



**SPIRIT OF 2012**  
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS



**A SPIRIT OF 2012  
INQUIRY CHAIRED BY  
SIR THOMAS HUGHES-HALLETT**

**AUTHORS AMY FINCH,  
GAETANO IANNETTA, JILL RUTTER**

**FINAL REPORT**

**4**

# **HOW CAN EVENTS HELP BUILD CONNECTED, HAPPY AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES?**

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# FOREWORD



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While we have regained our reputation for being great organisers of events, the Inquiry team were of the view that we may have often failed to plan in advance for achieving long-term benefits from the hard sweat of the organisers and, indeed in some cases, the very significant tax and rate payer money invested.

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**In summer 2021, I was asked to bring together a group of people from across the four nations to consider how events can help build happy, thriving and more connected communities. Spirit of 2012 commissioned this Inquiry knowing that 2022 would see a unique range of events being organised across all four countries: the late Queen's Jubilee, the Commonwealth Games, Coventry's UK City of Culture, the Women's Euros and many, many more. Quite apart from these, events would be happening across local communities ranging from food festivals to poppy days, from music festivals to cycle rides. Furthermore, we are still dealing with the aftershock of the biggest event since the 1940s, the COVID-19 pandemic, which witnessed an extraordinary surge of community strength.**

While we have regained our reputation for being great organisers of events, the Inquiry team were of the view that we may have often failed to plan in advance for achieving long-term benefits from the hard sweat of the organisers and, indeed in some cases, the very significant tax and rate payer money invested. As examples, what happened to the amazing Games Makers after the London 2012 Games and has enough been done to retain community involvement after millions of people came forwards to help during COVID? So we need to be the best in the world for creating great events, but now to become the best in the world for creating lasting impact from them.

Our key recommendations are based on a huge amount of research, the expertise of the Inquiry team, for which I am so grateful, who gave freely of their time and represent every aspect and diversity of the society of our four nations.

## FOREWORD

We note the importance of constantly asking “What next?” instead of saying “Wow – that was a great event”.

We are determined that this should be a positive report rather than a critique of past events. We looked for new ideas, for solutions, and for recommendations that can be used by future organisers and funders of events be they in Kings Lynn, Arbroath, Aberystwyth, or Derry/Londonderry.

We note some simple facts worth harnessing – it is the magic of events that changes people lives, outdoor events are far more inclusive, some of our best-known events are far too exclusive, people love food, events are where you meet people you would never meet otherwise.

We note the importance of constantly asking “What next?” instead of saying “Wow – that was a great event”.

We ask the question of whether we over-emphasise national events at the expense of regional and local events. Instinctively the former builds pride and the latter builds resilient communities. We need to build a connective tissue between national and local benefits.

Sport is popular with almost everyone, but if it is to be inclusive for all, it needs to range from digital games to angling, walking to softball – not just world-class athletes or games players. We recommend the creation of a City of Sport, following the very successful model of UK City of Culture, which must have the improved health and wellbeing of the entire population at its heart.

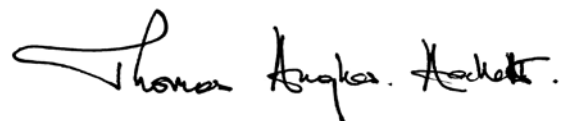
We believe that events should never be seen as the sole responsibility of the state. The best events bring together companies, charities, local groups, generous donors, and statutory funders as practised by the multi event: the Suffolk Festival

this year or the many events in north-east England which we spent much time studying. The key to the impact of events is successful curating by a group of people or organisations who want the impact to last and the events to repeat.

We hope that this Inquiry’s recommendations will lead to a step change in building into every event, big or small, simple advanced planning for delivering long-term benefits for the communities who enjoy or participate in it, improving wellbeing be it economic, societal, or health based. To this end we recommend that no statutory money can be made available for an event unless the organisers set out clearly how the event can lead to longer-term community benefits which they undertake to monitor post event.

The Inquiry team believes that successful events can deliver stronger, happier and more thriving communities, but it needs leadership, celebration, planning, encouragement, and funding. We all know we face real hardship at present. Never has the need for stronger communities been so important to support an ageing population, to tackle loneliness, to improve our wellbeing, and to simply cope with the economic challenges that we all face.

Finally, I would like to thank Spirit of 2012, our Inquiry members, and in particular Amy Finch, Gaetano Iannetta, Jill Rutter and Ruth Hollis who have taken me on this exciting journey.



**Sir Tom Hughes-Hallett**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Over the past decade, the UK has earned a reputation as a world leader in staging major events. Since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have hosted two Commonwealth Games, two Jubilees, and three UK Cities of Culture, as well as numerous internationally acclaimed sporting events and cultural festivals, many that take place on an annual or biannual basis. There are also thousands of local events celebrated up and down the country each year, some of which are local interpretations of national activities; others, unique expressions of the places in which they are held.**

These events can act as catalysts for wider change, with long-term social and economic impacts in the host places and profound benefits for the people who participate. However, this doesn't happen automatically but requires a shared vision between hosts and organisers, focused on achieving specific outcomes, with the resource to deliver it over the long term. This inquiry was set up on the tenth anniversary of the London 2012 Games in order to learn the lessons of past events and to identify how we can capitalise on the power of events to facilitate and encourage wider social and economic change.

Whilst this Inquiry seeks to encourage and influence all event organisers to adopt our recommendations, we acknowledge that the events sector is funded and motivated in a variety of ways. Events which receive public funding or other forms of public sector or state support have a stronger responsibility to achieve social outcomes than purely commercial events.

Chaired by Sir Tom Hughes-Hallett, the Inquiry's 25 members have spent the past year taking evidence from experts across arts, sports, and community development as well as hearing directly from the public about why events matter to them.

The evidence was structured around three questions:

- Thriving communities: how can events contribute to local economies and levelling up?
- Connected communities: how can events bring people together?
- Happier communities: how can events help our physical and emotional wellbeing?

## Thriving communities: how can events contribute to local economies and levelling up?

Events can bring a wide range of economic opportunities to the areas hosting them. They can forge connections between the public, private and charitable sectors, and can play a crucial role in broader levelling-up strategies. Events also have a crucial role to play in how people feel about where they live – whether that is their local area or the country as a whole.

There are strong examples of cities, such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester, where a focused, long-term events strategy has been an important part of economic regeneration over several decades. The bidding locations to the UK Cities of Culture programme, whether or not they received a designation, also showed a commitment to events and culture-led regeneration. In many cases, bidding cities are planning to deliver elements of their plans – the impetus of the bidding



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process having drawn together public, private and voluntary sector partners with a shared goal. Event organisers are increasingly considering how major sporting events – and the economic gains that come from them – can be distributed across the country, and particularly beyond London and the South East. UK Sport, the government agency responsible for investing in elite sport, estimates that 83% of investment and benefits from UK Sport's programme of events will impact towns, cities and communities outside south-east England<sup>1</sup>. Major events are increasingly being delivered across multiple towns and cities rather than being staged in a single host city.

Events often involve investment in new infrastructure and improvements to the public realm, a key driver of levelling up. New or regenerated venues are generally viewed as the main long-term legacy of an event, with event organisers placing equal emphasis between planning how they will be used by local people after the event and planning for how they will be used during the event itself. There is also a drive to reduce the financial and environmental costs of an event by hosting in places that already have facilities available. This can be very effective, although stakeholders warned that taken too far, this approach may prevent places which lack existing high-quality facilities from bidding successfully to host. There are challenges too in ensuring that the benefits from events extend to rural and suburban areas, or even smaller cities. The DCMS Select Committee was critical of the UNBOXED Festival for its interim audience figures. The figures were, at least in part, due to the festival's decision to host many of its commissions outside the places usually associated with major events, a decision taken to reach underserved audiences.<sup>2</sup>

While economic regeneration may initially only seem relevant to major events with large budgets and detailed plans to create jobs and attract tourists, smaller events also have a role to play in levelling up. Local Trust was set up to give 150 communities across England the money to invest in improving their community, and decision-making over how that is spent. Hosting events is a popular choice: organisers want to provide opportunities to bring their community together, but are often also looking

to attract visitors. Focus group attendees described a wide range of meaningful community events, from a black pudding competition to a local farmer who organised a Christmas lights tractor trail. Events of all scales can contribute to the idea that somewhere is a good place to live.

There is a need for a much more strategic approach, with a stronger connection between events and how they interact with the other things that a place is trying to achieve. While the events of 2022 had a solid commitment to long-term impact, there is little sign that, despite significant levels of investment, much thought had gone into how they could be greater than the sum of their parts. The Inquiry also observed competition between event organisers committed to their own particular approach, willing to share their learning but more reluctant to learn from others. Different types of events can fulfil different roles, so local and national event commissioners must look at their overall social and economic objectives to identify how events might support these, rather than working on an event-by-event basis. The Inquiry found that events could also capitalise on bringing together partners who had a shared goal but might not otherwise have reason to collaborate. From cross-department working in national and local government to opportunities for the business and voluntary sector, events help bridge divides between different sectors.

### Connected communities: how can events bring people together?

Events reach a wide spectrum of society. Across the major events of 2022, half of UK adults watched the Birmingham Commonwealth Games or took part in events such as the Queen's Baton Relay. The Lionesses' victory in the UEFA Women's Euros was watched by a crowd of 87,192 at Wembley and a further 17.4 million on the BBC. In June, 44% of UK adults (23.3 million people) took part in one or more Platinum Jubilee event.

However, the Inquiry found too little attention is being paid to who benefits from events. There are strong incentives for event organisers to demonstrate high participant numbers – like those

given above – at the expense of understanding who might benefit the most and who is missing out. About a quarter of the public feel like the place they live is less likely to run events than other places – rising to 34% in Wales, 37% in Northern Ireland, and a massive 43% in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. While events can play an important role in increasing the visibility of disabled people in society and challenging negative perceptions, only 44% of disabled people felt that theatres and sport stadiums were usually accessible to disabled people, and only 47% of disabled people thought that public transport was usually accessible to disabled people<sup>4</sup>.

The best events have a deep understanding of who is and isn't accessing their event and the reasons for this. Where possible, event organisers need access to this information quickly so they can act on it whilst the event itself is still going on or, in the case of short-term activities, make changes to appeal to a broader range of people in the future. While it is not realistic, or even desirable, for all events to cater to all people, there is more that can be done to remove barriers which prevent many from even being able to decide if an event is for "people like me".

Data about who is and isn't attending is also vital for capitalising on the potential of events to bring people together. Inquiry polling and focus-group evidence showed that many people feel local or national pride after an event, and it gave them the chance

to be part of something bigger. Events can also bring people from different backgrounds together, creating shared experiences and leading to greater trust and understanding.

In Leicester, a city where religious tensions bubbled over into riots in September 2022 (triggered at least in part by sporting rivalry), focus group attendees spoke passionately about the events that brought communities together. One man described attending Diwali celebrations explaining, "I don't have much to do with religion personally but [ ... ] it is amazing. I've never seen anything quite like it." Another described coming across Pride celebrations in Victoria Park, "At first me and my family weren't too sure, like can we go in or not? You know? But they made us feel so welcome [ ... ] there were people there to educate you too, so whatever misconceptions you might have, or whatever stigmas there might be, you talk to somebody."<sup>5</sup> The public are particularly positive about the potential of the 75th anniversary of the NHS this year and, if the UK were to host it, the UEFA Men's 2028 Euros to bring people from different backgrounds together (74% and 64% agreeing respectively).<sup>6</sup>

While events have the power to bring people together across divides, if not carefully planned and managed, they can have adverse effects, increasing feelings of exclusion. Stakeholders stressed the importance of representative boards and



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

organising committees, community consultation, co-production, and hyperlocal activities. A diverse volunteering workforce, including large representation from the groups an event is seeking to bring together, is also key. When asked about how events could best bring people from different backgrounds together, the most popular response was “events that catered for all ages so that families were brought together”, followed by “events that used shared open spaces like parks and gardens”.<sup>7</sup>

There are many examples of community projects doing fantastic work to bring people together, including from different backgrounds, through the shared experience of an event. Simple changes to event advertising and the way the event is delivered can make a big difference to people’s likelihood to interact with other attendees – Jo Cox Foundation, The Big Lunch and Together Coalition have all been leading work in this area.

Despite pockets of good practice, it is clear that social connection is often given as an aim of an event without a concentrated focus on how it can be achieved or the monitoring and evaluation processes in place to see whether it has been successful.

### Happier communities: how can events help our physical and emotional wellbeing?

One of the most important roles of events is simply that they create happiness and joy for those taking part. As well as the short-term boosts to mood that you can get from attending – detectable in national wellbeing data around the London 2012 Games – there are less measurable long-term impacts from the memories events leave behind.

Participation in arts and culture, physical activity and volunteering has been shown to increase levels of wellbeing, so events can also have long-term impacts on wellbeing by encouraging more people to take part in long-term participatory activity.

For this to happen, there needs to be funding for those long-term activities. One contributor to our Inquiry sitting said, “Everyone wants legacy, but no one wants to pay for it.” There is a role for more funders, including, but by no means limited to, Government to commit upfront to demarcated

funding for post-event activities. Where possible, being transparent about ring-fencing some of this funding before the event would allow event organisers a clearer sense of how to transition participants into longer-term activities. Where no such funding is available, the best event organisers have a clear understanding of the local landscape so they can point people towards existing activities. More funders could look to come in at the end of an event to fund ideas that have emerged or grown during the event itself. There is space for greater collaboration amongst major funders to identify what role each could play in the event funding ecosystem.

Since the London 2012 Games Makers, event volunteering programmes have been one of the major highlights of UK events. Event volunteers benefit from high quality training, and there are often great efforts made to open up volunteering to new audiences. While there is an increasing focus on how to route volunteers into future volunteering opportunities, the Inquiry found greater effort must be made in this area.

To increase physical activity over the long term, events must integrate proven approaches that work to reach the least active. This includes sporting and non-sporting organisations working together, and using inclusive messaging and relatable imagery to attract participants.

Inactivity is a stubborn national health issue, and one that a single event cannot solve alone. But events can act as a galvanising force, encouraging the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to achieve a common goal. If those with an interest in public health see an event or series of events as an opportunity and integrate it into a longer-term programme of work, then events are more likely to increase physical wellbeing.

Much of this report deals with the broader, long-term impacts which successful events can have on individuals and communities at a regional or national level. However, we should not underestimate the importance of the event itself in creating the conditions for this broader impact to take place: the quality of the event and the experience of those participating in it are crucial to the success of an event’s legacy.



## Recommendations

### Recommendation one: **Long-term impact and a clear plan for “what next” must be the drivers for the decision to bid or host a major event.**

- Publicly funded events should have a shared vision agreed by national and local stakeholders to ensure each event catalyses wider social and economic change.
- *Government, funders and event organisers* must commit to a small number of realistic and genuine long-term goals which drive decision-making and delivery.
- Where public funding is being used, *Government, funders, and event organisers* should consider how these goals contribute to the wider social and economic goals of the areas and communities in which the events are held.
- *National and local governments* must curate an events strategy, across arts, sports and civic life, ensuring that the collective impact of their events programme is greater than the sum of its parts.
- *Organisers* of large-scale events must prioritise partnership working, across public and private sectors and civil society, in order to optimise the delivery of these long-term impacts.

### Recommendation two: **The long-term impact of events must be underpinned by demarcated funding, accountability and governance.**

- *Funders and event organisers* should adopt a model which sees events as long-term projects, with funding allocated accordingly.
- *Government, national lottery distributors, and other funders* should take an open and collaborative approach to their funding strategies for events, striving for greater clarity for host locations about what they should expect.
- *Event organisers* should design large events with a delivery cycle that gives equal footing to post-event legacy activities.
- Responsibility for long-term impact must be with those who are around to deliver it, such as *local and combined authorities*. There should be clear responsibility and accountability for delivering these impacts.
- *Event organisers and funders* should measure the impact of events through independent evaluations undertaken over much longer time periods.

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Our Day Out, Creative Arts East

### Recommendation three: **Greater attention must be paid to who benefits from events and who is left out.**

- *Event organisers* should explicitly set out how they will reach and remove barriers for groups of people who are traditionally less likely to participate and, where possible, how they will act on emerging attendance data to address gaps in participation.
- *Event organisers* should undertake inclusion audits to make sure that disabled people are able to attend, making reasonable adjustments where necessary. These audits should include a review of transport.
- *Funders* of community events should prioritise low social capital neighbourhoods, recognising that there may be additional costs per participant to deliver activity in places with weaker voluntary sector infrastructure.
- *Event organisers* should consider where they are holding events. Public and outdoor spaces tend to be accessible and approachable and can attract a more diverse group of attendees.
- *Organisers* of large sporting and cultural events should work with business partners, colleges and other training providers to improve progression routes in the events industry and the hospitality and retail sectors.
- *Independent evaluations* of events must give more attention to the distributional impact of the event on different sections of society. The intelligence generated about participation during major events – including what was less successful – must, as standard, be passed on to local organisations who can use it to support ongoing efforts to extend their reach.

## Recommendation four: More events should be designed and curated with a broad range of stakeholders to build common ground across divides.

- *The DCMS and the Palace* should maximise the potential of the Coronation to unite people across divides, undertaking rapid research to identify effective messaging that helps to reach groups who traditionally feel excluded from ceremonial events.
- *The UEFA Men's Football Euros 2028* should be used as an opportunity to harness the power of sport to promote social contact between people from different backgrounds. The Government, governing bodies, football clubs, community trusts, supporters, schools, grassroots sport and volunteers need to make the most of this opportunity.
- *The Government* should back the move to make the Windrush 75th anniversary a national moment working with the organising committee, mayors, councils, faith and community leaders, the NHS, business, the armed forces, broadcast media, sports, and culture to do this.
- *Major funders of community events*, including NLCF and Arts Council England, should better support grant holders with simple, proportionate tools to understand to what extent their events are inclusive and how successful they are at bringing people together from different groups and building understanding.
- *Event teams in local authorities and at cultural, sporting, recreational and community organisations* should review their event calendars, to ensure that their programme not only caters for different communities of interest but also includes moments that bring people together.
- *Event organisers* must nurture the local and community elements of national-scale events. National events hold a particular power in instances where they can be celebrated and interpreted locally, with a common thread between the national and local.
- *Funders and event planners* should pay attention to unifying factors like using neutral outdoor spaces and food.



Little Amal, The Walk, Coventry City of Culture



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### Recommendation five: **Events that use volunteers should have a clear strategy to boost longer-term community volunteering.**

- *All large events* that use volunteers should have a volunteer legacy plan. This should make provision for those that want to continue to volunteer to share contact details with other organisations that work with volunteers. It should also set out how to sustain volunteers' interest in giving their time.
- *Event commissioners* must decide, based on local consultation, who will have the remit for the volunteer legacy programme in advance of the event, and there should be demarcated funding and data protection processes at the outset to support the transition of volunteers in post-event activities and to new organisations. The long-term volunteering strategy should also be responsive to the motivations and ideas of the volunteer cohorts themselves and adapt plans accordingly.
- *Event organisers working with volunteers* need to address the barriers that prevent people volunteering, including those faced with disabled people and people on low incomes. *Community organisations* should aim to use events to increase community volunteering post event and ensure they have permission for follow-up contact with volunteers, proactively signposting them to other similar opportunities or retaining them for ongoing volunteering within their own organisation.
- *Major event organisers* should continue to collaborate with the existing volunteering organisations to identify how the event and associated training can address gaps in capacity. These gaps may include targeting people from underrepresented groups who could be inspired into long-term volunteering, mapping to organisations in need of particular skills.

**These principles, when applied, will build stronger events and greater returns on investment for the communities that host them. In addition, the Inquiry is calling for:**

One:

### **The creation of a UK City of Sport competition, modelled on the success of UK City of Culture, with a focus on health and wellbeing.**

**The Inquiry recommends that the Government launch a new UK City of Sport competition, with one of its primary aims being increasing wellbeing and reducing physical inactivity. The competition would commit to delivering the five recommendations set out in this report. The UK City of Culture programme shows how a major event, held over the course of a year, can bring together partners from across the public, private and charity sectors around a shared vision for a place. It can promote closer relationships between businesses and communities and raise the profile of a place on the national and, even, international stage.**

The Inquiry is calling on the Government, sports councils, governing bodies, councils, schools, the media and faith and civil society to back this proposal. The competition would be open to cities, towns or whole counties.

The competition's focus would be increasing levels of physical activity among the least active, as well as participation in sport, with a real emphasis on using public spaces that are outdoors. Increasing volunteering as well as using the power of sport to connect people and bridge divides should be further objectives. Increases in cultural participation and cultural confidence have been major successes of the City of Culture competition, and there are good reasons to believe this could be replicated here.



