring and Evaluation:*** Recognise that after Covid-19 there needs to be independent structure to monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes. As during London 2012 the most effective and successful programmes had clear responsibility, outputs and independent organisations to review/benchmark work.

Method

The following submission has been built from a review of literature which has been systematically searched. Two concurrent searches were conducted via academic and non-academic databases. The initial stage for the academic sources was to run an overall database analysis using EBSCO Discovery, followed by narrower searches conducted on individual databases. Then additional academic sources were found via searching the reference lists of papers deemed to be important to include. The initial stage for the non-academic sources was

to run an overall database analysis using The National Archives and the UK Parliament repositories. Then additional non-academic sources were found via searching the reference and evidence lists of papers deemed to be important to include. These were then collated and reduced to only include articles that met the criteria of ‘London 2012 Olympic AND/OR Paralympic Games’, ‘Sport Policy’, and ‘Decision Making’. The academic discussion portion will open the discussion about what can be learnt from London 2012’s Olympic and Paralympic Games sports policy. The non-academic discussion portion will develop discussion about what has been learnt from London 2012’s Olympic and Paralympics Games sports policy by national and regional political stakeholders/organisations.

1. Ideological underpinnings

Boykoff² explains that celebration capitalism was borne from the 1980s push towards Neo-Liberal based politics. Neo-Liberalist politics is focused on deregulation and a focus on the free market. It is in opposition to the more Keynesian approach of state interventionism.³ It is known that the Olympic Games, and to a smaller extent the Paralympic Games, use a “classic New Right Two-Step.”⁴ Meaning that the initial approach to hosting the Olympic Games promotes a Keynesian method whereby there is increased spending from Government funds to develop venues, and infrastructure. However, Neo-Liberalism then takes hold, as it becomes necessary to reduce public spending and then there becomes a need to bring in private sector partners to develop and increase affluence in the location.⁵ The fundamental ideological groundings highlight the movement towards using multiple agencies and organisations in the development of an Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulated the structure and procedure for the UK Government to adhere to in the early 2000s when the London bid formally developed and then across the Games’ life course.⁶ As a consequence, ideological underpinnings from

² Boykoff, J. (2014) *Celebration Capitalism and the Olympic Games*. Abingdon: Routledge.

³ Ward, S. C. (2012) *Neoliberalism and the Global Restructuring of Knowledge and Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁴ Giulianotti, R. et al. (2015) ‘Sport Mega-Events and Public Opposition : A Sociological Study of the London 2012 Olympics’, *Journal of sport and social issues*, 39(2), pp. 99–119. p.103

⁵ Ibid 4.

⁶ International Olympic Committee (2013a) *London 2012 Olympic Games: Final Report of the IOC Coordination Commission*. Lausanne: IOC. Available at: <https://www.olympic.org/documents/games-london-2012-olympic-games> (Accessed: 12 February 2016).

the international and national sporting federations were prioritised alongside the domestic political underpinnings. More explicitly, the bid committee and the organising committee were formed as autonomous organisations. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) (October 2005 to June 2013) was registered as a private company limited by guarantee and was accountable to its primary stakeholders – the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, the Mayor of London and the British Olympic Association – under the terms of a Joint Venture Agreement.⁷ The fundamental ideological groundings and legal structure highlight the formalisation of multiple stakeholders where international agendas are prominent.

2. Development of sporting policy over the last two decades

London 2012 was a global phenomenon, but the biggest impact was at home in the UK in terms of interagency working to ensure it was delivered on time. It is noted by Grix and Phillpots⁸ that some of the largest changes to sporting policy has occurred since 2005 when the UK won the bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. However, the sporting system in the UK previously underwent huge governance changes in the mid-2000s as detailed by Houlihan⁹ in addition to work on the structural reform of our sporting bodies.¹⁰ It is the concepts presented in these papers 15 years later that are still representative of the UK's sporting system. It was the acknowledgement that elite sporting systems converge with policy in similar ways as other government departments, although, it is added that this is a linear view. It is often focused on resource allocation and development, all framed within a covert and overt levels of delivery.¹¹ It is here that we start to consider what can be learnt from the policy decision making relating to London 2012.

⁷ *London Olympic and Paralympic Games Act 2006*, c12. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/12/contents> (Accessed: 12 November 2015).

⁸ Grix, J. and Phillpots, L. (2011) 'Revisiting the "Governance narrative": "Asymmetrical network governance" and the deviant case of the sports policy sector', *Public Policy and Administration*, 26(1), pp. 3–19. doi: 10.1177/0952076710365423.

