

## ● Assessing the impact of the London 2012 Olympics

Geographer Professor Allan Brimicombe FRGS is leading the impact study being carried out for the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) to assess the environmental, socio-cultural economic effects of the Games in 2012.

**Key words:** Olympics; Regeneration; Sustainability; Socio-economic impacts

Large scale international sporting events, including the Olympics, can have significant impact on the places where they take place. These manifest in a wide range of economic, social, cultural, political, physical and environmental ways.

For example, construction works can create jobs, but may cause pollution or other negative environmental effects. Likewise, large numbers of visitors bring their spending to local economies, but can also cause problems, such as by disrupting transport.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), recognising such impacts, has introduced a requirement on host cities to carry out a scientific Olympic Games Impact Study (OGI) as a means of measuring success at delivering on the Olympic Charter of promoting 'a positive legacy from the Olympic Games for the Host Cities and Host Countries.' The 2012 London Games is the first summer Olympics to carry out such an assessment.

Leading this study on behalf of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) is the geographer, Professor Allan Brimicombe FRGS of the University of East London. The work involves assessing data from across London between 2003 and 2015, covering 11 environmental, 23 socio-cultural and 22 economic indicators, ranging from carbon emission, housing, employment and public transport to crime, poverty, physical activity and education.

A pre-Games report, covering impacts pre-Games, principally from construction, and covering data between 2003 and 2010. The current report was published in April 2011. Commenting on the findings, Professor Brimicombe said: "We are confident in

reporting that preparations for London 2012 have already had a positive impact in a number of areas."

The pre-Games study found no negative impacts as a result of preparing for the 2012 Games, including any adverse effect on London's air quality from the construction of Olympic venues.

Positively the city, especially eastern London, is gaining a hugely improved rail transport infrastructure that will yield considerable benefits in the (post-Games) legacy period. The study also found that the UK commercial waste treatment sector has benefited from the innovative process for the treatment of hazardous wastes that have been developed as part of Olympic developments.

The research has also found the Games having a positive impact on sporting participation and physical activity. However, whilst the report generally found some positive impacts, many of the indicators were inconclusive and uncertain, partly caused by the data available, and also because other East London regeneration makes it harder to identify impacts directly related to Games activity.

A full post-Games impact report is due to publish in 2015, providing a full understanding of the extent to which London 2012 achieves its legacy goals. This will be an important tool which the IOC will be able to use to understand the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impact of staging the Games.

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*Olympic Games Impact Study – London 2012 Pre-Games Report*, October 2010 [http://www.uel.ac.uk/geo-information/documents/UEL\\_TGIFS\\_PreGames\\_OGI\\_Release.pdf](http://www.uel.ac.uk/geo-information/documents/UEL_TGIFS_PreGames_OGI_Release.pdf) report compiled for the Economic & Social Research Council on behalf of The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Ltd., by the University of East London and the Thames Gateway Institute for Sustainability.