The place-based programmes of Sport England and its counterparts in the other home nations, as well as European-wide initiatives such as *Healthy Cities*, demonstrate how this might be done. UK City of Sport would be a galvanising force for long-term, local commitment to increase physical activity. This would not be about concentrating elite sport in one location for a year. Instead, bidding cities would develop a dynamic programme of participatory activities alongside flagship spectator events unique to the history, assets and needs of their place.

#### **This may include:**

- A shared commitment to improving physical activity;
- Launching new, participatory events that bring different communities together;
- A schools' programme;
- Businesses supporting their employees to be more active;
- Innovative partnerships between non-sporting and sporting organisations;

- Investment to roll out initiatives such as Sporting Memories, which brings together older people through a shared love of sport;
- Attracting more/more varied spectator sporting events or mass participation activities to the area;
- A strategic approach to strengthening the visitor economy through a celebration of the location's opportunities for active recreation and spectator sport;
- Investment in the public realm in the run up to the event, with a specific focus on active travel and improving facilities, as with City of Culture.
- Host cities might also join the Global Active Cities Network's *Global Active City – Active Well-being Initiative*, linking them up with a wider network of learning and action.

**The Inquiry recommends a further feasibility study be undertaken by a coalition of interested partners over the next six months.**



Family Fun Run, Northern Ireland

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Two:

### **The formation of an events observatory to marshal evidence and data on the long-term impacts of events.**

**There are many leading academics and researchers exploring the impact of events, some of whom shared their work with this Inquiry. There is also significant work being done to improve the impact evaluation of events themselves at a policy level, from DCMS's work on valuing cultural heritage capital to UK Sport's increased focus on social impact. Organisations such as What Works Centre for Wellbeing, whose work is referred to several times in this report, have done much to bring together evidence on some of the themes covered here from volunteering to culture and physical activity.**

However, the Inquiry believes there is a role for dedicated resource specifically focused on supporting events to deliver lasting and measurable social outcomes across the various mechanisms deployed by events (sport, arts, volunteering etc.).

This could be housed within an existing university department or research institution. The observatory would support policymakers and event organisers to:

- Look across different types of events, ensuring culture, sport, commemoration etc. are learning from what has worked (and what hasn't) rather than operating in silos;
- Explore the role of different types of events as one factor in a wider system of change;
- Take the long view, capturing outcomes that do not occur within the timeframe of traditional event evaluations, and after those that measure legacy have often concluded;
- Look at the collective impact of events within a place or timeframe linking to local data sets;
- Be independent rather than beholden to funder and commissioner objectives;
- Provide a learning bank to support continuous improvement;
- Mitigate against a tendency for evaluations to either be overly positive or highly critical;
- Develop an overarching theory of change for events that is not dependent on a specific mechanism like arts or sports

Try It! Taster Day, Coventry City of Culture.  
Credit: Jamie Gray





## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## About this report

**Spirit of 2012 was established to continue the pride and positivity that many people felt following the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Ten years on from the London 2012 Games, Spirit commissioned this independent Inquiry to examine the evidence on how events can best maximise long-term impact. Chaired by Sir Tom Hughes-Hallett, the Inquiry explored the role of events in creating:**

**Thriving communities**  
placemaking and economic impacts.

**Connected communities**  
relationships between people, including those from different backgrounds and between individuals and institutions.

**Happier communities**  
individual impacts particularly on people's social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

The Inquiry looked at the impacts on those who take part as participants and volunteers, as spectators, or through media engagement. It also considered how events can reach more people and become more inclusive, for example, for disabled people.

This is the Inquiry's final report. Following this introduction, Chapter Two briefly outlines the Inquiry's methodology. Chapters Three to Five then review the evidence collected against each of our three themes: thriving, connected, happier communities. Chapter Six provides a short set of key takeaways and top tips for event organisers, and Chapter Seven sets out our recommendations in full.

The key findings and recommendations are relevant to a broad range of audiences: local and national government, event franchise holders, and the wider network of cultural and sporting bodies and institutions that deliver, host and fund events. It is essential reading for anyone who is interested in ensuring that the long-term impacts of events are maximised.

The report explores the impacts of events at both ends of the scale, arguing that there are common lessons that can be drawn between small community events and mega international events, and clear advantages in considering how events as a whole can be more than the sum of their individual parts. The Inquiry did not focus on commercial events, although there are many that do create some social impact and that might benefit from these recommendations. The report also discusses the relationship between events and the role of decision-makers, at both local and national level, in curating event strategies that make better use of these connections.

"I'm so relieved and happy and so empowered as well if that makes sense... I'm empowered. I just feel like it can't end here man, it can't end here."

Participant, Coventry City of Culture 2021<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

### Why now?

**Over the past decade, the UK has come to be seen as a world leader in staging major events. Since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have hosted two Commonwealth Games, two Jubilees, and three UK Cities of Culture, as well as numerous internationally acclaimed sporting events and cultural festivals, many of which are annual or biannual. There are also thousands of local events celebrated up and down the country every year, some of which are local interpretations of national activities; others, unique expressions of the place in which they are held.**

We can also be a world leader when it comes to maximising events' long-term social and economic impact. We already have the ingredients to achieve this. From the enduring impact of Liverpool 2008 European Capital of Culture to the smallest Jubilee street party, we found plenty of evidence that organisers were thinking carefully about "What next?" There is a wealth of good practice to build on.

Yet there are also missed opportunities where we need to think differently about how to realise the full potential of events to make a difference to individuals and communities.

The need for events to create long-term impact, particularly to justify their costs, is now well established, but the national conversation about how to do this is both polarised and lacking in nuance. This can lead to both unrealistic overpromising – "events can do everything" – and evaluations that are defensive and do not honestly explore lessons learned. It can also lead to unwarranted criticism, where the perceived failure of legacy promises is laid fully at the door of event organisers, who had neither the authority nor the resource to deliver them. Some of these patterns can be seen in the criticism levelled at UNBOXED, a major arts festival held across the UK in 2022. At the time of writing, the value for money of UNBOXED is being investigated by the National Audit Office and is not explored in depth in this report.

Events can also become flashpoints for frustration about a lack of long-term core funding. In November 2022, the Sport for Development Coalition held a "town hall" for sports organisations interested in the legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Leaders of grassroots organisations expressed their frustration about not being able to access long-term core funding for their activities, frustrations which could detract from the achievements of an event, particularly in cases where ring-fenced funding for ongoing activity is limited. There is a risk that community organisations are viewed primarily as a gateway to accessing so-called "hard to reach" participants who are then provided with short-term opportunities by event organisers. There is a significant job for organising committees and any legacy bodies not only in managing expectations but also in developing mutually beneficial partnerships with those local experts. Birmingham 2022 and Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 have both sought to address these issues in their legacy plans, and an honest appraisal of what has worked and what could have gone better in this area in their follow-up evaluations will be very valuable. Such a review will be most effective if it sits alongside greater collaboration amongst funders about how their funding for future events fits together.

In seeking to be better at legacy, we must be careful not to undermine the intrinsic power of events themselves. In his evidence to the Inquiry, Professor Paul Dolan explained the role that events and rituals play in people's personal wellbeing – things to look forward to, things to look back on, things to give us succour in challenging times. In Inquiry polling, the public rated "making memories" as the most important long-term impact of events<sup>9</sup>, and throughout the past year, we heard again and again that if the event itself wasn't successful, there was little point thinking about legacy.



## Cross-cutting themes

**Alongside our core recommendations, which are set out at the end of each chapter, we uncovered a number of themes that event organisers need to balance in order to increase long-term impact.**

### Surprise and ritual

National and local event strategies must respect and understand the long-term positive effects of unexpected experiences and offer familiar and traditional rituals in curating a calendar of events that speaks to everyone in society.

Many events give us the excuse to do things differently. The artistic directors and programmers we spoke to as part of this Inquiry referred to the importance of surprising and delighting audiences, and that while community consultation and co-production were important engagement tools, they must leave space for the unexpected. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games cultural

team set out to be “positive disrupters”. During Hull 2017 UK City of Culture, the organisers were able to increase cultural confidence across the city through a programme that included “acts of wanton wonder”, a circus performance in a graveyard, and a 75m wind turbine blade installed overnight in a public square. As a result, nine in every ten Hull residents took part<sup>10</sup>.

A contrasting, but equally important, view of events is that it's their familiarity that helps them create lasting impact. People have long drawn parallels between church attendance and attendance at football matches. While opening ceremonies, the pageantry around royal celebrations (and mourning) and festivals of remembrance can be refreshed and modernised, their essential ingredients remain the same. In focus groups conducted for the Inquiry, members of the public shared a range of events that were important to them, many of which were connected to either local traditions (such as a cheese-rolling festival) or family ones (such as going to football matches with their dad).



Canley Parade, Warwick Arts Centre

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

### National and local

Many of the best events successfully balance local ownership with connection to something bigger at a national or even international level.

Some of our early conversations set major events against local events, questioning whether the costs of the former really delivered benefits multiple times greater than the latter. However, there is no clear national versus community event dichotomy. There are many medium-sized regional or local authority-level events that have significant social and economic impacts; we look at some of them in the next chapter. Many large-scale national events are also marked at a community level, such as the Platinum Jubilee. This was celebrated nationally with Trooping the Colour, thanksgiving services and the Jubilee Pageant, but also at a local authority and community level with concerts, beacon lighting, street parties and the Big Jubilee Lunch. A nationally representative survey undertaken after the Platinum Jubilee weekend suggests that 7.4 million people – 14% of the adult population – took part in a Jubilee street party<sup>11</sup>.

### Visitor economy and culture on your doorstep

Event organisers must balance the desire to attract visitors from outside a place with provision for local audiences. The economic benefits from events are driven significantly, though not entirely, by their impact on the visitor economy, with events such as Liverpool 2008, Glasgow 2014 and Birmingham 2022 being instrumental in their goal to be destination cities for national and international tourists. This approach can be seen to prioritise the experience of tourists over local residents, who bear the brunt of the disruption that comes from events, notwithstanding any benefits they may feel from gains to the local economy. Many programmes now focus on ensuring that residents can directly benefit from the events themselves – from reserving free or low-cost tickets to sports matches to offering activities outside city centres, so reaching people in their neighbourhoods.

COVID-19 accelerated the trend to hyper-local events that deliver “culture to your doorstep”, and both the London Borough of Culture and Coventry 2021 provide examples of how this can be done<sup>12</sup>. Both aspects of event delivery are important, particularly if the goal is to increase civic pride, as the evidence suggests that how external visitors see a place is directly related to how it is seen by residents. Birmingham residents in our post-Commonwealth Games focus groups were proud that the Games had increased Birmingham’s standing on the global stage; Hull residents believed the rest of the UK would see the city differently after its year in the spotlight in 2017<sup>13</sup>.

### Building on what exists and levelling up

Event legacies are more likely to be successful if they build on existing provision and strengths, such as local anchor organisations that already have the reach into the communities which organisers are targeting. This assets-based model helps make the event more sustainable, as those organisations best placed to deliver long-term impact are involved and feel invested in the event from the start. Creating the right conditions for collaboration rather than competition is challenging. Event organisers must also balance the need to gain buy-in from existing local organisations and community leaders while leveraging the opportunity of the event to amplify new voices. There is a risk that hosting events where there is existing infrastructure (whether physical or social) will entrench regional inequality. In a Northern Ireland roundtable, stakeholders pointed out that the infrastructure gap between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK makes it difficult for cities or regions to be competitive when it comes to securing hosting rights. Finally, while events must be relevant and responsive to local contexts, learning from past events in different places should not be disregarded. There is space for greater shared learning between events of different types, for both continuous improvement and an appreciation of the different roles they play within the event ecosystem.

## Public opinion and research

Understanding and influencing public opinion about an event is vital to its overall success. The polling and focus groups conducted as part of this Inquiry confirm that there is broad public support for events, both big and small, and that there is also widespread belief that they can, and do, have long-term impacts. In June 2022, 65% of the public thought that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games were still having an impact on the nation, their community, or their own lives. But the same polling found that 49% of the public agreed that big events like the Commonwealth Games and Jubilee are “a distraction from the real issues facing the country”.<sup>14</sup> Public views are in part shaped by a polarised narrative of events from press and commentators, either wholly celebratory or unreservedly critical. More nuanced reflections, such as The Herald’s reflections on the long-term legacy of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, are rare<sup>15</sup>. Public and press opinion about legacy can be more influential than more objective assessments of impact, certainly when it comes to appetite from politicians to commit public money to more events in the future. Yet this is notoriously volatile – if the event is successful, scepticism and complaints often fade away once the event begins, only to resurface when heightened legacy expectations are not met. Showcasing an event’s achievements and shaping the collective narratives of an event is an important part of managing its legacy. Whilst the public and media are likely to be sceptical of attempts to evade criticism, event organisers need an effective long-term communication plan for an event to act as an ongoing inspiration and attract additional funding or visitors to an area.

# 65%

of the public thought that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games were still having an impact on the nation, their community, or their own lives.

Source: Author’s analysis

## Opportunities

**The Inquiry’s findings and recommendations are particularly timely. As well as the opportunity to influence the planning of regular events, this year the UK will stage a major and historic national event in the Coronation of King Charles III.**

It also sees the 75th anniversaries of the NHS and the arrival of HMT Empire Windrush, and the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. These milestones will be widely celebrated as landmarks in modern British history. Leeds 2023 will demonstrate what a major cultural event can look like without an official European Capital of Culture designation, while Britain will host the Eurovision Song Contest, for the first time since 1998, in Liverpool. In 2025, Bradford will host the UK City of Culture. It is likely that the football associations of England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will host the UEFA 2028 Men’s Football Euros. Alongside the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the 2028 Men’s Euros could be one of the most important opportunities this decade to use the power of sport to catalyse social change.

In 2026, the Tour de France Grand Départ will pass through 90 places in England, Scotland and Wales. That same year, Birmingham has a chance to build directly on its experience with the Commonwealth Games when it hosts the European Athletics Championships. UK Sport is currently undertaking a number of feasibility studies that are looking at the potential to bring more major sporting events to the UK, including the 2036 or 2040 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The new Cabinet Office events team has the potential to strengthen our strategic approach to maximising the long-term power of events.



## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

There is a firm government commitment that culture and sporting events are part of the strategy to level up and address the social and economic disparities that characterise the UK. Regeneration or levelling-up policies have previously focused on the economy – on infrastructure, investment, jobs and skills – all areas in which events can play a role. The Levelling Up White Paper also places health, wellbeing, social connection, place-making and civic pride on a fairly equal footing with the economy<sup>16</sup>. Debates about levelling up offer a major opportunity to make sure that cultural, sporting, commemorative and community events have positive impacts.

The five recommendations set out in Chapter Seven form a blueprint for a more strategic approach to long-term impact. They can be adopted by individual event organisers and hosts and by those responsible for designing overarching events strategies at both local and national level. Sitting alongside these principles are proposals for the establishment of an observatory to take a lead on long-term event evaluation, and a new national event, UK City of Sport, that follows the principles set out in the report.

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**1. Long-term impact and a clear plan for “what next”, must be the driver for the decision to bid or host a major event.**

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**2. The long-term impact of events must be underpinned by demarcated funding, accountability and governance.**

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**3. Greater attention must be paid to who benefits from events and who is left out.**

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**4. More events must be designed and curated with a broad range of stakeholders to build common ground across divides**

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**5. Events that use volunteers must have a clear strategy to boost longer-term community volunteering.**

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By applying these principles and supporting our proposals, together we can build stronger events and greater returns on investment for the people, communities and places that host them.



Torch Relay, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games



CHAPTER TWO

# THE INQUIRY'S METHODOLOGY

**The Inquiry panel was made up of 25 members, from diverse backgrounds and representing areas across the UK. It was chaired by Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett, founder of Helpforce and founding Chair at The Marshall Institute for Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship at the London School of Economics. Each member contributed their skills and knowledge and will help to ensure that the recommendations reach policy makers and event organisers. Full details of the Inquiry members are included in the appendix. Spirit of 2012 staff acted as the Inquiry's secretariat.**

The Inquiry's work began in September 2021 and spanned 15 months. During this time, the Inquiry:

- 1. Held four hearings to take evidence from experts. Those who gave evidence to the Inquiry are listed in the appendix. A final sitting of the Inquiry discussed the content of the report and its recommendations;
- 2. Issued an open call for written evidence. A list of who submitted evidence is also in the appendix;
- 3. Organised five stakeholder meetings, held in Belfast, Birmingham, Glasgow, London and

Newcastle. A further online stakeholder meeting was held for participants based in Wales. The Inquiry also held a stakeholder meeting that looked at the links between events and environmental sustainability. Organisations represented at the stakeholder meetings included councils, cultural and sports organisations, academic experts, business and civil society organisations. All the organisations that took part are listed in the appendix;

- 4. Facilitated 14 focus groups, 13 online and one in person, with 123 members of the public, recruited by a specialist agency. Apart from the groups where participants had specific social or demographic characteristics, such as one group which focused on disabled people, those who took part were selected to give a mix of age cohorts, social grade and ethnicities. Each focus group covered people's perceptions about the impact of cultural, sporting, commemorative and community events. Different focus groups also examined specific themes which included the London 2012 Games legacy, the role of events in encouraging volunteering, greater physical activity or social connection (Table 2).

**Table 1 Events within the scope of the inquiry**

Type of event	Examples
Cultural events	UK City of Culture, Crufts, Eisteddfod, Hogmanay, the Ideal Home Exhibition, Mela, music festivals, Pride events, Refugee Week, Royal Highland Show
Sporting events	Commonwealth Games, Women's football Euros, regular sporting fixtures, parkrun
Commemorative events	Citizenship ceremonies, Platinum Jubilee, Remembrance Day, VE Day anniversary
Community and local events	The Big Lunch, Thank You Day, Great Get Together, street parties, fetes, local fairs, community iftars, parkruns, urban and county shows.

## CHAPTER TWO – THE INQUIRY’S METHODOLOGY

**Table 2: Focus group composition and themes**

Date	Profile of participants	Additional themes explored
September 2021	UK-wide	Events and volunteering, London 2012 Games legacy
September 2021	People who had volunteered in last three years	Events and volunteering
September 2021	North West England	Events and volunteering, London 2012 Games legacy
September 2021	Wales residents	Events and volunteering, London 2012 Games legacy
September 2021	East London residents	London 2012 Games legacy
January 2022	Leicester, with half the participants from minority ethnic groups	Events and physical activity, How events can bring people together
January 2022	Northern Ireland, with representation from the different faith/political traditions in Northern Ireland	Events and physical activity, How events can bring people together
January 2022	North East England	Events and physical activity, How events can bring people together
July 2022	Yorkshire and the Humber, with participants identifying as disabled	Inclusive and welcoming events, Attitudes to people with disabilities, London 2012 Paralympic legacy
July 2022	18 to 24-year-old non-graduates, South East and South West England	As above
July 2022	Eastern England	As above
July 2022	Scotland	As above
August 2022	Birmingham and Coventry	Perceptions of Coventry City of Culture and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games
August 2022	Birmingham (in person)	Perceptions of Coventry City of Culture and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games

You can find a series of films produced from these conversations here: [www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/](http://www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/)

5. Commissioned three nationally representative surveys:

- A survey with a weighted sample of 2,073 UK adults carried out by ICM between 24 and 27 September 2021. This survey explored volunteering and the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Its findings were used to launch the Inquiry<sup>17</sup>;
- A survey with a weighted sample of 2,018 UK adults carried out by Focaldata between 6 and 7 June 2022, immediately after the Platinum Jubilee weekend. This survey looked at participation in Platinum Jubilee activities and the capacity of different events to bridge divides and bring people together;
- A survey with a weighted sample of 2,350 UK adults carried out by Walnut and ICM between 5 and 11 August 2022. This survey covered the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, attitudes to disabled people, the London 2012 Paralympic Legacy and the Inquiry's proposals;

Note: For further information about these surveys and their findings, please go to the Spirit of 2012 website [www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/](http://www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/) to download a more detailed methodology.

6. Commissioned two expert reports which had the status of independent evidence to the Inquiry. The Institute for Public Policy Research was asked to review literature on the economic impacts of events<sup>18</sup>. British Future drew on the Platinum Jubilee weekend polling described above and looked how events can bridge social divides and bring communities together<sup>19</sup>.

The Inquiry decided to only consider events that are open to the public, including paying spectators. A review of national and local calendars suggests that events can be categorised as cultural, sporting, commemorative or local and community. We have included all four categories within the Inquiry's remit, looking at both large-scale or national events as well as those that take place at a local or community level. Examples of each category are given in Table 1. It should be noted that these are not discrete groups, for example, parkruns are both sporting and community events.