⁹ Houlihan, B. (2005) 'Public sector sport policy', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40(2), pp. 163–185. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690205057193>.

¹⁰ Houlihan, B. and Green, M. (2009) 'Modernisation and Sport: The reform of Sport England and UK Sport', 87(3), pp. 678–698. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.01733.x.

¹¹ Houlihan, B. (2012) 'Sport Policy Convergence: a framework for analysis', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 12(2), pp. 111–135.

What has been seen is that there is an assumption that surrounds mega events, that there will be an increase in participation in sport because of role modelling. In turn sports policy became focused on this tenet.¹² It is here that there is a sudden focus on using ‘sports development’ to encourage wider participation in sport, which in turn is ‘predicted’ to have an impact on their health and social life. The use of sport as a tool for helping other sectors is important to remember that this is not multi-agency working, it is one agency being used to help other agencies. It is argued by Mackintosh et al.¹³ that there are a multitude of challenges in this approach due to the nature of sports participation and the findings that participation in sport can be a learnt behaviour from families. Furthermore, Mackintosh et al. highlighted that interventions are costly, and they cannot always be used to improve participation as well as help other agencies. There is a naivety to this approach.

Across the life course of London 2012, different UK Government departments sought to develop or boost policy or agendas through and via the London 2012 project. A positive development during this period was the Government Olympic Executive (GOE) in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). They would coordinate the “biggest ever public sector delivery effort” around sport.¹⁴ A term that was coined by the Blair, then Brown Labour Government was ‘legacy’, and this both captured the policy imagination and added complexity to what could be achieved by London 2012. In retrospective inquiries and research, the House of Lords¹⁵ and the Institute for Government¹⁶ have noted the challenge of a national or mega sporting event being used to influence policy decision making. Although

¹² Grix, J. and Carmichael, F. (2012) ‘Why do governments invest in elite sport? A polemic’, *International Journal of Sport Policy*, 4(1), pp. 73–90. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2011.627358.

¹³ Mackintosh, C. et al. (2015) ‘A qualitative study of the impact of the London 2012 Olympics on families in the East Midlands of England: lessons for sports development policy and practice’, *Sport, Education and Society*. Taylor & Francis, 20(8), pp. 1065–1087. doi: 10.1080/13573322.2014.881337.

¹⁴ Norris, E., Rutter, J. and Medland, J. (2013) *Making the Games. What government can learn from London 2012?* London: Institute for Government. Available at: https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Making%20the%20Games%20final_0.pdf (Accessed: 10 March 2018). p.4.

¹⁵ House of Lords, The Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy (2013) *Keeping the flame alive: the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy*. HL Paper 78. London: The Stationary Office. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/olympic-paralympic-legacy/publications/?type=&session=1&sort=false&inquiry=all> (Accessed: 12 December 2015).

¹⁶ Institute for Government (2012) ‘Making the games: A conversation with Jeremy Beeton and David Goldstone – Government Olympic Executive’ [Speech]. London, Institute for Government, 9 October. Available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/events/making-games-conversation-jeremy-beeton-and-david-goldstone-government-olympic-executive> (Accessed: 05 November 2017).

the structure and systems within the UK Government were clear there was a tendency for foster blame-shifting, not problem-solving when issues or public debate arose.

3. Stakeholders

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games relied upon an interagency approach to the development and delivery of the Games as a way to help justify the investment provided by public monies.¹⁷ It is known that to host a mega-event there is a need for a range of stakeholders. Those stakeholders are drawn from different, yet linked, industries, government, and indeed sectors (e.g. public, private, or third sector) and are all required to work, to some extent, via an interagency or multiagency approach in order to balance their input and impact. Evidence from literature suggests this can be developed or hindered via strategic partnerships,¹⁸ accountability fragmentation¹⁹ and clarity of purpose.²⁰ It is the recognition that stakeholders already work in a multiagency or interagency approach outside of sport and its associated policy, which is imperative to bring forward to future discussions. Stakeholders are often working within the wider sports system which is reliant on achieving set criteria and wider objectives.

