

Olympics Legacy: Public Impact Report Year 1

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The report by the House of Lords this week “Keeping the flame alive: the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy” found that many aspects of the Olympics / Paralympics Legacy are in danger of faltering. Despite the memorable staging and success of London 2012, the long term success of the Games will be judged by the Legacy created.

Legacy goals were for a healthier and more successful sporting nation, a country open for business and with more active, sustainable, fair and inclusive communities. Research consultancy JGFR, has tracked public attitudes towards London 2012 since June 2005 and published a report in December 2012*. People were asked about the impact that the Olympics/Paralympics would have on sports participation, volunteering, activity and health, the economy and charitable/corporate giving. Public enthusiasm immediately after the Games was unsurprisingly at survey highs. Nearly 7 out of 10 thought London 2012 brought the country together and made people feel happier, up from just under a half in June 2012 despite the inclusiveness and excitement of the Olympic Torch Relay. Around a half of adults believed the Games to be the greatest sporting event of their lives, well above the 3 out of 10 across the 9 tracking surveys. Last June before the Anniversary Games, the JGFR/GfK Legacy Tracker **was launched examining the public’s attitudes towards the impact of the Games one year on. Chart: The Olympic / Paralympic Legacy one year on, June 2013

Source: GfK NOP /JGFR Respondents were asked whether any of a number of statements relating to the Games applied to them. The greatest support across the statements was for the Government / NHS to use the inspiration of the Olympics / Paralympics to promote healthy lifestyles, with around 7 out of 10 adults supporting the statement, up from nearly two-thirds before the Games. Increasing sports participation is a key feature of a healthy lifestyle and a major benefit of creating a sporting legacy. The research shows some 6 out of 10 adults believe that London 2012 will lead to increased sports participation, slightly down on just after the Games but above the survey average. Regionally greatest support is in the North East (69%). A majority of the public (57%) expect there to be a sporting legacy, down on two-thirds in September 2012 but above the survey average. In the South West 7 out of 10 adults believe there will be a sporting legacy, the highest regional support. Some 12 million adults expect to be more active as a result of not only the Olympics / Paralympics but also the Cultural Olympiad, with greater levels of post-games activity found among the under 30s (over a third have become more active) and regionally in the North East. More people have become sports fans as a result of the Games which will be of interest to broadcasters, advertisers and sponsors, although fewer people in reality (18%) than expected to at the end of the Games (31%) watch / follow more sport. The highest proportion of new sports fans is among 16-22 year olds (23%) and the over 65s (21%). Enabling greater access to sport in a socially inclusive manner is a Legacy challenge, particularly at a time of squeezed budgets. Schools will play a major role in the provision of community facilities. Both the corporate sector and charities have important roles to play in funding the sporting legacy. Increasingly corporates will be targeted both for traditional sport sponsorship but increasingly for funding through corporate and social responsibility budgets (CSR). A majority of the public (57%) agree that for the legacy to succeed corporate sponsors need to understand the role that sport plays in the lives of customers, employees and their communities. Such sentiment is greatest among the 40-64 age-group, many of whom are high earners. Charities that make a difference to young people’s lives through sport have broad public appeal, with just under a half of adults pledging support, little changed in the past year. Regionally the highest level of support is in London and the North West. Part of support for charities may also be through volunteering, with the Games Makers inspiring some 8 million people to volunteer in sports and community activity In September 2012. In the latest survey the numbers of people who have become a volunteer in sporting and community activity is some 4 million, with the highest proportion among the under 30s (13%, compared to 8% overall). Maintaining the support and enthusiasm of volunteers will be a key benchmark of the London 2012 Legacy. While the public mood in assessing the economic benefits of winning the Olympics has wavered, delivering the Games in such a memorable manner created a big shift in sentiment. JGFR /GfK research asked in all 12 surveys whether the public believed there would be economic benefits from the Olympics, with on average around 3 out of 10 supportive. Since September 2012 there has been a big rise among the public expecting a major economic benefits for the UK with approaching 50% of adults believing that the Olympics / Paralympics has boosted Brand Britannia. Regionally there is strongest support for the statement in the North East (62%). As host region, Londoners are less convinced about the major economic benefits (42%). Indeed Londoners across many of the statements are less enthusiastic about the impact of the Olympics / Paralympics than other regions suggesting that there is much work to be done in cementing a London Games legacy. While many Londoners received Games tickets at the last minute, this came following many months when demand for tickets overwhelmed supply with negative perceptions of London 2012. For Glasgow as it prepares for next year’s Commonwealth Games demand for tickets is just below a half of the demand for Olympics tickets, with 8% of the UK population (18% of Scots) intending to apply for tickets. The coming months will be crucial for Commonwealth Games organisers as ticket allocations are announced. Avoiding disappointing local demand is one of the lessons of the London ticketing process. Corporate sponsors need to be seen to support customers in experiencing the Games. Commented John Gilbert, Chief Executive JGFR “Strong economic growth in 2014 should help to maintain the Legacy momentum through more funding becoming available. The public mood remains very engaged with major sporting events as demand for Commonwealth Games tickets highlights. Having a single Minister responsible for the Legacy as proposed in the House of Lords report would provide a valuable focal point.”

*London Olympics Barometer 2005-12 ** The Olympics Legacy Tracker report will be published in December.

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