## CHAPTER THREE

# THRIVING COMMUNITIES:

## HOW CAN EVENTS BEST CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL ECONOMIES AND LEVELLING UP?

Events can help to build stronger economies and bring economic benefits to the areas which host them. This chapter looks at:

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How we can maximise the positive economic impacts of events on both a local and national scale;

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The role which events can play in placemaking, and in building infrastructure and capacity in the areas hosting them;

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How events can be run in a sustainable way and how they can contribute to regeneration

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Understanding the economic impact of events was the theme of both the Inquiry's second sitting and the subject of a commissioned report. The Inquiry commissioned the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) to produce a framework to help understand what the impacts are and how they work<sup>20</sup>, which we have adapted and discuss below. The inquiry team also took evidence from Dr Peter Dawson<sup>21</sup> and reviewed evaluation data from a number of events, including the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, UK Cities of Culture, and regional events such as the Great North Run.

### Context

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Over the last 25 years, central government and local councils have increasingly recognised the power of events to boost economic growth and promote regeneration, most recently in the Levelling Up White Paper. This talks about a role for culture, heritage and sport in addressing deep-rooted social and economic inequalities across the UK, and stresses the need to build social capital through social infrastructure<sup>22</sup>. The Welsh Government has also recently set out a strategy to use events to drive economic growth<sup>23</sup> and the 2021 Budget and Spending Review saw £41 million allocated to major sporting event bids. Meanwhile, research from the consultancy firm EY suggests that major sporting events could deliver benefits of up to £11 billion to the UK in terms of economic impacts and soft power. There is a clear need to better understand the economic impacts of events to ensure that budgets are spent effectively. The economic opportunities presented by events are significant and we cannot afford to waste them.

The Inquiry's polling found that among the public there is a strong perception that major events have positive economic impacts, with 64% of people agreeing that the Birmingham Commonwealth Games had been good for the local economy, rising to 72% of people who live in Birmingham and the West Midlands<sup>24</sup>. However, public perception about the economic benefits of events is not always matched by a strong body of evidence.



We face some methodological challenges when trying to calculate the economic benefits of events. It can be difficult to attribute causality to an event and its impacts. It can also be difficult to monetise the less tangible benefits of events, such as civic pride or soft power.

Not much has been written on the economic impact of events, and in particular we lack independent studies which focus on long-term impact. Most evaluations of the impact and legacy of events take place either before the event or directly after it, both of which are problematic. Studies conducted prior to the event are often promotional in nature, over-estimating the tangible economic benefits and under-estimating the costs<sup>25</sup>, whilst studies undertaken soon after an event often fail to pick up on long-term impacts. There are few studies that have looked at the economic impacts of cultural events, or at larger local and regional events – those events which have played a major role in placemaking and which many of the Inquiry's focus group participants have found so memorable.

## Impacts

Due to these difficulties in measurement and attribution, there is a tendency to ignore the less tangible impacts of events, many of which only become apparent over a longer time frame. Events can have economic impacts through their social value, including benefits for health, wellbeing and levels of physical activity. The Treasury's Green Book guidance provides a detailed approach for appraising policies and events in wellbeing terms. This is discussed further in Chapter Five of this report.

There is also strong evidence to show that many events boost civic pride and increase levels of social connection. These social impacts also have economic value, although this too can be difficult to measure. Civic pride is integral to placemaking – creating places where people want to live and work and where young people want to stay. Increasing people's satisfaction with their town centre is one of the medium-term aims of the Levelling Up programme of work, alongside reducing geographic



Opening Ceremony, Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

disparities in civic pride. Civic and community pride will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

*“If an area feels vibrant because of events, people are more likely to stay and you are more likely to get investment. Your retail units are more likely to be occupied. A festival can go on to build a critical mass in an area as you get spin-off events and fringe activities.”* Stakeholder discussion, Wales.

Culture and sport, and the people-to-people links they forge, enable the UK to wield influence and soft power abroad. This is recognised in the Government’s most recent Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, which commits to continued funding of the cultural and sporting sectors, and the Government’s wish to host major events<sup>26</sup>. Television and streamed online coverage are also key to leveraging soft power, with event organisers needing to strike a balance between the generating income from the sale of broadcast rights, and the benefits of as many people as possible seeing the event.

Volunteer Now, Northern Ireland’s leading volunteer support organisation, cited the 148th Open Golf Championship as a “massive opportunity for the whole of Northern Ireland. There was unprecedented demand for tickets, making it the first ever Open to sell out on Championship Days. The tournament was attended by more than 215,000 fans with a global audience of 80 million viewers.” Volunteer Now helped recruit and support 340 Volunteer Ambassadors who provided a warm welcome to visitors, logging almost 3,000 volunteer hours over eight days.

It is important for evaluations to take these harder-to-measure impacts into account when judging the overall impact of events. The Treasury’s Green Book provides guidance on the design and use of monitoring and evaluation before, during and after implementation. Where possible, the Government should commit to long-term evaluation of major events against a consistent, agreed framework.

## Case study: The Festival of Suffolk 2022

**One example that illustrates the role that events can play in catalysing social change is the Festival of Suffolk 2022. The festival wanted to use the power of events to bring people together, creating lasting legacies in the Platinum Jubilee year and beyond.**

The organisers of the Festival of Suffolk 2022 had clear aims. They wanted to capitalise on the 2022 events calendar to strengthen community cohesion, health and wellbeing, create economic opportunities, champion enterprise, improve sustainability and celebrate Suffolk’s rich cultural heritage. It set some ambitious goals which included increasing participation in physical activity by 2025 and the recruitment of community champions in every neighbourhood to promote volunteering.

The day-to-day work of coordinating the festival was led by a small team of four people. They were supported by a much larger group

of partner organisations which included the county and district councils, business groups, cultural, faith and civil society organisations. The Festival of Suffolk 2022 mostly used existing events to achieve its aims, although it helped to organise new events in the Jubilee year. The project team and partners used the opportunity of these events to promote the Festival’s aims. For example, Festival organisers worked with the Suffolk Show to make sure that its schools’ programme had a strong focus on the environment. Community Action Suffolk was represented among the many trade stands at the show and used this opportunity to promote volunteering and recruit community champions.

Fundraising for future events was another activity. The project team aimed to secure a £5m Festival Fund by 2025, administered in partnership with Suffolk Community Foundation. The team are already planning their next event.



## Benefits and opportunities

The framework that the Inquiry commissioned from IPPR sets out a number of associated costs of bidding and hosting events<sup>27</sup>. These include the costs of preparing and submitting bids, building new facilities and adapting old ones, as well as general infrastructural and operational costs. Events also incur opportunity costs, where the funding, goods and services used to deliver the event could have been put to a different use elsewhere. For example, the £778 million of public funding of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games or the £8.921 billion spent on the London 2012 Games potentially could have generated different economic benefits if invested in other regeneration projects.

However, investment in events delivers a number of economic benefits and opportunities.

**Tourism and trade:** Firstly, local, regional and large-scale events can generate increased tourism and trade, benefitting both the local and the wider UK economy<sup>28</sup>. There was a strong sense in responses to our open call for evidence and in focus groups that events gave the opportunity for host locations to advertise themselves to a global or national audience. Bidding proposals and legacy plans for many large events often contain commitments to increase the number of jobs. For example, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games committed to create 4,500 jobs yearly until 2022, then 950 jobs a year after that<sup>29</sup>. However, some jobs associated with events are short term, with events leading to little long-term growth in local employment<sup>30</sup>. With complex supply chains for many events, not all new jobs are local to the host location. A greater emphasis on local procurement where possible should be a key consideration for event organisers planning for local impact.





## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**Employability:** Legacy and impact programmes associated with larger events often commit to upskilling the local workforce or supporting unemployed people to gain work. The London 2012 Games delivered 12 employability and skills development programmes across the UK, including the GLA Employment and Skills Legacy Programme in six London boroughs, a sports coaching bursary, a volunteering into employment programme in the East of England, and Bridging the Gap, which supported 4,000 students and unemployed people to gain stewarding or door supervision qualifications<sup>31</sup>.

Local events can also help develop participants' employability and skills, for example, by offering apprenticeships, supporting staff training, or through volunteering programmes that focus on employability. Programmes such as these can help remove some of the barriers faced by those people who are normally prevented from participating in events.

**Regeneration:** Both cultural and sporting events are central to place-based regeneration plans which aim to transform deprived areas. Across the UK, there are many examples of event-driven, place-based regeneration, including the East End of Glasgow, Newcastle and Gateshead Quayside, and the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games, and First Arts Programme case studies in this chapter. Events themselves, and the consequent place-based regeneration of an area, may attract further investment, often for many years after the event has taken place<sup>32</sup>.

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When given a budget and control of what to spend it on, people see events as an important part of improving their local area.

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Much has been written about transformation and continued investment into East London since the London 2012 Games, with the BBC, Sadler's Wells, London College of Fashion, University College London and V&A now having bases in and around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which is also home to a growing number of businesses<sup>33</sup>. Here, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) acts as the planning authority for the area, with a remit to attract further investment. Evaluations of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 suggest that winning the competition attracted at least £172 million of investment into the cultural and visitor economy of the city as a result of winning the bid, as well as £500 million funding for city regeneration projects<sup>34</sup>.

Improvements to transport, alongside new housing, sports and cultural facilities will accrue economic benefits, for example, to local businesses, through rent and fees or the interest on loans.

Events can also play a part in regeneration on a smaller scale, and with a more local context. When given a budget and control of what to spend it on, evidence from the Big Local programme suggests that people see events as an important part of improving their local area.

Big Local, funded by a £196 million grant endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund, is a programme that gives 150 communities across the UK £1.15 million to spend on the things that matter most to them. Of the 150 areas, more than half (81) have listed an event or festival as a priority over the course of the programme. Local Trust estimate that at least 6% of the community budget, £10.5 million, has been invested in events. Events are seen as an important part of what Big Local can offer to communities, particularly where there are few free or low-cost activities for people to take part in. There are many examples of one-off events becoming an annual event, helping to nurture local pride and making, in the words of one recipient, a "substantial difference to how the area is perceived". The events vary from Boston Book Festival to Central Jarrow Folk Festival and Handsworth Christmas Tree Festival. Many of the events explicitly aim to bring different parts of the community together, and specifically mention cohesion and inclusion.

## Case study: Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games

**It is more than 20 years since Manchester hosted the Commonwealth Games. One of the aims of the Games was to leave a lasting legacy of new sporting facilities as well as social, physical and economic regeneration, particularly around Sportcity in the east of the city.**

The initiative for staging the 2002 Commonwealth Games came from the City Council, which led on the regeneration and legacy plans and was responsible for developing the facilities. The council delegated operational responsibility for organising the Games to a limited company.

The staging of the Commonwealth Games was made possible because of the facilities developed for Manchester's bid for the 2000 Olympics and Paralympic Games. The Aquatics Centre and the City of Manchester Stadium (now Manchester City's Etihad Stadium) were new venues built for the Games, but many existing venues were also used.

The public investment in the Games and associated regeneration infrastructure and activity was £670 million at 2002 prices, including

£100 million funding for the stadium. While the Games themselves were delivered within budget, capital costs ran £30 million over budget and the Games organisers struggled to find commercial sponsorship.

Manchester City Council bore the financial risk associated with hosting the Games, with MPs later criticising this arrangement, stating:

*"Major events concentrated in one city have imposed a considerable and unfair burden on the relevant city authority. Those authorities are expected to be responsible for some facility costs, to subsidise and under-write the running costs and to meet many of the hidden costs associated with events. This burden is most apparent in the inheritance of debt for the City of Sheffield from the 1991 World Student Games. The commitment of local government to staging sporting events is often crucial to their success. However, major events are not municipal, but national. The Government and national bodies must now recognise this and take a more leading role themselves in partnership with host local authorities."*



Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games.  
PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

### Case study: Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games *continued*

It is estimated that by 2007, 6,300 full-time equivalent jobs were directly attributable to the Games, amounting to 10 jobs for each £1 million of public investment. Evaluations suggest that 2,050 jobs were created before the Games started, 250 during the Games, with a further 4,000 arising from developments after the Games. The planning, delivery and legacy activities of the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games were also subject to scrutiny by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

There is consensus that the Games were a catalyst for the regeneration of East Manchester, an area which had been largely derelict since the closure of mills and heavy industry. Hosting the 2002 Commonwealth Games has helped Manchester's journey to come the prosperous, vibrant city it is today. As well as the development of Sportcity, the Games brought new commercial developments to East Manchester including a regional retail centre, a four-star hotel, offices and new housing developments. The Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games also helped build the UK's reputation as a country that could host major sporting events, and it is unlikely that London would have won the right to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games without the success of Manchester.

There was a commitment to learn from the success of the Games and a number of internal and external evaluations were commissioned. The evaluations highlighted the need for better knowledge transfer from previous Games. Factors that contributed to the success of the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games included:

- Leadership from Manchester City Council in the planning and delivery of the Games and legacy activities. As one of the largest local authorities in the UK it was the right organisation to lead the Games.
- The personal support of the prime minister and a dedicated team within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (as was), although central government was also criticised for not doing enough to use the Games to promote international tourism.
- The integration of the Games into Manchester's wider regeneration plans, which meant that impact and legacy were considered from the start and throughout the planning and delivery stages.
- Shared goals and good relationships between the council and its operational partners, including those involved in running impact and legacy activities.
- An agreement with the BBC that secured extensive media coverage and the involvement of the BBC in the cultural programme of the Games. The cultural programme successfully engaged local residents, while the television coverage of the Games reached an international audience of one billion people, boosting the UK's soft power.
- A communication strategy that reached local residents, without overpromising what the Games would achieve. This secured the buy-in and support of local residents who saw the Games as part of wider regeneration activities of relevance to their lives.



## Youth Charter

**One of the significant legacy elements of Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games was Youth Charter ([www.youthcharter.org](http://www.youthcharter.org)), which aims to engage young people with sport, art, culture and digital activity, equipping them with a greater awareness of their skills and potential and empowering them to aspire to further and higher education, employment and entrepreneurship.**

Almost three decades on, the Charter continues to operate as a global movement for sport development and has been associated with a number of the major events referenced in this report, including Liverpool Capital of Culture, Hull UK City of Culture, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

One of the key successes of the Charter is the Community Campus and Social Coach Leadership Programme, funded as part of the Sport England Commonwealth Active Communities Fund, which seeks to support young people around three key

themes: Somewhere to Go; Something to Do; Someone to Show Them.

A Community Campus is made up of hub facilities, such as schools, community centres, youth clubs, sports centres, further and higher education institutions or any facility delivering youth cultural engagement, which are quality assured to deliver the programme.

The programme supports a number of social coaches, individuals who are empowered to deliver activities and mentoring in their communities with the aim of:

- Engaging young people through sport, art, culture and digital activity;
- Equipping them with mental, physical and emotional life skills and resilience;
- Empowering them with the aspiration for further and higher education, employment and entrepreneurship.

A Community Campus has most recently been established in Birmingham: [www.communitycampus-youthcharter.org/birmingham-community-campus](http://www.communitycampus-youthcharter.org/birmingham-community-campus)





## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

# SUSTAINABILITY

**Over the past decade, there has been an increasing focus on how to ensure events are sustainable. The Inquiry considered this topic at a specially convened roundtable, exploring three areas:**

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**Impacts: How best to reduce the negative environmental footprint of events?**

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**Design: What are the features of sustainable events? What are the features of environmentally friendly venues? How can events contribute to sustainable regeneration?**

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**Raising awareness and changing behaviour: Can events help change people's behaviour and build a stronger public mandate for environmental sustainability?**

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**Impacts:** Historically, large events have had a poor record in relation to sustainability. As major sporting and cultural events have grown in size, increasing numbers of participants and spectators have made the environmental impact worse. Hosting an international sporting competition often requires new facilities, which have sometimes been underused after the event. Many concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of the decision to hold the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. Seven of the eight stadiums in Qatar were built from scratch specifically for the tournament, with critics concerned about how they will be used after 2022<sup>35</sup>. International governing bodies must support hosts to use existing facilities where possible. This was done successfully in Birmingham, where only one new venue was built in order to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games.



Alexander Stadium, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

In the UK, event organisers have responded to public and political pressure and taken steps to reduce the carbon footprint of events. The Vision 2025 Coalition is a network of businesses which has produced guidance to help festival organisers reduce the carbon footprint of their events. It also works to influence the behaviour of festivalgoers, encouraging them to think about how they travel and what they eat. Ecolibrium is a live events industry response to the climate crisis, a coalition acting to reduce travel impacts and invest in climate solutions. The Inquiry welcomed the announcement that Birmingham 2022 would be the first Commonwealth Games to be carbon neutral, an approach which could be adopted more widely by organisers of both large and small events in the UK and beyond.

### **Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games**

Birmingham is the first Commonwealth Games to commit to being carbon neutral, with planning for sustainability built in from the start. A major priority has been to address carbon emission hotspots such as spectator transport. For many large sporting events, transport may comprise well over half of the carbon footprint of the event. Event organisers:

- Made sure that Commonwealth Games tickets include access to public transport in the West Midlands on the day of the event;
- Informed spectators about their public transport options, letting them know about the carbon impact of different modes of transport;
- Used a fleet of electric vehicles to transport athletes;
- Reduced reliance on diesel generators where power is needed at outdoor venues;
- Reduced single-use material such as temporary signs and plastic packaging;
- Worked with catering suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint by prioritising a local workforce and cutting food miles by sourcing from local suppliers;
- Used carbon offsetting to create a lasting legacy, including planting 2,022 acres of a new Commonwealth Forest across the West Midlands.

The Games organisers recognised that there were limitations on the extent to which the Birmingham Games could minimise carbon emissions, but they were committed to using the Games as an opportunity to inspire other event organisers to think about actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint and promote sustainability.

**Design:** The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games embodied many of the design principles of sustainable events. Rather than just reducing an event's carbon footprint, events can be part of sustainable urban development strategies. Increasingly, new stadiums are being designed around sustainability. Dartford FC's home ground, Princes Park, incorporates features such as rainwater harvesting, effective insulation and solar panels. It uses efficient underfloor heating and low energy lighting, and the use of public transport to and from the ground is encouraged. The bold design also includes a green roof, and stands which are partially buried into the ground to preserve the landscape.

### **Raising awareness and changing behaviour:**

By bringing people together, community events encourage people to feel they have a stronger stake in the place they live. If someone feels they belong, they are more likely to protect their local environment.

Environmental themed events tend to appeal to a narrow "activist" audience. In order to broaden their appeal, event organisers can:

- Use messaging and channels that are effective in changing the views and behaviour of a broad cross-section of society. There is an extensive body of literature on this which has informed the work of organisations such as Climate Outreach and the European Climate Network;
- Incorporate environmental themes into events attended by a broader cross-section of society, as shown by the Dandelion case study below. Tree planting featured in the Jubilee celebrations, and the Festival of Suffolk also worked with the Suffolk Show to make sure that its schools' programme had a strong focus on the environment.



## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

### Case study: Dandelion

**Dandelion was a six-month STEAM project that formed part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, and was one of the ten major projects that took place across the UK and online in 2022.**

It was a partnership between a number of arts and science organisations, community organisations, academic institutions and others across Scotland and its theme was “Sow, Grow, Share”. The project worked in schools and with families and school communities to distribute 2000 tons of specially created growing medium and “tatties” so they could experiment with growing in multiple different ways.

Dandelion also held growing festivals in Glasgow and Inverness. A fleet of cargo bikes toured Scotland towing growing cubes containing stacks of plants. The tour was used to initiate conversations about food and the environment.

The centrepiece of the project was Unexpected Gardens. Dandelion organisers worked with local

organisations in 13 different locations to plant gardens in unlikely places, such as waste ground. As well as planting food crops, the Unexpected Gardens hosted events and live performances. A September Harvest formed the finale in each of the Unexpected Gardens and beyond, resulting in over 500 harvest events, and there are plans for some gardens to stay in place beyond 2022.

In the UK there is public consensus that climate change is a problem – an ONS survey of October 2021 showed that 75% of people in the UK are worried about climate change. Dandelion made conversations about sustainability more accessible by using food as a starting point. Its festivals, bike tour, schools programme and Unexpected Gardens project reached people in many different communities.

*“We’ve put culture in agriculture and got communities and children and young people thinking about their food and where it comes from.”* Dandelion organiser, February 2022.



Dandelion (Team at Falkirk's Helix Park), part of UNBOXED\_ Creativity in the UK © Andrew Cawley

## Ownership of legacy

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**Planning for social and economic impact, including post-event legacy activities, will require those leading events to make the right decisions about who leads or delivers impact and post-event legacy activities. This must be a continued focus – although the London 2012 Games was seen as a ten-year project, after 2015 there was no full-time civil service post working on the legacy, and reporting on the ten-year plan stopped in 2015. Furthermore, there was no public reflection by central government on the legacy on the tenth anniversary of the Games.**

Legacy and long-term impact does not happen automatically, and legacy plans promised in the bidding and planning stages often fall short. Furthermore, those responsible for organising and delivering events are rarely held accountable if they do not deliver what they set out to achieve. Government, funders and event organisers should carefully consider who has responsibility for delivering on each part of a legacy plan. It is crucial to create a sense of ownership for these long-term impacts, as well as to provide designated funding for them.