An illustrative case from London 2012 concerning multiagency or interagency approach within and outside sport is the “inspire a generation” legacy aim and the inclusion of physical education and school sport. A headline legacy aim and the source of high-profile media and public debate this issue exemplifies how an interagency and multiagency approach is hindered by political and policy decision making.²¹ In 2013 during a House of Lords evidence session, the comment was made:

¹⁷ Weed, M. et al. (2015) ‘The Olympic Games and raising sport participation : a systematic review of evidence and an interrogation of policy for a demonstration effect’, *European Sport Management Quarterly*. Taylor & Francis, 15(2), pp. 195–226. doi: 10.1080/16184742.2014.998695.

¹⁸ Bell, B. and Gallimore, K. (2015) ‘Embracing the games? Leverage and legacy of London 2012 Olympics at the sub-regional level by means of strategic partnerships’, *Leisure Studies*. Routledge, 34(6), pp. 720–741. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2014.994553.

¹⁹ Leopkey, B. and Parent, M. M. (2016) ‘Stakeholder perspectives regarding the governance of legacy at the Olympic Games’, *Annals of Leisure Research*. Taylor & Francis, 18(4), pp. 628–548. doi: 10.1080/11745398.2015.1092388.

²⁰ Postlethwaite, V., Kohe, G. Z. and Molnar, G. (2018) ‘Inspiring a generation : an examination of stakeholder relations in the context of London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics educational programmes’, *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 23(4–6), pp. 391–407. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2019.1591296>.

²¹ Bunt, K., Llewellyn-Thomas, S., Campbell-Hall, V. and Johns, E. (2011) *Schools’ and Colleges’ engagement with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: PE and Sport*. Research Report DFE-RR109. London: DfE. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-colleges-engagement-with-the-2012-olympic-and-paralympic-games-pe-and-sport> (Accessed: 03 April 2016).

Just to move on here, it is clear that sport enjoyed its position of dominance because it had the backing of Government as a whole. It is also clear that the Department for Education will occasionally have other priorities, especially if something is somebody's particular baby at the time. You are always vulnerable.²²

Moreover, in 2013 the Education Committee conducted its inquiry. It concluded that some stakeholders see a greater clarity of cross-departmental working about school sport. In contrast, other stakeholders disagreed and that there are “practical difficulties of having three Departments [DfE, DoH, DCMS] involved in a policy.”²³ A significant amount of time and resource was placed in gathering evidence and evaluating the cross-departmental working post-London 2012, therefore, this would be useful to consider in the current climate.

4. Collaborative working

The multiagency approach to hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games means that London 2012 was able to deliver the 30th Olympiad. It is the ability to focus on these collaborative efforts to work towards a ‘common goal’ which helps to create this ‘leveraging’ effect.²⁴ It is within these conditions that London 2012 provided the chance, within challenging economic position, for communities and other stakeholders to influence the situation and opportunities that became available through policy design and decision making. However, it is posed by Bell and Gallimore²⁵ that the opportunity to ‘leverage’ from the multiagency work completed throughout the London 2012 Olympic Games was challenging due to the stringent economic environment.

The leverage in practice, as noted above, was dependent on the political systems and individual UK Government departments. Beyond this, the dynamic between LOCOG, the UK

²² House of Lords, The Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy (2013b) Keeping the flame alive: the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy. Oral and written evidence. London: The Stationary Office. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/olympic-paralympic-legacy/olympicparalympicevidencevolume.pdf> (Accessed: 12 December 2015). p. 374.

²³ House of Commons, Education Committee (2013) Volume 1: School sport following London 2012: No more political football (HC 164-I). London: The Stationary Office Limited. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/meduc/164/164.pdf> (Accessed: 10 December 2015). p. 14.

²⁴ Beesley, L. G. and Chalip, L. (2011) ‘Seeking (and not seeking) to leverage mega-sport events in non-host destinations: The case of Shanghai and the Beijing Olympics’, *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 16(4), pp. 323–344. doi: 10.1080/14775085.2011.635016.

²⁵ Ibid 18.

Government organisations (e.g. GOE, the National Lottery, or London Delivery Authority) presented practical strengths and weaknesses. A highly cited advantage was the focal point of strict timeframes and delivery dates, as the IOC demands the Olympic Games to be held in a non-negotiable period (July to August 2012) and several other non-negotiable deadlines to meet pre-Games (checked by the IOC). Jeremy Beeton, Director-General of the GOE described in 2012 “the project being the equivalent of setting up a FTSE-100 company to operate for six weeks and then collapse immediately afterwards.”²⁶ Moreover, the standards reached by the London 2012 project, such as, the safety record in building the Park needed to be embedded in the construction industry.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

In recent years, the sporting system has become focused on accountability and achieving objectives²⁷ as set out by Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) on behalf of the DCMS. However, this process of monitoring and evaluation becomes a post-analysis of the impact of the policy on the intended intervention rather than a true monitoring of it.²⁸ In terms of London 2012 there has been a tendency for ‘positive’ evaluation of interventions due to the fact that stakeholders are often the ones evaluating.²⁹ It is here that some attention needs to be paid, the evaluation of a policy intervention should be assessed from an independent perspective.