Different event organisers have different priorities for events, but where public funding is being sought, they should aim to link the outcomes of an event to local or regional funding strategies. Funders also need to be clear and specific about which of the benefits previously discussed they are aiming for, and set definite, measurable outcomes, agreed with stakeholders, before implementation of an event.

Often the responsibility for legacy, including the overarching governance and legacy promises, lies with the owners of the physical assets, such as a stadium, as they are seen as the physical manifestation of legacy. Accountability for the social assets and outcomes are equally important, and need considered layers of ownership within an overarching governance framework for legacy.

What happens to volunteers post event is just one aspect of the complexities of “owning” a legacy. A well-trained, civic-minded cadre of volunteers is one of the most significant intangible assets of major events. However, there are several challenges to overcome in ensuring that event volunteer programmes strengthen the volunteering infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

Firstly, there is the issue of data ownership and management – who has rights to contact volunteers post event, how will contact be streamlined to maintain their enthusiasm and goodwill while ensuring they’re not inundated with requests? Follow-up contact with the London 2012 Games Makers was complicated by data protection and issues around which sorts of organisations owned the data for future contact. This goes beyond a database – although that can play a role. Another important consideration is whether the distinct volunteer brand created for the event should continue post event, or whether it is effectively dissolved and volunteers dispersed between existing volunteering opportunities. There are several examples of how volunteer programmes with roots in an event can retain their original cohort and attract new volunteers. Team London Young Ambassadors scheme is the Mayor of London’s social-action scheme for schools. It emerged in 2013 from the London 2012 Games and has reached over 450,000 young people. In Coventry, the City of Culture City Hosts volunteer scheme was run by EnV, a volunteer management community interest company (CIC) that started during the London 2012 Games.

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What happens to volunteers post-event is just one aspect of the complexities of “owning” a legacy.

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## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

“Spread events around, there are areas of the country which would hold absolutely fantastic sailing events, because they’ve already got great boating infrastructure.”

The long-term impact of a volunteering programme will be greater if it is underpinned by a longer-term, locally owned, strategy. This strategy should start with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current volunteer infrastructure and the opportunities presented by an event. Event volunteers at major events receive training and support that many charities simply can’t afford, so organisers have a responsibility to help community organisations benefit from that training, finding out in advance what they need from volunteers to see if that can be integrated into training.

In October 2022, Spirit of 2012 announced funding for four places that bid to be UK City of Culture in 2025. The programme will gather evidence about how more places can use the momentum of a bid to improve volunteering, even where they are not awarded a City of Culture designation. Spirit of 2012 hopes that this investment might encourage more funders to invest in those places that have a clear strategy about the role of events in strengthening their volunteering infrastructure.

There is no one size fits all, but different implications for what funding is needed if the intention is to maintain the volunteering programme post event.

### Looking beyond single host cities

**The Inquiry found that the potential economic benefits of events were more equitably distributed when the activities associated with the event were spread out geographically. The UEFA Women’s Euros 2022, Royal Jubilees, and 14–18 NOW (the arts programme for the First World War centenary) are examples of major national events with a geographic spread and a variety of local activities.**

Looking ahead, the UEFA Men’s Euros 2028, which will involve the football governing bodies of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland, has committed to hosting matches in stadiums across the UK and Ireland. This decision spreads the economic benefits of the competition more widely as well as allowing more widespread participation at a local level. This is an example of a multi-location, single-discipline event; the Inquiry believes that this model could also bring benefits when applied to multi-sport events, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which are usually held in a single location.

*“Spread events around, there are areas of the country which would hold absolutely fantastic sailing events, because they’ve already got great boating infrastructure. And I think we could actually keep the cost of putting the Olympic Games down if we use some of our existing facilities around the country. So, for example, if we did want to do the cycling up in Glasgow, in our amazing velodrome, that would be a great way to do it.”* Focus group participant, September 2021.

There is a danger, however, that by hosting events that deliver activities in multiple locations across the UK, it can be more difficult to co-ordinate and deliver legacy and may exclude areas with less existing infrastructure. This should be considered during the planning and delivery of the event, with a greater focus on partnership working.

A significant resource to be drawn on here is the OECD’s Recommendations on Global Events Toolkit, which presents guidance and policy advice on maximising the impact of global events for local development<sup>36</sup>.

## Key findings

### The Inquiry found that:

- Major events tend to achieve the greatest economic and social impact when they were delivered as long-term development projects, involving a planning and preparation phase, the event itself, and a legacy period;
- Leading on from this, many events were evaluated during or immediately after their delivery. By failing to take this longer timescale into account, evaluations only gave a partial picture of impact, and risked underestimating more gradual, long-term changes. This approach, where events are evaluated before, during and after implementation, is supported by HM Treasury's Green Book;
- A crucial factor in achieving long-term economic impact was the leadership of events, particularly during the legacy phase. Without clarity around responsibility for and ownership of event outcomes, longer-term impact was less likely to be achieved. Furthermore, event organisers and legacy bodies were rarely held to account for failing to keep their social and economic impact commitments;
- The strongest long-term impacts were achieved when events were aligned with longer-term regional or local plans. This alignment often secured greater support from businesses and other partners and enabled greater public buy-in, with people believing that an event would help improve their local area;
- It is possible to run highly successful local and regional events with comparatively little public funding. Community, local and regional events have a great deal of "placemaking" potential in that they help create communities where people want to live or work, particularly if they become regular events;
- The local economic benefits of events were sometimes limited when the staff, goods and services related to an event were procured from outside the local area where an event was taking place.



## CHAPTER THREE – THRIVING COMMUNITIES

### Implications for smaller projects

**Whilst smaller local events can't boast the same scale of economic impact as their national counterparts, they can still play a crucial role in local economies. Events can bring in tourism and trade as well as increasing local people's awareness of and engagement with local businesses. Several participants in the Inquiry's focus groups mentioned Christmas markets as events which encouraged them to buy locally and form relationships with local producers.**

Local events can also have a profound impact on community pride, and can contribute positively to placemaking. This was borne out in the Inquiry's focus groups, with many participants connecting local events to a sense of pride and belonging in their community.

By connecting local events to larger national moments or events, smaller events have the potential to shape the vision and goals of these national events as well as benefitting from their profile, popularity and momentum.

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry from The Big Lunch found that local events had excellent potential to bring people together behind causes and to raise funds.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, local events can also help support employability and skills in communities, for example, by offering apprenticeships, supporting staff training or through volunteering programmes that focus on employability. Programmes such as these can respond to local needs, helping to remove some of the barriers facing those who are prevented from participating in events.





## CHAPTER FOUR

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES:

## HOW CAN EVENTS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER?

**Events are collective acts. They link us to other people, helping us to feel part of something bigger, strengthening our social connections and creating new ones. These connections can create bridges across ethnic, faith, class, generational or even political divides, breaking down prejudice and building trust. They also have an important role to play in promoting inclusion, including bringing together disabled and non-disabled people. The connections that events create can boost wellbeing by reducing loneliness and isolation. However, the opposite can also be true. Done without due care and attention, events can also reinforce divides between different groups or increase experiences of exclusion among those who are unable to participate. This chapter looks at the power of events to connect people, and how we could do this better.**

The Inquiry commissioned British Future to write a report, *Seizing the Moment*, exploring this topic in more detail<sup>37</sup>. We also took evidence from Sunder Katwala, Director of British Future, Jon Knight, Chief Executive of the Together Campaign and Marnie Freeman, Director at Neighbourly Lab. The Inquiry secretariat visited the St George's Day celebrations in Dartford, run by Cohesion Plus, and discussed the topic at a stakeholder roundtable in Northern Ireland. This chapter also draws on submissions to our open call for evidence, focus groups and public polling, as well as the work of Inquiry members themselves.

### Context

**There is a consensus that events can, and do, increase social connection. It is an outcome that features heavily in evaluation frameworks for events of all sizes.**

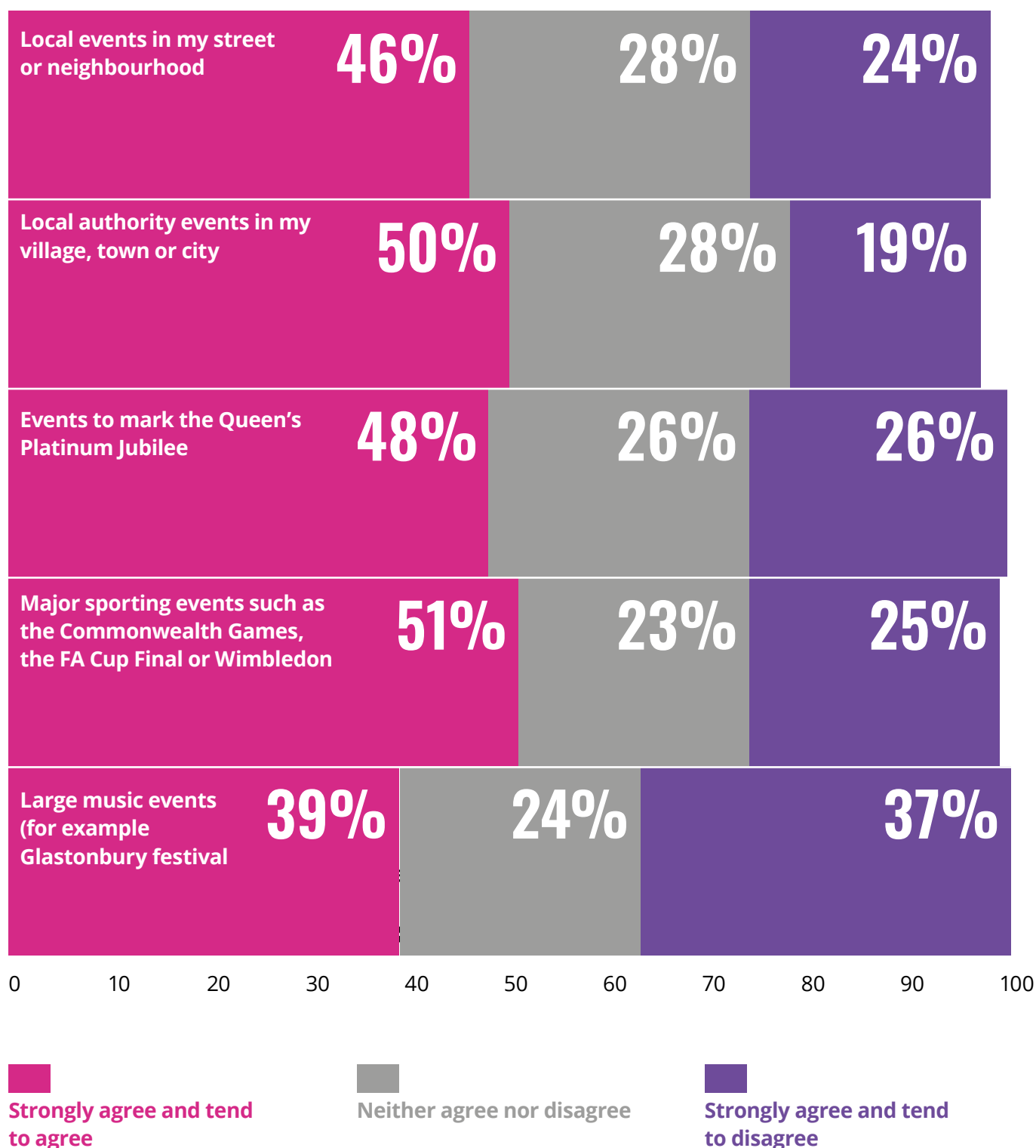
Inquiry polling found that 63% of people believed that local events were good at bringing people from different backgrounds together (10% disagreed), and 62% felt that major sporting events could do the same (12% disagreed). In advance of this year's Coronation, Inquiry polling also found that the majority of the public (62%) felt that events like the Jubilee brought people together, although this still leaves 24% who were neutral and 14% who disagreed. This was strongly correlated with age, with 70% of over 65s agreeing compared with 53% of 18 to 24-year-olds.<sup>38</sup> Where events are seeking to "bring the whole country together", there is clearly purposeful work that needs to be done to ensure that different groups feel connected to and represented by the event, rather than assuming this is an automatic process.

Inquiry polling explored different types of events and whether respondents felt that they were for "people like me". Fig 1 shows the proportion of people who disagreed that these events were for people like them. Whilst some of the differences are likely to be simply down to personal preference, they give an indication of the number of people who feel excluded by different types of event.



## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

**Fig 1: Extent to which people agree that different types of events are generally for “people like me”**



As the Inquiry's second report, *Seizing the Moment*, explained: *"This research suggests that there was some kind of event for everyone and that very few people felt alienated from all of the types of major event. Across the five categories, only 4% of respondents felt that none of the options listed appealed to them (both in the nationally representative and boosted ethnic minority surveys). But each event will also have a certain audience skew, which organisers will need to be conscious of when seeking to identify where and how their events can most successfully build new social connections."*<sup>39</sup>

Mega events are uniquely placed to reach wide sections of society. A total of 51.9 million people in the UK (90% of the population) watched at least 15 minutes of the London 2012 Games on BBC TV and 17.7% of adults attended a ticketed or free Olympic or Paralympic event or took part in community programmes. Ten years later, half of UK adults watched the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games or took part in events such as the Queen's Baton Relay. The Lionesses' victory in the UEFA Women's Euros was watched by a crowd of 87,192 at Wembley and a further 17.4 million on the BBC. UK Sport has secured over 130 international sporting champions in the UK since 2012 and estimates that in the coming decade they will reach over 10 million fans<sup>40</sup>. In June 2022, 44% of UK adults (23.3 million people) took part in at least one Platinum Jubilee event. Events of this scale are historic in nature, giving participants the chance to feel part of something bigger and become part of our national story.

The Inquiry heard evidence that national events held a particular power in instances where they could be celebrated and interpreted locally, with a shared thread between the national and local. The London 2012 Games torch relay successfully brought the spirit of the Games to communities across the country, with almost 8,000 torchbearers chosen to represent their place. Anniversaries of major historical events also allow people to plan locally relevant activities whilst connecting people to a larger shared history. Participants know that in workplaces and schools across the country, people are taking part in the two-minute silence to mark Armistice Day, and events up and down the country will have common features, but they can be also

tailored to the local context. As one young focus group member in July 2022 explained:

*"Locally to me on we've got like an old Victorian high street where I live and they do a parade every year on Remembrance Sunday, it's good, they usually have some older planes flying over. It's quite nice to [see] all the old equipment plus, obviously, it's nice to see the whole community come together for something like that. Because it really does pack out my high street. And you see pretty much everyone you know, as everyone goes down to it."*<sup>41</sup>

There is strong evidence, therefore, that events can increase people's pride in where they live, and in doing so increase their sense of belonging.

However, Inquiry polling also found that 50% of people think that "Big events like the Jubilee and the Commonwealth Games are a distraction from the real issues facing the country." The Jubilee saw substantial differences in participation rates between the different nations of the UK, with England and Wales seeing higher engagement than Northern Ireland and Scotland<sup>42</sup>. Engagement in the Jubilee was also correlated, unsurprisingly, with feelings of pride in the Royal Family. For 70 years, the late Queen had been synonymous with the Royal Family itself. Her funeral was watched by over 30 million people in the UK. The Coronation is a major historic event that will attract global attention. It has significant potential to nurture our shared sense of community. But it also has the potential to increase divisive conversations about class and privilege, generational change, the history of empire, attitudes towards migration, and differences in attitudes between the four nations of the UK.

No single event can be all things to all people, and it is certainly not in the scope of a single event to solve all of society's divides. But event organisers can play a powerful role in curating a programme of events across the year, offering some events that appeal more to specific groups within a community, and other events that are designed specifically to bring different groups together. This type of curation is happening at many levels – from cultural programmers at mega events like the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, to local authority event teams or individual organisations reviewing their

## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

In the lead up to Birmingham 2022, the organising committee was criticised for a perceived lack of engagement with the city's diverse communities, with the Birmingham Race Impact Group releasing a damning report two months before the Commonwealth Games opened.

forward programme. Rather than expecting all events to have universal appeal, one of the most effective approaches to bridging divides event organisers can take is identifying groups who already have a shared interest in an activity, and using that to build common ground.

### Event planning and inclusion

Effective event curation requires diverse leadership teams and effective community consultation processes. The Inquiry heard evidence about how this can be achieved. There are many different approaches for involving place-based communities and communities of interest in the decision-making processes and design of events. Coventry 2021 UK City of Culture focused significant time and resource co-producing their programme with groups who have traditionally had little opportunity to set the agenda for a major event – an approach that is considered further in Chapter Five. Inquiry polling found that 72% of people felt that disabled people should be more involved in the planning of sporting and cultural events<sup>43</sup>. In the lead up to Birmingham 2022, the organising committee was criticised for a perceived lack of engagement with the city's diverse communities, with the Birmingham Race Impact Group releasing a damning report two months before the Commonwealth Games opened. This criticism largely dissipated during the event itself but could resurface if people believe there has been unequal access to long term benefits, including activities funded with the £60 million Commonwealth Games underspend<sup>44</sup>.

### Addressing barriers to participation

The majority of the events included in Inquiry polling were either free or could be accessed for free through broadcast media. In the Birmingham focus group, people raised the cost of tickets as a reason for not attending in-person events, and suggested that more free or low-cost tickets should have been available to residents. People with household incomes of over £40,000 were also significantly more likely to agree that music events were for people like them. The question gave the example of Glastonbury 2022, where a weekend ticket with booking fee cost £285, although there are of course many low-cost and subsidised music festivals. Until 2018, Radio 1's Big Weekend was the largest free music festival in Europe, but in 2022, day tickets cost £26 with booking fee. For publicly funded events, ticket pricing decisions are of course a balancing act. While revenue from ticket sales, concession stands and merchandise decreases the burden on the taxpayer, the downside is that fewer people are able to afford to attend. Evidence submitted by Local Trust suggests that community event organisers felt a responsibility to put on free events because existing activities were too expensive for some of their residents to access<sup>45</sup>. Some events now use a pay-what-you-can model, an exciting way of increasing access, but of course, further complicating organisers' ability to decide on their financial model. The Jo Cox Foundation, which supports community events across the country through its Great Get Together Campaign, provides advice for organisers on securing sponsorship and donations from local businesses to meet the costs of their events. Ticket price isn't the only barrier to participation. Travel to and from events can be prohibitively expensive, particularly for disabled people, and unpaid carers may need to make additional care arrangements for their friend or family member to attend.



### Changing perceptions of disability

Events have an important role to play in including and promoting inclusion for disabled people, although they are of course only a small part of a wider effort that is needed to reduce entrenched inequality.

There was broad consensus that the London 2012 Paralympic Games marked a turning point in attitudes to disabled people. Some 70% of people agreed that the Games had a positive impact on attitudes to disabled people, which rose to 71% among disabled people. Only 6% of people disagreed. Some 68% of people agreed that attitudes to disabled people in society have generally improved (66% among disabled people)<sup>46</sup>.

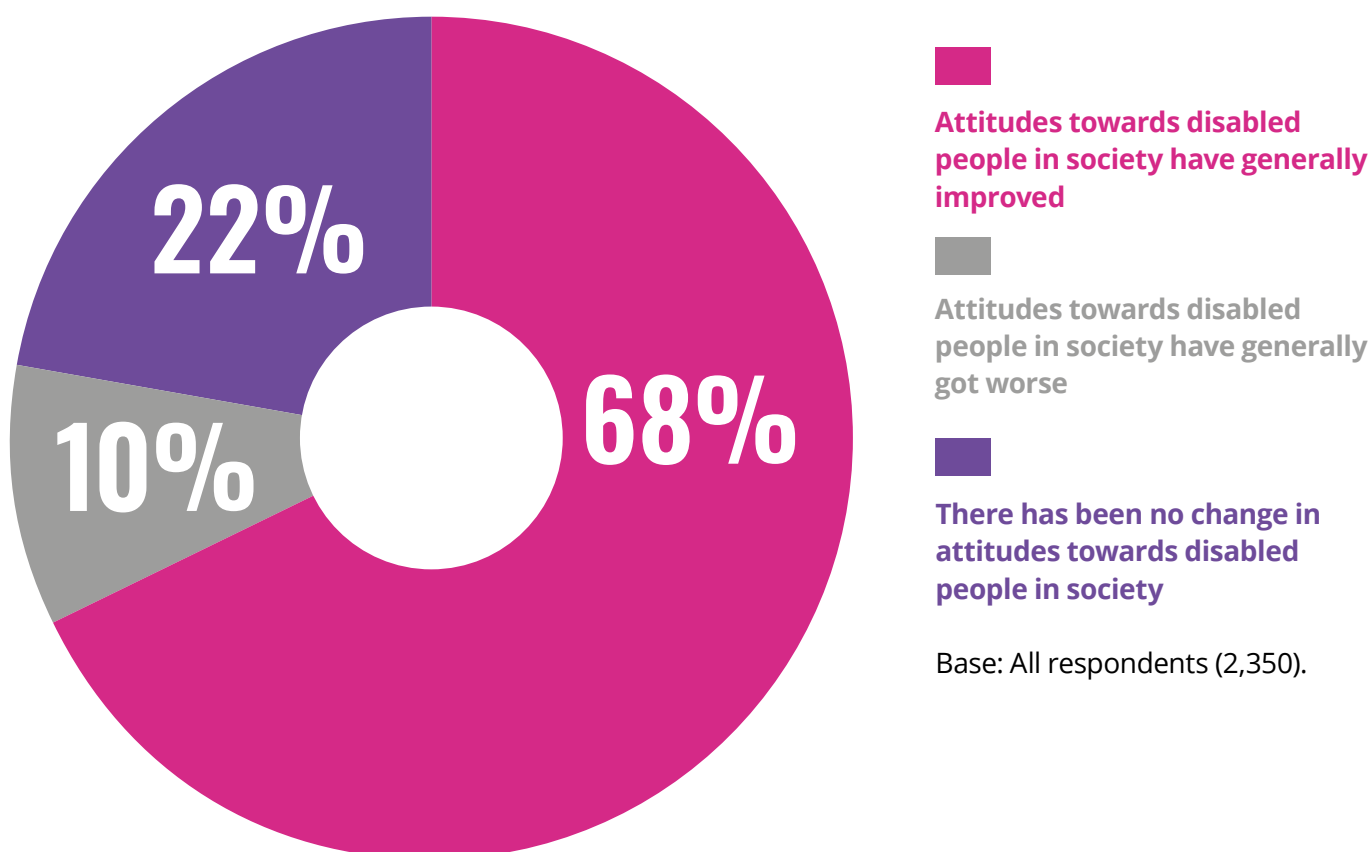
The findings of the survey were reflected by both disabled and non-disabled people in the focus group discussions. Much of this change in attitudes was

attributed to the extensive coverage of the London 2012 Paralympics on Channel 4. People felt that the event had raised the profile of disabled people and provided positive role models.

*"I just think the Paralympics made people more accepted in society, in lots of different ways, like, the modelling and [disabled] people will now be on things like Strictly Come Dancing. So yeah, I think I think it's made people accept and its much, much better."*  
Participant in a focus group with disabled people, July 2022.

However, the extent to which the visibility of para-athletes actually made a difference to the everyday lives of people with disabilities has been questioned by researchers from the University of Bournemouth, who found that this may have been overstated at the time<sup>47</sup>.

**Fig 2: Public perceptions about changes in attitudes over the last 10 years. Source ICM survey of 2,350 UK adults, 5–11 August 2022.**



## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Despite these changes in attitudes, most people still feel that disabled people face prejudice and barriers that prevent them from working or taking an active part in society. Some 68% of people felt that, in the UK as a whole, there was either a lot or some prejudice towards disabled people, and 67% of people felt that the public had negative stereotypes about disabled people. As might be expected, this view was felt more strongly by disabled people. Participants in the focus group discussions were particularly concerned about people with “hidden disabilities” facing misunderstanding and prejudice. This view was supported in survey findings which showed that 83% of people agreed that people do not understand the needs of people with hidden disabilities.

While events can be part of the solution, they can conversely perpetuate stereotypes and compound problems. Inquiry polling found that disabled people still experienced significant barriers to participating in events. The survey showed that only 44% of disabled people felt that theatres and sports stadiums were usually accessible to disabled people, and only 50% of people thought that public transport was usually accessible to disabled people.

The Commonwealth Games is an integrated competition including para sport, with 59 medal events, out of a total of 280, reserved for para-athletes. Some 73% of people agreed that including disabled athletes in big events such as the Birmingham Commonwealth Games helps change attitudes to disabled people. At the same time, there is strong support, not least from many disabled athletes, for retaining a distinct Paralympic Games within the Olympic movement.

Ensuring disabled people are part of event delivery teams, performances and event volunteering programmes increases social contact between disabled and non-disabled people, building empathy and understanding between them, and helping to reduce stereotypes and prejudice. Some 64% of people agreed that people feel awkward in the presence of disabled people. Social contact, and representation across social and mainstream media all have a role in addressing this awkwardness.

*“The Paralympics helped other people to see beyond people’s disabilities.”* Participant in a focus group with disabled people, July 2022.

Yet event organisers must also be wary of reinforcing the othering of disabled people. The inquiry heard from disability rights campaigners about the risks of reducing the lives of disabled people, and their multifaceted identities, into inspirational narratives for non-disabled people. Inquiry polling found that half of the public believed that they did not know a disabled person.

### Understanding reach

While events can enable the bonding, bridging and connections described above, they can’t do this if people stay away because they choose not to attend or because of barriers to participation. However large or small the event is, it is important to know who has or has not attended, and the reasons that prevent or encourage people to take part. Large national and regional event organisers usually commission external evaluations. However, there has been a tendency in some evaluations to inflate statistics about reach and participation, such as counting someone who has heard about an event as someone who has taken part. The Coventry 2021 City of Culture evaluation has made great strides in this area, trialling new methods to verify their attendance data and understand the depth of engagement <sup>48</sup>. Coventry is also leading the way in ensuring that attendance data is not simply used to create a headline participation figure but can be used both to inform programming when the event is taking place and provide the cultural sector with rich insights into who is or isn’t benefitting.

Whilst the prospect of evaluation can be intimidating for community event organisers, many of whom are volunteers, there are simple steps that can be taken to improve practice. Spirit of 2012 recently published [...] in partnership with Local Trust for those organising community events, to enable them to learn from their event for future years <sup>49</sup>.

## Case study: Critical Mass

**Critical Mass is an inclusive dance collective, for young people aged 16–30 across the West Midlands. With funding from Spirit of 2012, its dancers took part in the opening of Birmingham 2022 Festival and the opening ceremony of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games as well as featuring in three of the baton relay celebrations and the launch of Birmingham International Dance Festival.**

The project was developed in partnership with Fabric (formerly Dance XChange), Arts Connect and the Dance Development Leaders Group, a network of dance organisations in the West Midlands. It brought 242 disabled and non-disabled young people together over a 14-month period to produce new performances for the Birmingham Games. Organisers wanted to show how genuine inclusion can be achieved in large events such as the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, as in the past many mass performance moments have failed to be genuinely inclusive for all participants.

Inclusion was prioritised from the start, with support workers recruited as soon as the project started. Organisers spent a lot of time reaching out to and reassuring potential participants, with taster sessions offered to young people to see if they felt the event was for them. Participants met weekly and had opportunity to take part in dance

and movement workshops. Here the organisers worked to build participants' confidence and helped them to bond as a group. Social events such as a winter social also helped this bonding and nurtured a sense of mutual support.

There were challenges along the way, such as transport, as well as meeting the individual needs of each participant within a mass participation experience. At the same time, workshop leaders and support workers gained valuable knowledge and skills in organising inclusive mass performances. There is a commitment to share this knowledge with other dance organisations, the events sector and beyond.

The performances at the Commonwealth Games were the obvious highlights of the project. But it has also left a legacy with many of the participants forming lasting friendships. The evaluation has also shown how successful Critical Mass has been in building the self-confidence and life skills of the young people who took part. Some 81% of the participants said they gained new skills and 76% said they were more confident in doing new things. These impacts will be felt in the years ahead as participants move on with their lives.



Critical Mass rehearse for the opening ceremony of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Credit: Graeme Braidwood



## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Headline figures mask significant variations in the sorts of people who benefit from events. Very few event evaluations involve surveys or focus groups of people who didn't attend. Evaluations like this would help event organisers understand whether these decisions were motivated simply by personal tastes or whether people felt excluded or alienated from taking part. Introducing some evaluation with non-attenders as standard practice would improve collective efforts to use events to bridge divides.

### Social connection

**While the short-term nature of many events means that social contact with others can be short-lived, much of the Inquiry's research suggested that the sense of being part of something bigger through attending single-day events, or even watching them on television, still helped make connections and inspire people to get involved in longer-term activities.**

Participation over a longer period for example through volunteering increases the likelihood of forming lasting friendships<sup>50</sup>.

Following Bradford's Women of the World Festivals in 2016–2018, evaluators created a visual map of the connections that had been formed as a result of the event, showing 40 different follow-on activities. One of the programmers explained, *"before WOW there were pockets of women; now we have a support network"*.<sup>51</sup> After the 2016 festival, some of the young volunteers formed Speakers' Corner, a community collective that continue to put on events more than six years later. *"We didn't want everything that happened during the festival to just fizzle out. We wanted that enthusiasm and excitement to continue. There are a lot of people who really want to make Bradford a better place, and we need something like this to engage people from all sorts of backgrounds. That is where Speakers' Corner grew from, as a project that can carry this enthusiasm."*

Events provide an opportunity for increased partnership working between different groups, but this is not always sustained after the event. One respondent to our open call for evidence argued that legacy bodies – and the funding attached *"should have focused on the network of creativity that had been built. It should have kept these people and organisations stuck together [...] I think that the policy should be that when an event finishes the people and organisations are encouraged to keep working together through pots of money that insist on partnerships and collaboration."*

Events also have a powerful role in bringing a wider group of people into contact with both local and national institutions, increasing public trust and satisfaction with government. However, it is a very challenging area to get right, particularly in parts of the country with low levels of trust in local and national government. Disruption to daily life around traffic and litter feature heavily in people's criticisms of events, and can undermine rather than strengthen faith in institutions. In their literature review of the social impact of community events, Andrew Smith and team stress the importance of managing and measuring these negative impacts, which can otherwise undermine the social impact of the event<sup>52</sup>.

### Bridging divides

Sporting and cultural events have the power to spark conversations about identity and belonging. Televised major sporting events may be a child's first introduction to national flags, anthems and team colours, and with it their first encounter with national identity. As we grow older our memories of international sporting events may continue to influence our ideas about identity and belonging. As the second inquiry report, *Seizing the Moment*, explained: *"National sporting teams – Team GB for the Union Jack, and the English, Scottish and Welsh football teams – currently rank as the primary public association with the national flags. This can provide a valuable counter-pressure in polarised times, as*

*one potential antidote to efforts to narrow national symbols into reflecting allegiance to specific political projects, whether in mainstream politics or those out on the extreme fringes. The 2020s challenge for sport is how to use this positive and inclusive vision as a foundation for the bridging social contact that can do more to realise it.”<sup>53</sup>*

In the North-west focus group, one participant explained: *“I’m not somebody who sort of feels a sense of pride or patriotism very often. But I think when you are watching a big event, like the Olympics, they are the few and far between, the events where actually I do think, you know, we’ve done really well on the world stage [...] and the opening ceremony was lovely. I mean, the torch came past my house, actually, I was just standing in the garden and they came past the house.”*

## Case study: Dartford St George’s Day

### **Cohesion Plus has been delivering annual Saint George’s Day festivals in Dartford and Gravesham for over a decade.**

Gurvinder Sandher MBE, Artistic Director of Cohesion Plus, explained *“When I was growing up, the Union Jack flag was seen as the symbol of the far right, representing a lot of fear and anxiety for many minority communities in those days. However, looking at the UK in the context of modern times, we are a diverse and culturally rich people. As such, I was motivated many years ago to not only reclaim the flag for all who identify as British, but also to celebrate our shared history and experiences by holding annual Saint George’s Day events. The aim of the celebrations is to bring people from all backgrounds regardless of race, faith and socio-economic together to celebrate shared values and a commonality.”*

Over 1,200 people across Dartford and Gravesend attend the annual celebrations which involve schools, and culturally diverse street entertainment and live music.

The event intentionally connects people from different communities in Dartford and Gravesham by bringing the traditions of different minority and majority groups together, for example with dhol players joining a marching band.

Some 81% of the participants said they gained new skills and 76% said they were more confident in doing new things. These impacts will be felt in the years ahead as participants move on with their lives.



St Georges Day, Dartford. Credit: Cohesion Plus

## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

The most popular ideas for bringing people from different backgrounds together were events that appeal to people of all ages, which use shared open spaces like parks and gardens (see Fig 3). The public's findings mirror social cohesion projects like

Youth Sport Trust's and Sporting Equals' Breaking Boundaries<sup>54</sup>, and Roe Valley Resident Association's work in Northern Ireland – both of which have often used intergenerational, outdoor events.

**Fig 3:**







Great Get Together, Jo Cox Foundation

Some 35% of adults said that a memorable impact of an event that they had attended was that they got to meet people from different backgrounds. Events achieve this through both facilitating social contact and by enabling open conversations about who we are and our national identities. In Leicester, focus group members discussed a range of events that had brought people together, including Diwali and Pride celebrations and Leicester City's triumph in the 2016 Premier League. One attendee described attending Diwali Celebrations, explaining, *"I don't have much to do with religion personally but [...] it is amazing, I've never seen anything quite like it."* A fellow attendee explained that as a non-religious man of mixed Indian and White heritage, he had been unsure whether he would be out of place. Convinced by friends to come, he explained *"I couldn't believe it, I saw Europeans, Africans, Caucasians, all sorts and I'm thinking, right, I'm alright!"* Another described coming across Pride celebrations in Victoria Park, *"At first we weren't too sure, me and my family, like can we go in or not? You know but they made us feel so welcome [...] there were people there to educate you too, so whatever misconceptions you might have, or whatever stigmas there might be, you talk to somebody."*

Of course, where significant tensions exist, events can act as flashpoints to reinforce rather than bridge divides. At the Inquiry's Northern Ireland stakeholder roundtable, participants reflected on the loyalist marching season, a series of events that celebrates Protestant identity between Easter Monday and the end of September each

year. These events heighten tensions between Catholic and Protestant communities, but there are many perspectives, with one member of the roundtable remarking that these marches represented "the largest working-class men's musical festival in the UK".

Community event organisers can take small steps to encourage greater social connection for relatively low cost. Neighbourly Lab gave evidence to the Inquiry's fourth sitting based on their evaluation of "Thank-You Day" street parties. They recommended that all event organisers encourage attendees to wear name badges that also list an interest or hobby, such as "Hannah, dog owner", "Nelson, enjoys camping" to encourage strangers to strike up a conversation. The Jo Cox Foundation (JCF), which runs the Great Get Together campaign, provides cards with conversation starters for volunteers to lay out on tables. Other community organisers spoke to us about the importance of food and outdoor space for breaking down barriers, or how the layout of chairs and tables can encourage or discourage mixing. In 2020, Spirit of 2012 worked with InFocus and three leading charities, JCF, Springboard and the WOW Foundation, to produce best practice guidance on turning community events into longer-lasting movements. Their advice was collated in a report, *Moment to Movement*, and an online learning course. This how-to guidance provides a simple set of principles and barriers for small event organisers to consider.

## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

### Case study: Roe Valley Residents Association, Limavady, Northern Ireland

**Limavady is a mixed community of Catholics and Protestants, 17 miles east of Derry/Londonderry. For over 20 years, Roe Valley Residents Association has led projects that bring the whole community together. In 2018, they partnered with Springboard on a project called 14-NOW, funded by Spirit of 2012. The project asked residents to identify activities that would improve their community, with a focus on increasing wellbeing and social connection and reducing isolation. Events were a key part of what they wanted to do, and included a Halloween lantern parade and Christmas family lunch. As one parent explained, “I think since the event has started to run I feel more community spirit. I didn’t know the people who are pretty much my next-door neighbours. We have never hardly spoke before or if I would have even passed them on the street, I wouldn’t have said anything. Now I’m getting to know people and it’s well to be able to put names to faces and know that there’s people out there who have become friends.”**

Karen Campbell, Project Co-ordinator at Roe Valley Residents Association explained some of the approaches they had used to gain trust across sectarian divides: “Using events proved to be an excellent strategy when engaging residents from right across the community. It was important to work at a grassroots level, in partnership with residents, to find common ground between both community backgrounds. From this, we were able to engage local people, providing events and activities that were enjoyable, memorable and offering that sense of community pride for all.”

As well as sectarian divides, the projects sought to address rural isolation. Karen explained “Roe Valley Residents Association worked on a strengths-based approach with the smaller, more rurally isolated hamlets across Limavady. Bringing together volunteers, providing appropriate training and identifying their skill set, we were able to empower

*local people in being able to effectively deliver community events. The development of quality community leaders delivering high quality events, led to an increase in momentum from local people willing to engage in further, more longer-term community activities.”*

The project team made a concerted effort to collect both survey and focus group data to understand the impact of their events, with the support of independent evaluators InFocus. There was a significant increase in participants feeling proud of their contribution to the community, from 17% to 44% feeling “very proud”. The proportion of respondents agreeing that their community “is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together”, increased significantly, with a baseline of 43% stating that they either strongly agree or agree at baseline, compared to 91% by the end of the project<sup>55</sup>.



Roe Valley Residents Association,  
Limavady, Northern Ireland



## Connected communities and volunteering

**One of the key ways that events promote more connected communities is through their volunteering programmes. Volunteering allows people from different backgrounds and at different stages of their life to work together with a shared sense of purpose. Event organisers can enhance this experience with focused attention on: ensuring the volunteer workforce is reflective of the communities where the event is being held, increasing access support, and making sure the programme appeals to people who may not have previously considered formal volunteering. Volunteers at events report feeling proud of their community, that they were listened to and more actively engaged in it.**

Event volunteering programmes can also help increase community connection by helping to increase longer-term civic engagement. Evidence from The Big Lunch suggested that 38% of people who took part in 2018 had since taken up a new volunteering opportunity in their local area<sup>56</sup>. Research commissioned by Sport England showed that 7% of those who volunteered at large sporting events went on to volunteer in grassroots sports<sup>57</sup>. The same study also showed that 22% of event volunteers who wanted to offer their time again, did not become involved in grassroots sports. People take part in event volunteering for different reasons, many of them not related to an interest in sport or culture. Some people give their time because their friends are doing so or because a major event is a memorable experience. Any post-event volunteering offer needs to reflect this. There are key lessons to be learned from the London 2012 Games which show how legacy volunteering schemes might be better managed to maintain the engagement of event volunteers.

Communities can be brought together not only by joyful events but also by crises such as flooding or pandemic. Several stakeholders commented on the parallels between the community spirit at the heart of celebratory events and the way in which COVID-19 brought together millions of people who sought to support each other. The demand for community volunteers during the pandemic provided several examples of where cohorts of existing event volunteers had been mobilised as part of the community response. In Hull, the City of Culture volunteers delivered food and other essentials to shielding residents and signed up to a befriending scheme. In Waltham Forest, the London 2019 Borough of Culture, the Council was able to draw on a database of more than 1,000 volunteers, the “Legends of the Forest” to help in similar ways.

The Inquiry asked the charity Helpforce to survey NHS volunteer coordinators from across Britain about lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic that might benefit future events<sup>58</sup>. Respondents noted that events gave organisations the opportunity to suspend normal practice and do things differently, building stronger relationships with the community. Some respondents were frustrated that the funding for supporting volunteers had not been maintained over the longer term, despite the positive contribution volunteers were making. They also stressed the need for tailored, local campaigns for volunteer recruitment, and clarity around permission to access volunteer data. They urged event organisers not to forget basic principles of volunteer management – that unless prospective and existing volunteers were communicated with swiftly and clearly valued, their commitment and goodwill would diminish.

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“Respondents were frustrated that funding for volunteers had not been maintained.”

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## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

### Case study: HEY! Volunteering

**Nearly 3,000 volunteers signed up for Hull 2017 UK City of Culture, many of them first-time volunteers. From the outset, the plan was to establish support mechanisms to keep them volunteering after the festival ended.**

Five years on, the Hull City of Council Legacy Volunteering Programme is now managed by Visit Hull and East Yorkshire (VHEY), a partnership between Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council funded by Spirit of 2012. VHEY took on responsibility for managing the volunteering programme from the arts organisation Absolutely Cultured in 2021. VHEY's remit is more closely aligned with the volunteering programme, with volunteers welcoming visitors to the area.

Today, the volunteers are a visible presence near visitor attractions in their distinctive turquoise uniforms, having found in 2017 that uniforms can incentivise regular volunteering. While many volunteers give their time to cultural and heritage organisations and to welcome visitors, many are also vaccine volunteers or volunteer in schools and for charities. In February 2022, VHEY recruited 85 new volunteers, with plans to recruit even more.

John got involved as a volunteer in Hull through his wife, Janet, and it has helped him see more of his city and meet new people.