It is thought that inter-organisational associations are considerably effected by the relationships between organisations who are working together and those in power positions within the event that they are working.³⁰ There is a desire for engagement between the

²⁶ Ibid 16.

²⁷ Harris, S. and Houlihan, B. (2016) ‘Implementing the community sport legacy : the limits of partnerships , contracts and performance management’, *European Sport Management Quarterly*. Taylor & Francis, 16(4), pp. 433–458. doi: 10.1111/1467-9248.00247.

²⁸ Chen, S. (2018) ‘Sport policy evaluation : what do we know and how might we move forward ? move forward ?’, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*. Routledge, 10(4), pp. 741–759. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2018.1488759.

²⁹ Chen, S. and Henry, I. (2016) ‘Evaluating the London 2012 Games’ impact on sport participation in a non-hosting region: a practical application of realist evaluation’, *Leisure Studies*. Routledge, 35(5), pp. 685–707. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2015.1040827.

³⁰ Ferkins, L. and Shilbury, D. (2010) ‘Developing board strategic capability in sport organisations : The national – regional governing relationship’, *Sport Management Review*. Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand, 13(3), pp. 235–254. doi: 10.1016/j.smr.2010.01.009.

organisations involved rather than a one-way discussion, in order to achieve transparency and accountability. Furthermore, Parent³¹ proposes that there is ‘internal’ and ‘external’ transparency within the development of hosting a mega event. There is an emphasis on the idea that transparency and accountability are divided between these two perspectives. It apportions accountability to the stakeholder(s) who are responsible for that task. It is focused on the premise that stakeholders require communication and precision within the hierarchy.

Further to this, multiple evaluation documents have been produced by a variety of non-academic sources (e.g. DCMS;³² IOC;³³ LOCOG;³⁴ National Lottery;³⁵ UK Government and Mayor of London³⁶). As noted above, these organisations represent public, private and third organisations. A developing theme of analysis is the mixing of practices between these organisations and how sustainability and/or mutual interest be measured. Nichols and Ralston³⁷ highlight the problematic contradiction of the role of organisations during London 2012 that was between traditional systems of private and public regulatory practices. For example, the ODA who although it is a:

...public company that might be expected to comply with Freedom of Information requests, the ODA [Olympic Delivery Authority] will not reveal details of its contracts with private companies because public disclosure of these would provide a commercial advantage to the company’s contractual counterparties. That is, ‘it is (deemed to be) in the public interest not to know how public money is being spent’!³⁸

³¹ Parent, M. M. (2016) ‘Stakeholder perceptions on the democratic governance of major sports events’, *Sport Management Review*. Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand, 19(4), pp. 402–416. doi: 10.1016/j.smr.2015.11.003.

³² Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2012) *Beyond 2012: The London 2012 legacy story*. London: The Stationary Office.

³³ International Olympic Committee (2013b) *London 2012 Facts and Figures*. Lausanne: IOC. Available at: http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents_Factsheets/London_2012_Facts_and_Figures-eng.pdf (Accessed: 10 November 2015).

³⁴ LOCOG. (2013) *London 2012 Olympic Games Official Report*. London: LOCOG Ltd.

³⁵ National Lottery (2013) *Keeping the Spirit of 2012 alive*. Available at: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/keeping-the-spirit-of-2012-alive> (Accessed: 04 July 2018).

³⁶ UK Government and Mayor of London (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) *Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (First/Second/Third/Fourth Annual joint UK Government and Mayor of London Report)*. London: Cabinet Office.

³⁷ Nichols, G. and Ralston, R. (2015) ‘The legacy costs of delivering the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games through regulatory capitalism’, *Leisure Studies*, 34(4), pp.389-404.

³⁸ *Ibid* 37. Emphasis in the original, p.392.

The analytical point here is that the multiagency approach and systems can provide pockets of practice where groups, such as the public, can be circumvented to deliver or protect other interests, i.e. in Nichols and Ralston's point the procurement of Olympic Delivery Authority contracts.

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