*"The experience has been (and still is) very rewarding. We have volunteered at many events, doing different roles including meeting and greeting visitors to the city. We are busy doing two or three shifts each week ranging from coffee mornings at a community library to shifts at the information pod in the travel interchange.*

*"Because of the diversity of the opportunities we have been involved in we no longer have a 'comfort zone'. We have made many new lifelong friends with many other volunteers who we socialise with (COVID permitting) including Christmas parties. As a result of our volunteer training, we have gained knowledge and experience of many different communities.*

*"I have carried on volunteering because I enjoy it and also get a lot from it. It makes me feel good to do something for my city."*



## Key findings

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### The Inquiry found that:

- Events as a whole reach much of the population – in Inquiry polling, only 4% of the population could not identify at least one type of event that was for “people like me”. But there are significant differences between who is attracted to these types. Some of this is an inevitable consequence of our personal interests and hobbies, but there are also some differences based on factors such as geography, age and gender. Effective curation of an overarching events strategy – at a national, combined authority or local authority level as well as in individual institutions – has an important role to play in ensuring the total sum of events helps to strengthen community connection.
  - One of the biggest challenges event organisers face is how to respect and manage the multitude of different ideas and perspectives that come from those who are invested, both financially and emotionally, in an event. Events can act as “disrupters” within a system, giving people the chance to do things differently. This can have hugely powerful consequences, bringing in fresh perspectives and elevating different voices. But this can also feel threatening and frustrating to individuals and groups who were there long before the event and will be there after the event is over. The make-up of a board or organising committee, the plan for distributing funding, and the process of community consultation can all act as flashpoints, potentially deepening rather than strengthening divides.
  - There is strong evidence that events can improve people’s sense of pride in their place, and that this plays out at a national, city and local level. In focus groups, a wide range of events of very different sizes – from the Premier League Final, to the Ramsbottom World Black Pudding Throwing Championships – were credited with bringing people together and increasing community spirit.
  - Some events have a particularly powerful role to play in uniting people across divides. Events connected to significant anniversaries, as well as heritage events more generally, have an opportunity to establish a shared narrative.
- Hosting events is also important, with *“the sense of a special and scarce occasion may generate a widely felt sense of ownership in the potential pride (or anxiety) about whether things will go well. Hosting international guests requires us to decide, at home, what it is that we want to say about who we are and where we are going.”*<sup>59</sup>
- The Inquiry heard evidence that some types of activity within an event are particularly effective at democratising access and facilitating conversations across divides, including outdoor activities and events that focus on food. Volunteering at an event is also particularly effective for bringing people into contact with people from different backgrounds and different life stages.
  - Many event organisers lack the data that could tell them how inclusive their events are and how effective they’ve been in connecting people from different communities. This could be a rich source of information not only to understand the impact of an event but also for venues, local authorities and funders to use in long-term community and audience development.
  - Events can play a role in changing perceptions of disabled people and supporting wider inclusion. A majority of the public, including a majority of disabled people, feel that events such as the Paralympic and Commonwealth Games have had a positive impact on inclusion. But there is more that could be done to embed inclusion across all events and to ensure disabled people are participants at all levels of a project.
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- “Hosting international guests requires us to decide, at home, what it is that we want to say about who we are and where we are going.”*
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## CHAPTER FOUR – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

### Implications for smaller projects

**As discussed, locally run events are arguably in a stronger position than national ones to design projects that bridge divides and to address barriers that prevent everyone in their community from getting involved.**

A single event will not transform relationships between different groups, particularly if there are longstanding tensions. It may take time to gain the trust of different communities, and events can be flashpoints for increasing rather than resolving conflict.

If increasing cohesion is the aim of the event, there are small steps that you can do to help people mix with people that they don't know – from conversation starters to name badges. Event organisers can also make small changes to their feedback and evaluation, adding simple questions, such as asking if attendees spoke to someone new.

Organisers of small events should also think about what steps they can take to be more inclusive, such as whether the event planning team includes people from all parts of the community, including disabled people. If applying for funding for your event, be clear about costs associated with making the event more inclusive, such as translating flyers into different languages or covering the transport costs of people who wouldn't normally be able to afford to travel to the event.





## CHAPTER FIVE

# HAPPIER COMMUNITIES:

## HOW CAN EVENTS HELP OUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING?

**One of the most important roles of events is simply that they create happiness and joy for those taking part. This chapter summarises the evidence in relation to:**

- **The direct “in the moment” benefits of attending events on people’s happiness;**
- **How to build wellbeing programmes into event design and delivery;**
- **How events can best encourage people to participate in longer-term activities – in particular, physical activity, culture and volunteering.**

Improving wellbeing was the theme of the Inquiry’s third sitting. Members heard from Professor Paul Dolan, London School of Economics, on what we can learn from behavioural psychology about the role of events, and Amy Finch, Head of Policy and Impact at Spirit of 2012, who summarised lessons on increasing physical activity amongst the least active. Wellbeing was explored in all focus groups and polling. The Inquiry also reviewed event evaluations, strategies and case studies which highlighted the wellbeing impact of individual events. The Inquiry launch report ([www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/reports/](http://www.spiritof2012.org.uk/policy/inquiry-2022/reports/)) explored the relationship between events and volunteering in detail.

The role of events in creating stronger economies and reducing geographic inequalities in participation is covered in Chapter Three. Chapter Four explores how events can increase our satisfaction with where we live, increase our sense of belonging, reduce divides and increase community participation from all sectors of a population. These themes all contribute to individual wellbeing<sup>60</sup>. This chapter primarily covers our physical and mental wellbeing.

### Context

Over the past decade, improving wellbeing has become increasingly prevalent as a stated goal of event organisers and funders in the heritage, culture and sports sectors. From the bidding stage, Coventry 2021 said they wanted to address public health as part of their City of Culture year, while the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games’ impact programme included mental health awareness campaigns for volunteers, the paid workforce and construction workers. Heritage Lottery Fund lists “people will have greater wellbeing” as one of its six priority outcomes; Arts Council England lists “health and wellbeing” as one of its six areas of focus, while Sport England is increasingly measuring changes to emotional as well as physical wellbeing<sup>61</sup>. All three organisations are major funders of events. What Works Centre for Wellbeing has led the way in urging local and national governments to prioritise wellbeing and in increasing understanding of how leisure and participation can contribute to this<sup>62</sup>.

## CHAPTER FIVE – HAPPIER COMMUNITIES

In the course of the Inquiry's research, we heard many stories of the transformational impact of events on people's lives. However, there is also scepticism that investment in short-term events can have a lasting impact on wellbeing beyond the emotional boost of attending an event, as Professor Paul Dolan described in the Inquiry's wellbeing evidence sitting. Wellbeing is multifaceted and fluid. Event commissioners and organisers grapple with how much it is reasonable to expect a single event to do, while evaluators face difficult methodological challenges both in accessing the data and in establishing causation. The impact of very different sorts of events at both a personal level (bereavement, divorce) or national (COVID-19, the cost of living crisis) further complicate the picture.

There is also a significant risk that those attending events are drawn from a narrower section of society – more likely to be affluent, educated and in employment, healthy, non-disabled, and already regular participants in culture, sports and volunteering. These groups have higher wellbeing anyway, meaning wellbeing gains could be limited.

One of the most established routes, for sporting events in particular, to improve wellbeing is through increasing physical activity levels – something desperately needed in the UK where 15 million people over the age of 16 are now classed as physically inactive. There is very little evidence that events, including the London 2012 Games, have done this successfully, but it remains widely viewed as one of the most important potential legacies of events by both sporting bodies and the general public<sup>63</sup>.

The Inquiry concludes that improvements to wellbeing are one of the important long-term benefits of events as long as they are:

- Seen as part of a wider, joined-up approach to improving wellbeing at a national or local level;
- Focused on reducing wellbeing inequalities, including how those who would most benefit from participation are reached and engaged;
- Supporting routes into long-term participation in culture, physical activity, and volunteering;
- Not underestimating or diminishing our need for experiences that bring us joy and make memories.

## Making memories

*"My most memorable event was over 20 years ago now. I went to the first day of an England-Australia test match at Edgbaston, in Birmingham. It was a full house; England were not expected to do well at that time. And they bowled Australia out for about 118, if I remember. It was just being part of the atmosphere that was just unbelievable. Even now I get sort of goose pimples thinking about it, being together with so many people for a happy few hours. it was just a great occasion."*

Focus group participant, September 2021.

In his evidence to the Inquiry, Prof Paul Dolan described events functioning in a similar way to holidays and religious festivals – personal and collective cultural touchstones around which we shape our personal lives. He stressed that anticipating events and looking back on them fondly were just as, if not more, important than the events themselves as part of our psychological wellbeing<sup>64</sup>. This means event communications must generate excitement about the event far in advance, establishing an emotional connection with potential attendees as well as clarifying what to expect. It also means proactive management of the memory of the event long after it has ended, something done skilfully by LLDC in relation to the London 2012 Games, and by Liverpool City Council following their year as European Capital of Culture in 2008 (see case study).

## Case study: Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008

**In 2003, Liverpool was awarded the designation of European City of Culture 2008 (ECOC). It was a pivotal moment in the city's history, according to Claire McColgan, Liverpool's current Director of Culture, who says that residents divide their narrative of the city into "pre and post" 2008. In focus groups conducted in 2018, residents were keen to share their memories of the events in which they had participated. McColgan explained that the Council has a role to play in "managing the memory" of an event in order to create a story that unites the city: *"We can tell a story like no one else – a skill we have finely honed over the past 20 years. And that's what gives the activities we stage an authenticity and connection, and provides a true legacy for a city long after an event has finished."***

Of course, any attempt to create a unifying narrative risks simplifying the story and alienating a cultural community which was in existence long before 2008, especially if they did not feel part of the ECOC project. McColgan says: *"Community was at the heart of everything we did back then and continues to be now. Nearly 20 years on from winning the European Capital of Culture title we continue to keep the conversation alive around the importance of culture and events – and it goes from strength-to-strength each year. The initial scepticism that was prevalent ahead of our cultural year was blown away within hours of our celebrations getting underway, and we have kept this cynicism at bay, thanks to our continual investment in culture which tells the story of Liverpool's present and future."*

Although already internationally famous for its cultural exports – McColgan says that Liverpool's reputation is perhaps stronger internationally than within the UK – the ECOC designation also provided a major boost to Liverpool's visitor economy, with 9.7 million additional visitors attracted to the city in 2008, making up 35% of all visits to the city.

Liverpool's Institute of Cultural Capital has also explored the role of the City of Culture year as a touchstone and, in 2018, held a two-day international symposium, *Impacts18*, bringing together evidence about the Capitals of Culture programme a decade on.

The focus groups and surveys conducted as part of *Impacts18* indicated that many residents could identify lasting impacts on the way they viewed culture and their city in general. 42% of residents stated that the ECOC had introduced them to new or different cultural activities, and more than 1 in 4 residents agreed that, ten years on, they actually participate in arts and culture more often because of the ECOC<sup>65</sup>.



Liverpool Capital of Culture Opening Ceremony



## CHAPTER FIVE – HAPPIER COMMUNITIES

### Case study: Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008. *Continued*

*“You should not underestimate what people got from it personally. I got my city [...] I am a Liverpool girl, but I did not have the awareness, for want of a better word that the Tate belongs to me, the galleries belong to me, that amazing art belongs to me. For me [the Liverpool ECoC] was powerful and it made me love my city again. It made me see what my mum and dad and my nan and grandad were talking about, because I had gone through the 80s, no money no jobs and all that. I got the opportunity to see my city as it should be seen by everyone.” Kirkdale focus group, 2018*

The start and end of events also play a huge role in the positive memories that we then derive from them: the wellbeing gains detected during the London 2012 Games peaked during the Opening Ceremony, highlighting the importance of getting these events right to set the tone for the whole event<sup>66</sup>. This pattern was also detectable in Hull’s UK City of Culture year where population wellbeing was at its highest following its first season and spectacular opener, *Made in Hull*<sup>67</sup>. Academics reviewing the long-term benefits of the European Capital of Culture year have also noted a hangover effect in the year after a major event, where wellbeing decreases – perhaps because expectations raised by the event are difficult to maintain once the spotlight fades<sup>68</sup>. Such patterns highlight the need for ring-fenced investment for maintaining momentum, and clear communication with local communities about “what’s next”.

## Increased participation

**The main opportunity that events have for increasing wellbeing over the longer term is through prompting a sustained increase in participation – whether that is in physical activity, arts and culture or volunteering and community engagement.**

One of the ways that major events can have a long-term impact on increased participation and, therefore, increased wellbeing is by providing new facilities that can be used by the community after the event. New or upgraded facilities do not automatically lead to increases in physical activity or engagement in arts and culture, but they can be a necessary first step – if people do not have access to facilities, it is hard for them to act on that inspiration. Ferens Art Gallery was given a £630,000 makeover as part of preparation for Hull UK City of Culture which included improvements to the environmental conditions to allow it to host national and international exhibitions. Event organisers for Birmingham 2022 designed the Sandwell Aquatics Centre with the local community in mind from the outset rather than as an afterthought post Games. While the Inquiry heard evidence that the idea of white elephant infrastructure projects has sometimes been exaggerated, other contributors described facilities falling out of use because ongoing running costs were too high.

Events have a real opportunity to draw in residents to new and existing venues that are underused by some sections of the community, despite being on their doorstep. They offer an opportunity for arts and sports institutions to question why some people feel unwelcome or like they do not belong, the impetus and investment to try something new, and are a vehicle for capturing the attention of underserved audiences. As part of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme, Warwick Arts Centre worked with volunteers from its local community in Canley to hold an annual parade (held in 2021, 2022 and due again in 2023). The Games themselves provided a hook for a longer-term goal of increasing the connection between arts centre and local residents. The parade was featured in the official programme for the Games.

Too often, government, event organisers and the media are locked into a cycle that prioritises headline attendance data or participation figures rather than exploring whether the events are really reaching priority groups who could gain the most from taking part. This has important consequences for an event's likely impact on wellbeing. If event volunteers are not new to volunteering, and City of Culture participants are already regular attendees of galleries and the theatre, adding in a few more events to their diaries is unlikely to increase their sense of happiness and life satisfaction. Similarly, evaluations of sports tournaments which focus on increases in the uptake of a specific sport, rather than whether projects are reaching the least active, do little to improve the country's physical wellbeing.

## Physical activity and wellbeing

Last summer, the National Audit Office published a review of initiatives to improve physical activity since 2012 which explained: *"the proportion of adults participating in sport at least once a week declined in the three years following the Games. The Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Cabinet Committee was disbanded in 2015 and government attention to legacy waned."*<sup>69</sup>

The London 2012 Games is not unique in not meeting its physical activity targets or getting more people involved in sport. Evaluations of the Atlanta, Sydney, Athens and Rio Games showed a similar lack of success, although there have been more positive results in other places<sup>70</sup>.

The public remain optimistic about the inspirational role that sporting events could play in creating healthy habits for young people – "encouraging

more young people to take up sport" was the most popular choice when asked what the long-term benefits were from the London 2012 Games. Get Set, the youth engagement programme for Team GB and Paralympics GB, can evidence some success in this area. Since it began in the lead up to 2012, Get Set has capitalised on the excitement of the event by recruiting athlete ambassadors to visit schools and encourage young people to take part in sports. The programme also provides realistic challenges set at different levels, for example running a specified distance or encouraging young people to try new sports. The programme encourages physical activity through an online platform and by using games and rewards. Almost 200,000 young people took part in Travel to Tokyo. More than 80% of young people believe the programme made them more physically active, and 80% of teachers agreed<sup>71</sup>.

In polling conducted for the Inquiry, 21% of people agreed that they had been inspired to take part in a sport that they had watched live or on television, while 61% disagreed<sup>72</sup>. That 1 in 5 people, and nearly half (44%) of 18 to 24-year-olds, could recall being inspired into activity by a sporting event seems promising. But this was also correlated with social class and salary, with those with more resources more likely to say that they had tried something after watching an event. The polling also does not indicate whether this inspiration led to increases in overall activity levels over the long term.

When asked about which role models would inspire them to become more active, people selected a range of answers (see Fig 4). Relatability is key to inspiring people. Four times as many people prefer to hear from an ordinary member of the public of the same age, background and level of fitness (22%) rather than a television celebrity or social media influencer of about the same age as them (5%).

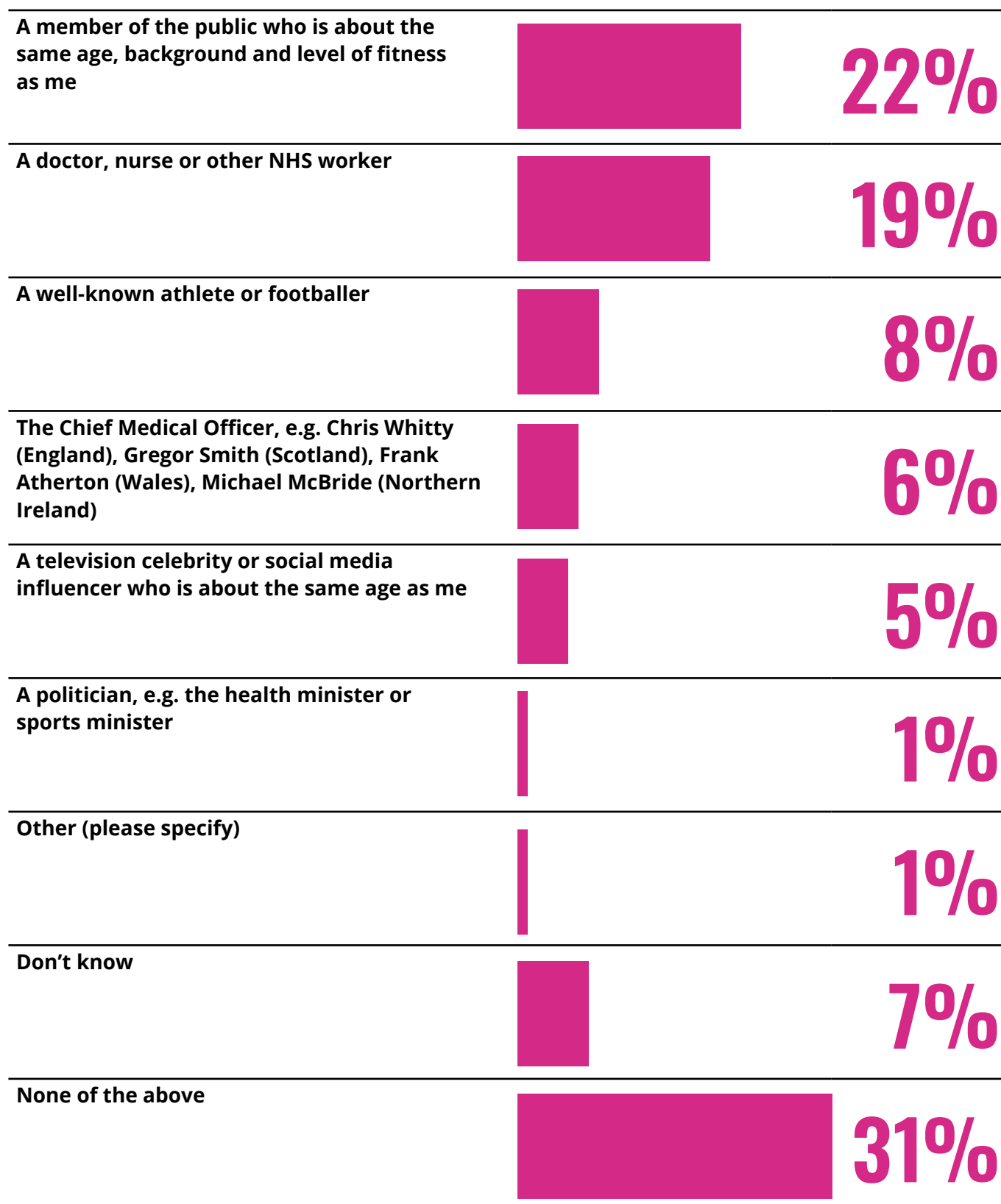
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*"the proportion of adults participating in sport at least once a week declined in the three years following the Games. The Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Cabinet Committee was disbanded in 2015 and government attention to legacy waned".*

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## CHAPTER FIVE – HAPPIER COMMUNITIES

**Fig 4: Responses to the question:** *In an advertising campaign, who would be most likely to persuade you to take up a sport or become more active? Please select one of the below options.* Polling conducted by ICM for Spirit of 2012, February 2022.





In focus groups, many people were sceptical that public campaigns to increase activity, even when fronted by inspirational role models, could inspire them to take up exercise. As one participant from the North East explained: *“I think the older generation, as myself – I can speak for myself as 60-odd – there’s nobody out there that would actually tell me to start increasing [physical activity] myself as I’d give a good mouthful.”*

Ultimately, for this inspirational effect to happen, supply and demand need to be synchronised – people need to know where to go locally to try out the activities that looked so enjoyable. There is an opportunity here for grassroots sport clubs to think about how they might meet a surge in demand and advertise local recruitment drives in the build-up to and immediate aftermath of a sports tournament. The hook of the event may attract increased corporate and charitable funding from which these grassroots organisations can benefit.

Major event organisers often invest in grassroots sports as part of their legacy planning. For example, to capitalise on the Lionesses’ triumph at the 2022 UEFA Euros, the FA is providing 500,000 football opportunities for girls and young women, a long-term funding commitment set out in their event

strategy<sup>73</sup>. The legacy plan is structured around the nine host cities, building on existing local priorities and opportunities. A necessary condition for this success was the decades of work, not least by the players themselves, to get more coverage and respect for the women’s game.

Some of the largest physical activity events in the country are primarily participatory sports rather than spectator ones. More than 40,000 people take part in the London Marathon each year; 60,000 in the Great North Run, while 20,000 cyclists compete in RideLondon, an event established by the Greater London Authority (GLA) as part of its London 2012 Games legacy. Many of the participants have significantly increased their levels of physical activity in the run up to the event. The events also make a significant philanthropic contribution each year – the Great North Run alone raises around £25 million for charity each year – with the subsequent impact on the sense of wellbeing that comes with charitable giving. These annual events attract visitors from around the UK and the world, make an ongoing contribution to the way the area is perceived, and have an individual impact on those taking part. In our north-east focus group, participants described how the Great North Run put the region on the map.



Great North Run. Credit: Guy Percival. License: CC0 Public Domain

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Across the UK every Saturday morning, thousands of people take part in a physical activity event via their local parkrun. The organisation celebrates the fact that over time the average duration of the 5km run and walk by its participants has got longer not shorter, as more people feel confident to give it a try. Parkrun further exemplifies the principles set out in this report by making sure the monitoring data it collects as part of its regular operations is open to researchers for greater public benefit. Organisers of community fun runs, sports tournaments and similar events can think carefully about how they promote their event to attract participants who are not used to taking part in traditional sport and how they share information about other local opportunities to take part in regular social exercise.

Sports events are highly varied, and the Inquiry concluded that we are setting ourselves up for failure if we expect all sporting events to increase physical activity. This is a long-term endeavour, outside the control of most event organisers. Where increases in physical activity are the primary goal of organisers and hosts, the event should be seen as a catalyst in a process of wider improvements to public health over the long term. The Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games approach to physical legacy has an unprecedented focus, positioning it as a key part of the solution to France's public health "catastrophe". One initiative, already underway, is that every child will have 30 minutes of physical activity in school every day<sup>74</sup>.

There are strong examples from the UK of how local and national governments have used a major event to catalyse a longer-term process of change – however challenging it might be to attribute to the event itself. The legacy for the six Olympic boroughs is mixed, but Hackney has gone from the sixth most inactive borough in London to the nineteenth over the past decade after a concentrated commitment to active travel, improving facilities and green spaces and continuing some of the Olympic legacy programmes<sup>75</sup>. Director of Public Health for Hackney, Sandra Husbands, explained that the role of the London 2012 Games in contributing to these improvements is complicated: *"No doubt, there has been an impact from 2012 in motivating and inspiring the Council to provide programmes and improve facilities, as well as inspiring local people to take up activities, at least initially. However, there has also been considerable population change in Hackney, with more middle-class people, who are more likely to cycle, moving into the area. This will also be reflected in our changing position. We continue to work with local communities and grassroots organisations, to support people to become more active in a variety of ways."*

In Scotland, the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, and its Legacy 2014 programme, was the start of a series of funded projects focusing on reaching the least active, encouraging more grassroots community sport organisations to work with non-sporting organisations to reach and engage new groups. In August 2022, the Minister for Public



Health, Women's Health and Sport launched a report, *Changing Lives through Physical Activity and Sport*, sharing findings from a two-year project with sportscotland, Spirit of 2012 and The Robertson Trust. Partnership working was essential to this funding, allowing wellbeing specialists to bring strategic insight and expertise to working with sports delivery organisations. The Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH), for example, worked with Jog Scotland to widen participation by training jogging leaders from a more diverse range of backgrounds, part of wider partnership between SAMH and Scottish Athletics. Partnership working of course can happen without an event – but the Inquiry heard repeatedly that events were often the impetus to bring different organisations and sectors together.

In the instance of a UK city or collection of cities deciding to bid to host another Olympic and Paralympic Games, or an event on a scale of the men's Euros, the Inquiry urges local and national government to have a stronger focus on reducing inactivity rather than promising unrealistic activity targets. An alternative approach would be to take many of the lessons learned from the UK City of Culture programme and apply it to physical activity, establishing a new competition for a year-long, place-based "City of Sport". This concept, which emerged as an idea during the course of this Inquiry, is discussed in full in the recommendations chapter.

## Arts and culture events and wellbeing

There is a wealth of evidence that arts and culture can improve wellbeing, and the APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing published *Creative Health* in 2018, a seminal report setting out a series of recommendations for supporting the wellbeing benefits of the sector<sup>83</sup>. Further research, from leading experts such as Daisy Fancourt, has continued to make the case,<sup>77</sup> whilst evidence from COVID-19 population surveys indicated that many people used participatory cultural activities as a key coping mechanism during the 2020 lockdowns<sup>78</sup>.

The role of cultural events, as opposed to ongoing activities, is slightly harder to analyse. In November 2022, Spirit of 2012 and the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded a rapid evidence review into this topic by What Works Centre for Wellbeing and the Institute of Cultural Capital. The report identifies a number of mechanisms that help make positive changes to wellbeing more or less likely. These include:

- Participatory arts practices;
- Interventions focused on young people with an emphasis on place and heritage;
- Hyperlocal activities delivered in community settings.

Many of these features are present in the work of My Pockets CIC, a Hull-based arts organisation that was commissioned to deliver work as part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017. In his response to the Inquiry's open call for evidence, Peter Snelling from My Pockets explained:

*"For us as an organisation Hull 2017 allowed us to expand what we deliver. Music, animation and other art forms were things we had done some work in but not lots. Hull 2017 gave us the opportunity to move into these areas and experiment and develop. When you take part in something that is large scale you can see yourself as part of a wider whole. The teenagers writing songs on our music project are not just doing that in isolation, they are part of a city-wide event that has national significance. They feel seen, listened to, they are also more likely to listen to others. People open up, talk, get to know each other. And with that comes a change in how you feel about yourself and others."*

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 focused strongly on co-creation as a tool for improving wellbeing, with 64% of its programming involving co-creation with target audiences. The Coventry City of Culture Trust credit this approach with helping them distribute 42% of their tickets to low-income audiences. Evidence published in What Works Centre for Wellbeing's AHRC paper indicates that wellbeing increases were greatest among those people who were involved in co-creating the programme.



## CHAPTER FIVE – HAPPIER COMMUNITIES

### Volunteering at events and wellbeing

Most events rely on the support of volunteers in order to take place. Since the Games Makers were widely celebrated as one of the highlights of the London 2012 Games, major events have seen high-quality, large-scale volunteering programmes as one of their key social legacies. Unlike participants and spectators, volunteers are likely to have a longer-term interaction with event organisers, often including training and support. This intense level of engagement offers more potential for wellbeing gains both during and after the event.

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing's Rapid Evidence Assessment explains: *"There is high quality evidence that volunteering is positively linked to enhanced wellbeing, including improved life satisfaction, increased happiness and decreases in symptoms of depression."*<sup>79</sup> It acknowledges that happier people are more likely to volunteer in the first place but that volunteering has stronger wellbeing benefits for those who: have low wellbeing, are unemployed, are from lower socio-economic groups, have long-term health conditions, or are older. In evidence to the Inquiry, volunteering expert Jeremy Hughes highlighted the barriers to participation that some people from these groups may have – not least a lack of identification with the term "volunteering" itself. Many people who are willing to contribute to their community, or are already doing so, do not recognise themselves as volunteers and do not get involved in formal event volunteering, which means that formal volunteering programmes can fail to reflect the diversity of the community or fail to reach those who might get the biggest wellbeing benefits. Such risks are being addressed by Bradford UK City of Culture 2025, whose plans include improvements to the rural volunteering infrastructure as well as ensuring the volunteer workforce is representative of all communities within the city.

The demands of running a major volunteering programme can make a focus on volunteer wellbeing challenging. Large sporting and cultural events need to over-recruit due to attrition. This over-recruitment is inevitable, but can lead to disappointment, as

seen during the COVID-19 volunteer drive, where thousands of people volunteered but this goodwill was lost. As one NHS manager surveyed for this Inquiry reflected: "A key barrier to continued community participation is simply a lack of 'love' towards the people who come forward."<sup>80</sup>

Event volunteering can be stressful, and major event programmes increasingly recognise this as part of their volunteer management. For community events, which may be entirely volunteer run, the risks of volunteer burnout are more acute. Here, lead volunteers provide support to others. A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the relationship between wellbeing and volunteering found that there was some evidence of negative impacts of volunteering on wellbeing for "high demand" roles, although more research needs to be done.



Asha, Coventry UK City of Culture 2021.  
Credit: Phoenix Creative

## Case study: Festival City Volunteers

Between 2017 and 2019, Festivals Edinburgh and Volunteer Edinburgh collaborated on a person-centred volunteer programme with wellbeing at its heart. Together they trained 254 volunteers to welcome visitors during the festival. Half of the volunteers faced barriers to inclusion. Participants were asked about their reasons for volunteering, which included social connections, improved wellbeing or a stepping stone towards employment. Six months after the festival, the team followed up to support and understand their post-volunteer pathways. Festivals Edinburgh partnered with The Welcoming to identify and support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants into volunteering, and with IntoWork to support job seekers who wanted to gain skills through volunteering. Having trusted partners meant that there were specialist organisations to help volunteers with their next steps. In the project's evaluation report, Employment Advisor Lee Hutchinson explained:

*"The stories and experiences that my clients have shared with me during their time volunteering puts a smile on my face, they have made friends, seen fantastic shows they otherwise wouldn't have been able to see, mixed with the stars and come away from it with a huge boost of confidence. The clients that have taken part have gone on to gain sustainable long-term employment and nearly every employer has remarked how impressed they were when they saw Festival City volunteering on their applications, it's gained an excellent reputation with everyone involved!"*<sup>81</sup>

One of the biggest impacts an event volunteering programme can have on volunteer wellbeing is developing employability skills. According to What Works Centre for Wellbeing, *"Unemployment is one of the most important factors affecting individual wellbeing, with negative impacts going beyond the effects on income. When measuring life satisfaction on a 0-10 scale, the unemployed report about 0.5 points lower compared to those who are in employment."*<sup>82</sup> The Inquiry didn't find examples of large-scale event evaluations that described how many people gained paid employment following their volunteering experience, although this was a feature of many qualitative evaluations.

Of course, employability skills are not relevant to all volunteers – many will be retired, still others will be looking to make use of their existing skills rather than developing new ones, or doing a meaningful leisure activity that is completely different to their day-to-day work. Such nuances are often lost in evaluations of event volunteering programmes. It would be beneficial to be able to segment the volunteer population by some of these themes in order to fully understand what outcomes the programmes are achieving for volunteers.

*"I have carried on volunteering because I enjoy it and also get a lot from it. It makes me feel good to do something for my city."* Festival City Volunteer



## CHAPTER FIVE – HAPPIER COMMUNITIES

### Key findings

- We must not undervalue our need for experiences that bring us joy and make memories. Polling and focus groups conducted for the Inquiry indicate that people share the view of event organisers that memories themselves are an important long-term legacy. Alongside the long-term wellbeing benefits of specific events, the short-term contribution that events make to happiness makes a strong case for funding a vibrant and varied calendar of events, accessible to the widest possible audience, at a national and local level.
- Some events, such as those that provide participation opportunities over several weeks or months rather than as one-off spectators, lend themselves better to more sustained impact on wellbeing than others. It is important that expectations are aligned with an event's core purpose and goals rather than being universal. For a small but important group of people, events themselves can be transformative, inspiring them to make profound changes in their lives. This is particularly true for groups who have a deeper interaction with an event, for example as volunteers, as co-creators or as participants in targeted initiatives. Emerging evidence suggests gains will be higher for those who have lower starting points.
- Event organisers are too often incentivised by funders – corporate, philanthropic and government – to focus on overall attendance rather than ensuring that wellbeing benefits of events can be shared equitably.
- There is an inadequate understanding across events of all sizes about which approaches work best to transition or signpost people from attending a one-off event to long-term participation in physical activity, culture and volunteering. Most event organisers have some plans in place to point people towards other opportunities, and there are many examples of organisations unaffiliated with events using an increase in public interest to advertise their own offerings. But there is little analysis of whether some methods are more effective and cost-effective than others when it comes to encouraging new, long-term participation habits.
- The majority of events need volunteers to run, and the wellbeing benefits for those volunteers can be profound. Efforts to support volunteers into long term volunteer post event have been mixed. Some have been particularly successful at taking a person-centred approach, identifying what the volunteer themselves wants from continued volunteering. This approach could be strengthened further by taking a more strategic approach to the needs of the wider volunteering infrastructure. While an easy-to-use platform can be a powerful enabler, volunteering is a human endeavour requiring investment in staff as well as technology.



Dandelion (Festival), part of UNBOXED – Creativity in the UK © Eoin Carey



- The strength of existing community, arts and grassroots sports infrastructure is an important determining factor in how successfully wellbeing benefits can be maintained after an event. Without a compelling local cultural offer or well-maintained and welcoming leisure facilities at accessible price points, people cannot continue to take part. One contributor to the Inquiry said: “Everyone wants a legacy, but no one is prepared to pay for it.” The degree of post-event funding needed will be dependent on the pre-existing strengths of the community assets and how far the event itself has helped build local capacity. Some of the stakeholders the Inquiry spoke to pointed out that a place needed to be ready to take advantage of an event, with existing institutions ready and eager to pick up on legacy. However, there is a risk is that some places with weaker capacity will miss out and fall further behind.
- Events have a part to play in a wider, joined-up approach to improving wellbeing at a national and local level. Not all events need to have wellbeing as their primary objective, but where they do, event organisers have a wealth of evidence to draw on about approaches that are most likely to increase wellbeing. Likewise, those with responsibility for public health and wellbeing at both a national and local level can consider how events could make a meaningful contribution to their overall strategies. Partnership working here is essential. This includes asking questions such as: How might events connect with social prescribing infrastructure? Could job support services be better linked with event volunteer programmes? Do organisers of community sporting events have partnerships with organisations who can reach and welcome the least active people?
- Whilst there has been a significant increase in applying wellbeing measurement to events over the past decade, there are still significant methodological challenges in measuring the wellbeing benefits of events. The HM Treasury Green Book provides policymakers with detailed supplementary evidence for conducting wellbeing appraisals and other useful information. But even well-funded independent evaluations of major events encounter significant problems in their attempts to definitively define wellbeing changes and attribute them to the event itself.

## Implications for smaller projects

**Simply by putting on an affordable, enjoyable event you can contribute to wellbeing in the short-term. Ensuring that the event is inclusive and welcoming to people with low wellbeing helps to maximise those benefits.**

You can use some of the evidence from this report and from What Works Centre for Wellbeing to help you design your event and apply for funding. Don't overpromise – a realistic, confident articulation of your event's contribution is better than overclaiming.

One of the ways to sustain wellbeing impacts is to use the event to point people towards further activities – ideally weekly creative, physical or volunteering opportunities. You may want to partner with local groups that have this regular offer. You can help those groups think about how to reduce barriers to entry, such as having a familiar face from the event at the first regular session or following up quickly while the positive feelings about the event are at their peak.

If you can, think about how you could find out whether your efforts to point people towards further opportunities have been successful – can you ask the organisations that run the follow-up activities if they have had an increase in signups?

Think about those groups which have a deeper involvement with your event than the one-off attendees – for example volunteers or performers. You are more likely to be able to make a significant difference on their wellbeing, and if you have capacity, you could measure the difference you make. You may also need to manage negative wellbeing impacts on this group, such as stress and burnout. Is there a realistic, measurable goal you can set for having a deeper impact on a smaller proportion of your attendees? For example, connecting ten isolated people to a befriending scheme, or sparking a new partnership between a grassroots sports provider and a social prescribing link worker.

## CHAPTER SIX

# TOP TIPS FROM SPIRIT OF 2012 AND THE INQUIRY EVIDENCE

Through the course of Spirit of 2012's last eight years and the Inquiry, we've seen and read a great deal of good practice on delivering a legacy from events. We've also seen and heard about some things that haven't worked as well. We have fed this into the Inquiry's recommendations, but we also wanted to summarise and share what we've learned. Organising events and delivering long-term impact on the back of an event is complex and there is no one-size-fits-all, but there are common threads that can help deliver successful long-term impacts from events. Obviously different considerations may apply to large or small events, these will not be wholly applicable to everything, especially mega events, but we hope it will be useful food for thought.

Events legacy isn't the panacea for everything – target what you want to change and go for that;

If it's going to be marketed as a "legacy project" it needs a clear and specific link to the event;

Take the long view – see events as a long-term project with the event itself as a "pivot point" in that journey, and aim to understand how they can work alongside and contribute to wider social changes for people and communities;

Acknowledge that wider social change takes time to deliver and feel the benefit – it won't happen overnight, and you need to think about how you maintain the momentum and spark post-event – including who does that if your team has moved on;

Have a laser-sharp focus on who is participating (audiences, makers, volunteers). Who will feel part of the story of that event and believe it belongs to and represents people like them? Crucially, who are you missing? How can your infrastructure and volunteers welcome different or under-represented groups?

Look beyond events in your sector – sport has a lot to learn from cultural events and vice versa. Events provide a unique opportunity to work across sectors and forge new partnerships;

Think about the difference between your national multi-location legacy and the local impact you want to have, and what the bridge is between the two;

Where time-limited organisations are delivering events, they have a strong responsibility from the outset to work closely with those organisations that will be responsible for driving the long-term benefits; goals need to be collectively agreed on and owned, with appropriate demarcated funding and clear accountabilities;

Consider how the things you need to deliver a fantastic event can be used beyond the event too. This goes beyond physical infrastructure. Events require volunteers which in turn requires large-scale data collection;

Last but very much not least – delivering a successful event is an essential part of the process, and it requires flexibility to capitalise on unexpected benefits (or upsets).

Search out collaborations across sectors and organisations of all sizes. You need to plan from the outset how you make the most the most of all these intangible assets;



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**During the past 18 months, this Inquiry into the power of events has reviewed evidence from event evaluations across the past decade, heard from a wide range of practitioners, commissioners and academics, and gathered fresh insights from the public about the role of events in their own lives. There have been many fantastic examples of long-term change for individuals and communities instigated by attending and hosting events. It has also been clear that events are sometimes viewed as a panacea for much bigger problems that are beyond the capacity of organisers to solve, with unrealistic expectations about legacy compounded by a lack of clarity about who is responsible for delivering, and funding, longer-term ambitions. Both formal evaluations and media commentary are at risk of oversimplifying the conversation, being on one hand celebrations of high participation numbers and inspirational stories to justify the costs, and on the other critical exposés from sceptics who believe those costs are never justified. This polarised environment inhibits reflective practice, transparency about mistakes, analysis of missed opportunities, and continuous improvement.**

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There have been many fantastic examples of long-term change for individuals and communities instigated by attending and hosting events.

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The Inquiry was set up to consider three areas of impact:

- Thriving communities: placemaking and economic impacts;
- Connected communities: relationships between people, including those from different backgrounds and between individuals and institutions;
- Happier communities: individual impacts particularly on people's social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

At the end of each thematic chapter, the report set out a series of key findings as well as thoughts about how small events can apply findings to their own activities.

Major event hosts and franchise owners have to think about events as long-term development projects: multi-decade programmes rather than just "events". Ultimately, some of this means stepping back from the event itself and taking a longer view of what the social and economic goals are and where an event might usefully build momentum or add value to wider changes. This requires much longer-term, cross-sector thinking and a broader mindset change in funding, governance and delivery.

In the last decade, the United Kingdom has re-established its reputation for executing world-class events. It now has the opportunity to go further, taking global leadership in optimising sustainable community and economic impacts from the catalytic opportunity of such events. To achieve this, the Inquiry is making five recommendations that should underpin public policy and funding around such events.

Recommendation one:  
**Long-term impact and a clear plan for “what next” will be the drivers for the decision to bid or host a major event.**

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- Publicly funded events should have a shared vision agreed by national and local stakeholders to ensure each event catalyses wider social and economic change.
- *Government, funders and event organisers* must commit to a small number of realistic and genuine long-term goals which drive decision-making and delivery.
- Where public funding is being used, *government, funders and event organisers* should consider how these goals contribute to the wider social and economic goals of the areas and communities in which the events are held.
- *National and local governments* must curate an events strategy across arts, sports and civic life ensuring that the collective impact of their events programme is greater than the sum of its parts.
- *Organisers* of large-scale events must prioritise partnership working across public and private sectors and civil society in order to optimise the delivery of these long-term impacts.

Recommendation two:  
**The long-term impact of events must be underpinned by demarcated funding, accountability and governance.**

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- *Funders and event organisers* should adopt a model which sees events as long-term projects, with funding allocated accordingly.
- *Government, national lottery distributors and other funders* should take an open and collaborative approach to their funding strategies for events, striving for greater clarity for host locations about what they should expect.
- *Event organisers* should design large events with a delivery cycle that gives equal footing to post-event legacy activities.
- Responsibility for long-term impact must be with those who are around to deliver it, such as *local and combined authorities*. There should be clear responsibility and accountability for delivering these impacts.
- *Event organisers and funders* should measure the impact of events through independent evaluations undertaken over much longer time periods.

## CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation three: Greater attention must be paid to who benefits from events and who is left out.

- *Event organisers* should explicitly set out how they will reach and remove barriers for groups of people who are traditionally less likely to participate and, where possible, how they will act on emerging attendance data to address gaps in participation.
- *Event organisers* should undertake inclusion audits to make sure that disabled people are able to attend, making reasonable adjustments where necessary. These audits should include a review of transport.
- *Funders* of community events should prioritise low social capital neighbourhoods, recognising that there may be additional costs per participant to deliver activity in places with weaker voluntary sector infrastructure.
- *Event organisers* should consider where they are holding events. Public and outdoor spaces tend to be accessible and approachable and can attract a more diverse group of attendees.
- *Organisers* of large sporting and cultural events should work with business partners, colleges and other training providers to improve progression routes in the events industry and the hospitality and retail sectors.
- Independent evaluations of events must give more attention to the distributional impact of the event on different sections of society. The intelligence generated about participation during major events – including what was less successful – must, as standard, be passed on to local organisations who can use it to support ongoing efforts to extend their reach.

### Recommendation four: More events must be designed and curated with a broad range of stakeholders to build common ground across divides.

- *The DCMS and the Palace* should maximise the potential of the Coronation to unite people across divides, undertaking rapid research to identify effective messaging that helps to reach groups who traditionally feel excluded from ceremonial events.
- *The UEFA Men's Football Euros 2028* should be used as an opportunity to harness the power of sport to promote social contact between people from different backgrounds. The Government, governing bodies, football clubs, community trusts, supporters, schools, grassroots sport and volunteers need to make the most of this opportunity.
- *The Government* should back the move to make the Windrush 75th anniversary a national moment working with the organising committee, mayors, councils, faith and community leaders, the NHS, business, the armed forces, broadcast media, sports and culture to do this.



FEAST, Coventry. Credit: Trev Photography



- *Major funders* of community events, including NLCF and Arts Council England, should better support grant holders with simple, proportionate tools to understand to what extent their events are inclusive, and how successful they are at bringing people together from different groups and building understanding.
- *Event teams in local authorities and at cultural, sporting, recreational and community organisations* should review their event calendars, to ensure that their programme not only caters for different communities of interest, but also includes moments that bring people together.
- *Event organisers* must nurture the local and community elements of national-scale events. National events hold a particular power in instances where they can be celebrated and interpreted locally, with a common thread between the national and local.
- *Funders and event planners* should pay attention to unifying factors like using neutral outdoor spaces and food.

## Recommendation five: Events that use volunteers must have a clear strategy to boost longer-term community volunteering.

- *All large events* that use volunteers should have a volunteer legacy plan. This should make provision for those that want to continue to volunteer to share contact details with other organisations that work with volunteers. It should also set out how to sustain volunteers' interest in giving their time.
- *Event commissioners* must decide, based on local consultation, who will have the remit for the volunteer legacy programme in advance of the event, and there should be demarcated funding and data protection processes at the outset to support the transition of volunteers in post-event activities and to new organisations. The long-term volunteering strategy should also be responsive to the motivations and ideas of the volunteer cohorts themselves and adapt plans accordingly.
- *Event organisers working with volunteers* need to address the barriers that prevent people volunteering, including those faced by disabled people and people on low incomes. *Community organisations* should aim to use events to increase community volunteering post event, and ensure they have permission for follow-up contact with volunteers, proactively signposting them to other similar opportunities or retaining them for ongoing volunteering within their own organisation.
- *Major event organisers* should continue to collaborate with the existing volunteering organisations to identify how the event, and associated training can address gaps in capacity. These gaps may include targeting people from underrepresented groups who could be inspired into long-term volunteering, mapping to organisations in need of particular skills.



## CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These principles, when applied, will build stronger events and greater returns on investment for the communities that host them. In addition, the Inquiry is calling for:

One:

**The creation of a UK City of Sport competition, modelled on the success of UK City of Culture, with a focus on health and wellbeing.**

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The Inquiry recommends that the Government launch a new UK City of Sport competition, with one of its primary aims being increasing wellbeing and reducing physical inactivity. The competition would commit to delivering the five recommendations set out in this report. The UK City of Culture programme shows how a major event, held over the course of a year, can bring together partners from across the public, private and charity sectors around a shared vision for a place. It can promote closer relationships between businesses and communities, and raise the profile of a place on the national and, even, international stage.



The Inquiry is calling on the Government, sports councils, governing bodies, councils, schools, the media, and faith and civil society to back this proposal. The competition would be open to cities, towns or whole counties.

The competition's focus would be increasing levels of physical activity among the least active, as well as participation in sport, with a real emphasis on using public spaces that are outdoors. Increasing volunteering, as well as using the power of sport to connect people and bridge divides should be further objectives. Increases in cultural participation and cultural confidence have been major successes of the City of Culture competition, and there are good reasons to believe this could be replicated here.

The place-based programmes of Sport England and its counterparts in the other home nations, as well as European-wide initiatives such as *Healthy Cities*, demonstrate how this might be done. UK City of Sport would be a galvanising force for long-term, local commitment to increase physical activity. This would not be about concentrating elite sport in one location for a year. Instead, bidding cities would develop a dynamic programme of participatory activities alongside flagship spectator events, unique to the history, assets and needs of their place.

### This may include:

- A shared commitment to improving physical activity;
- Launching new, participatory events that bring different communities together;
- A schools' programme;
- Businesses supporting their employees to be more active;
- Innovative partnerships between non-sporting and sporting organisations;
- Investment to roll out initiatives such as Sporting Memories, which brings together older people through a shared love of sport;
- Attracting more/more varied spectator sporting events or mass participation activities to the area;
- A strategic approach to strengthening the visitor economy through a celebration of the location's opportunities for active recreation and spectator sport;
- Investment in the public realm in the run up to the event, with a specific focus on active travel and improving facilities, as with City of Culture.

Host cities might also join the Global Active Cities Network's *Global Active City – Active Well-being Initiative*, linking them up with a wider network of learning and action.

The Inquiry recommends a further feasibility study be undertaken by a coalition of interested partners over the next six months.



## CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two:

### **The formation of an events observatory to marshal evidence and data on the long-term impacts of events.**

**There are many leading academics and researchers exploring the impact of events, some of whom shared their work with this Inquiry. There is also significant work being done to improve the impact evaluation of events themselves at a policy level, from DCMS's work on valuing cultural heritage capital to UK Sport's increased focus on social impact. Organisations such as What Works Centre for Wellbeing, whose work is referred to several times in this report, have done much to bring together evidence on some of the themes covered here from volunteering, to culture and physical activity.**

However, the Inquiry believes there is a role for dedicated resource specifically focused on supporting events to deliver lasting and measurable social outcomes across the various mechanisms deployed by events (sport, arts, volunteering etc.).

This could be housed within an existing university department or research institution. The observatory would support policymakers and event organisers to:

- Look across different types of events, ensuring culture, sport, commemoration etc. are learning from what has worked (and what hasn't) rather than operating in silos;
- Explore the role of different types of events as one factor in a wider system of change;
- Take the long view, capturing outcomes that do not occur within the timeframe of traditional event evaluations, and after those that measure legacy have often concluded;
- Look at the collective impact of events within a place or timeframe linking to local data sets;
- Be independent rather than beholden to funder and commissioner objectives;
- Provide a learning bank to support continuous improvement;
- Mitigate against a tendency for evaluations to either be overly positive or highly critical;
- Develop an overarching theory of change for events, that is not dependent on a specific mechanism like arts or sports



## APPENDIX:

### Inquiry members



#### Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett (Chair)

Tom founded the Marshall Institute for Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship at the London School of Economics (LSE). He is also the founder and Chair of Helpforce, a charity championing the greater use of volunteers in health and social care.



#### Petra Barran

Petra launched KERB, a food market accelerator, in 2012 and currently sits on the board for KERB and UCL SU, providing placemaking consultancy for organisations.



#### Sir Peter Bazalgette

Sir Peter Bazalgette is Senior Independent Director on the board of Saga and also chairs LoveCrafts, an online retailer. From 2016 to 2022 he chaired ITV, and previously served on the board of Channel 4.



#### Hayley Bennett

Hayley is an equity, diversity and inclusion consultant and campaigner who co-founded Nutmegs, a growing football community for women of colour and non-binary people of colour. She currently sits on Spirit of 2012's Board.



#### Esther Britten

Esther Britten has been the Head of Major Events at UK Sport since March 2012, leading the team that is responsible for the strategic programming and investment of major sports events in the UK.



#### Ajay Chhabra

Chhabra helped create outdoor performance company Nutkhut, which creates festivals, digital artworks and theatrical moments which bring people together, under single universal experiences.



#### Angila Chada MBE

As Director of Springboard Opportunities, Angila has extensive experience of working across divided communities, promoting an appreciation of diversity and increasing community cohesion. In 2022 she was awarded an MBE for services to young people in Northern Ireland.



#### Dr Neil Churchill OBE

Neil is Director for Experience, Participation and Equalities at NHS England, having joined the NHS after a 25-year career in the voluntary sector. Neil has previously been a Non-Executive Director for the NHS.



#### Chris Creegan

Chris Creegan is a writer, consultant and non-executive based in Edinburgh. He was Chair of the Scottish Association for Mental Health from 2015 to 2022 and Chief Executive of the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability from 2013 to 2019.



## APPENDIX:

### Inquiry members. *Continued*



#### Simon Enright

Simon was the first Director of Communications for NHS England. He worked through the COVID pandemic establishing the NHS presence at the daily Downing Street briefings.



#### Kersten England CBE

Kersten has been Chief Executive of Bradford Council since 2015 and is also the chair of the Young Foundation whose mission is to develop better connected and more sustainable communities across the UK.



#### George Grima

George founded Do IT Life and various tech platform businesses over a 25-year period. He also created the world's first social currency for schools and is passionate about the intersection of society and technology.



#### Revd Nicky Gumbel

Revd Gumbel is the creator of Alpha, an introduction to the Christian faith running in churches in 140 countries. Initially trained as a barrister, Nicky went on to be Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton, London.



#### Professor Donna Hall

Donna was CEO of Wigan Council for eight years and is also an Integrated Care System Adviser to NHS England. She was awarded a CBE in 2009 for innovation in public service.



#### Danny Kruger MP

Danny is Conservative MP for Devizes. He was formerly Political Secretary to Boris Johnson and an Expert Adviser on Civil Society. He co-chairs the New Social Covenant Unit and serves on the Treasury Select Committee.



#### Bill Morris LVO

From 2006 to 2013, Bill was responsible for the team which delivered the London 2012 Games Ceremonies. Since then, he has advised the International Olympic Committee and several Games Organising Committees.



#### Mark Pendlington

Mark has led a range of campaigns to improve the resilience of diverse local communities. In 2022, Mark chaired the Festival of Suffolk that brought all communities together to "Recover, Reset and Recharge" following Covid.



#### Nicola Pollock

Nicola has had a long career in the charitable and voluntary sector, most recently as Director of the John Ellerman Foundation where she developed the strategic direction and advised trustees on governance and grant making.





### **Susie Rodgers MBE**

For six years Susie was a 5-time medal-winning professional Paralympic swimmer, retiring in 2017. Susie currently works as a Technical Adviser on Disability Inclusion for Economic Empowerment at the Department of International Development.



### **Professor Jane Robinson**

Jane joined Newcastle University in 2019. As Pro-Vice-Chancellor, she leads the University's Engagement & Place Strategy, focusing on building partnerships to enhance its contribution socially, economically and culturally.



### **David Sheepshanks CBE, DL**

David is best known for his extensive career in football and charity, serving The FA, The Football League and Ipswich Town over the last 30 years and, in the voluntary sector, Suffolk and UK Community Foundations.



### **Emma Sims**

Emma joined Young Manchester as Head of Development and Partnerships in January 2022. Previously, Emma held roles at the Together Coalition and Step Up To Serve – the charities that co-ordinated #ThankYouDay and the #iwill campaign respectively.



### **Professor Geoff Thompson MBE, FRSA, DL**

Geoff is the Founder and Chair of the Youth Charter, a charity which uses sport, arts, cultural and digital activities to tackle societal problems. He is also Chair of the London Youth Games and was Deputy Chair of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.



### **Professor Patrick Vernon OBE**

Patrick is an independent adviser on equality, diversity and inclusion for the Crown Prosecution Service and Islington Council and has led the campaigns for a national Windrush Day and amnesty for the Windrush Generation.



### **Dr. Jason Wouhra OBE**

Jason is Chief Executive Officer of Lioncroft Wholesale Limited. He has been a Non-Executive Director of University Hospitals Birmingham Foundation Trust and is currently a Member of the Aston University Governing Council.

## APPENDIX:

### Acknowledgements

The Inquiry would like to thank all those who have contributed their time and expertise by giving evidence or taking part in stakeholder meetings and focus groups. We hope this report reflects the best of their ideas. We are also grateful to staff at DJS Research, ICM, Focaldata and Quantum Communications who helped us deliver the research or launch it.

Outside the secretariat, most other Spirit of 2012 staff were involved in the Inquiry, but the Inquiry is particularly grateful to Kate Bines and Alex Ekong who worked on the production of the reports and launch events. Lastly, the Inquiry team would like to thank Spirit of 2012 and its board, for its support for the Inquiry.

#### The secretariat

Support for the Inquiry was provided by a secretariat from Spirit of 2012 who were Amy Finch, Gaetano Iannetta and Jill Rutter (until August 2022).

#### About Spirit of 2012

Spirit of 2012 was set up by the National Lottery Community Fund as the London 2012 Games legacy funder. It aims to build sustainable social legacies from the inspiration of events, investing in projects that help people become more active, creative and connected. Nearly 45,000 people have offered their time as volunteers through the 225 projects that Spirit of 2012 has funded. Over the last eight years, Spirit of 2012 has built up a strong evidence base about the power of events to catalyse social change, drawn from its own and others' research and learning from the projects it has funded.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>UK Sport, response to open call for evidence to Spirit of 2012 Inquiry (2022)

<sup>2</sup>Unboxed leadership team also note that the actual participation figures are higher than have been reported in the press.

<sup>3</sup>Inquiry commissioned nationally representative survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out by Focaldata between 6 and 7 June 2022

<sup>4</sup>Inquiry commissioned nationally representative ICM survey of 2,350 UK adults, 5-11 August 2022.

<sup>5</sup>Focus group attendees, Feb 2022

<sup>6</sup>Focaldata survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out between 6 and 7 June 2022

<sup>7</sup>IBID

<sup>8</sup>Young producer of the CVX Festival, part of Coventry City of Culture 2021, Available at: <https://vimeo.com/689483965/511112121b>

<sup>9</sup>Focaldata survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out between 6 and 7 June 2022

<sup>10</sup>Culture, Place and Policy Institute, University of Hull (2018) *Cultural Transformations: The Impacts of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation*

<sup>11</sup>Focaldata survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out between 6 and 7 June 2022

<sup>12</sup>Metrolanding: Brent's Year as London Borough of Culture (2020), Available at: <https://metrolandcultures.com/brent-2020/evaluation>

<sup>13</sup>Culture, Place and Policy Institute, University of Hull (2018)

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<sup>15</sup>Anderson, D., *Glasgow Commonwealth games legacy: Did we deliver and what lessons were learned?* (2022), The Herald

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- <sup>18</sup>Nanda, S. (2022) *The economic impact of cultural, sporting, commemorative and community events*, London: Spirit of 2012.
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- <sup>20</sup>Nanda, S. (2022) *The economic impact of cultural, sporting, commemorative and community events*, London: Spirit of 2012.
- <sup>21</sup>Professor of Economics, University of East Anglia.
- <sup>22</sup>HM Government (2022) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, London: The Stationery Office.
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- <sup>24</sup>ICM survey of 2,350 UK adults carried out between 5 and 11 August 2022.
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- <sup>26</sup>HM Government (2021) *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, London: The Stationery Office.
- <sup>27</sup>Nanda, S. (2022) *The economic impact of cultural, sporting, commemorative and community events*, London: Spirit of 2012.
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- <sup>30</sup>Preuss, H. (2004) *The Economics of Staging the Olympics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
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- <sup>34</sup>Coventry 2021 UK City of Culture (2022) *Performance Measurement and Evaluation, Interim Report*, Coventry UK City of Culture, Available at: <https://coventry2021.co.uk/about/monitoring-and-evaluation>
- <sup>35</sup>Carbon Market Watch (2022) *Poor tackling: Yellow card for 2022 FIFA World Cup's carbon neutrality claim*, Brussels: Carbon Market Watch.
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- <sup>37</sup>Katwala, S., Puddle, J. and Ballinger, S. (2022).
- <sup>38</sup>Focaldata survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out between 6 and 7 June 2022.
- <sup>39</sup>Katwala, S., Puddle, J. and Ballinger, S. (2022).
- <sup>40</sup>UK Sport, response to open call for evidence to Spirit of 2012 Inquiry (2022).
- <sup>41</sup>Participant in young person's focus group, July 2022.
- <sup>42</sup>Focaldata survey of 2,018 UK adults carried out between 6 and 7 June 2022.
- <sup>43</sup>Inquiry commissioned nationally representative survey of 2,350 UK adults carried out by Walnut and ICM between 5-11 August 2022.
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- <sup>45</sup>Local Trust response to open call for evidence to Spirit of 2012 Inquiry (2022).
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- <sup>49</sup>McPherson, G., Cox, T., McGilivray, D., Quinn, B; Hell, N., Mamattah, S., Smith, A. (2021), *Social Value of Community Events*, Centre for Culture, Sport and Events, University of the West of Scotland.



## APPENDIX:

- <sup>50</sup>In thinking about the role of events in building social connections, we have used frameworks developed by Sir David Putnam and others that distinguish between bonding, bridging and linking connections. To read more about these different types of social connection, see: [www.socialcapitalresearch.com/explanation-types-social-capital](http://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/explanation-types-social-capital)
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- <sup>53</sup>Katwala, S., Puddle, J. and Ballinger, S. (2022).
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- <sup>58</sup>Survey with NHS Volunteer Managers on behalf of the Inquiry, August 2022.
- <sup>59</sup>Katwala, S., Puddle, J. and Ballinger, S. (2022).
- <sup>60</sup>For a framework exploring the relationship between community and individual wellbeing see [www.whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/model-different-people-same-place](http://www.whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/model-different-people-same-place)
- <sup>61</sup>[www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes); [www.sportengland.org/about-us/mental-wellbeing](http://www.sportengland.org/about-us/mental-wellbeing)
- <sup>62</sup><https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-affects-wellbeing>
- <sup>63</sup>See Inquiry commissioned nationally representative survey of 2,073 UK adults carried out by ICM between 1 and 4 March 2022.
- <sup>64</sup>Professor Paul Dolan, London School of Economics.
- <sup>65</sup>Data presented at Impacts18 conference and available on the event website <https://iccliverpool.ac.uk/impacts18/cultural-participation-and-engagement>
- <sup>66</sup>Dolan, P., et al (2016) *The Host With the Most, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics*.
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- <sup>68</sup>Impacts 18 conference.
- <sup>69</sup>See: [www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/grassroots-participation-in-sport-and-physical-activity](http://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/grassroots-participation-in-sport-and-physical-activity)
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- <sup>71</sup>Statistics from impact report, Travel to Tokyo, Everfi.
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- <sup>76</sup>*Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* (2017), All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.
- <sup>77</sup>See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing)
- <sup>78</sup>See: <https://art-wellbeing.eu/research-covid-19-pandemic>
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- <sup>80</sup>Survey with NHS Volunteer Managers on behalf of the Inquiry, August 2022.
- <sup>81</sup>Edinburgh Festival City Volunteers, *Our Story of Impact and Learning* (March 2020), Available at: [www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/volunteers](http://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/volunteers) p.23.
- <sup>82</sup>Briefing: Unemployment, (Re)employment and Wellbeing (2017), What Works Centre for Wellbeing.



To contact the Inquiry, please email:  
**[external.affairs@spirit of 2012.org.uk](mailto:external.affairs@spiritof2012.org.uk)**

To find out more about Spirit of 2012, visit  
**[www.spiritof2012.org.uk](http://www.spiritof2012.org.uk)**

