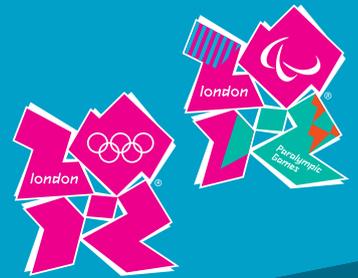


Learning legacy

Lessons learned from planning and staging the London 2012 Games



Changing Places programme – transforming for the next generation

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Abstract

The London 2012 Changing Places programme was created to extend the regeneration being undertaken in the Olympic Park for London 2012 into the neighbouring communities, by focusing the efforts of a wide range of stakeholders and, crucially, local volunteers to improve their part of east London from an environmental perspective and to feel part of the Games. If successful, the programme would enable people to take pride in their local area through the delivery of a range of small-scale regeneration initiatives.

Through their involvement in Changing Places it was hoped that the local community would feel part of the Games and develop an association to the Olympic Park. More than 15,000 people helped create improvements at more than 580 sites.

Changing Places brought the community together by instigating, supporting and funding initiatives and interactions that may not have otherwise happened. Using vacant, underused or run-down public land for community benefit led to community cohesion that may have otherwise taken years to develop.

More than 50 organisations working together to improve social and environmental quality.

Introduction

Why Changing Places?

London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was based on a promise that a London Games would result in the regeneration of 2.5 square kilometres of largely derelict land in one of the most deprived communities in Europe. What was once industrial wasteland with derelict buildings, polluted soil, and neglected waterways has been transformed into world-class sporting venues, new homes and 45 hectares of species-rich habitat.

The Park's transformation has been an unquestioned success, but there was always the danger of creating a stark contrast between the newly regenerated Olympic Park and the socially and environmentally deprived neighbouring communities. This scenario had been seen in previous Host Cities, but with London's focus on sustainability it was clear that the regeneration must extend beyond the fence of the Olympic Park.

The London 2012 Changing Places programme was created to extend the regeneration into the neighbouring communities by focusing the efforts of a wide range of stakeholders and, crucially, local volunteers. If successful, the programme would enable people to take pride in their local area through the delivery of a range of small-scale and local regeneration initiatives. Through their involvement in Changing Places it was hoped that the local community would feel part of the Games and develop an association to the Olympic Park.

Vision

The vision for the programme was simple: 'for communities surrounding the Olympic Park and other Games venues to secure lasting social and environmental benefits by exploiting the catalytic effect of the Games'.

Changing Places could have taken a number of different themes, including sport, education or culture. However, improving the lives of people through local and predominantly environmental regeneration initiatives was chosen to show that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are far more than sporting competitions.

Key objectives

To meet the vision, Changing Places had three key objectives:

- Deliver sustainable environmental improvements.
- Enable people living close to Games venues to learn new skills and develop new interests.
- Leave a legacy of more volunteers and a community that has taken ownership of its local area.

Partners

Changing Places would not have been possible without help and support from some very dedicated and knowledgeable staff from the programme's partners. The partners ranged from the Games sponsors, all three tiers of government and stakeholders through to third-sector charitable organisations. Some of the programme's partners provided financial support to Changing Places as the programme helped them to achieve their wider charitable objectives. Those organisations that were unable to give direct funding provided unwavering support through staff time and advice. More than 50 organisations have been involved in the programme.

With such a large and varied group of stakeholders delivering a broad set of projects it was necessary to organise the stakeholders so that they could operate effectively. They were organised in the following way:

- One main stakeholder group that met quarterly. This group helped bring new ideas forward and acted as an informal scrutiny body to ensure the projects were being delivered effectively.
- A management group that helped to distribute the programme's unrestricted budget, identify new funding streams and oversee the delivery of the programme.
- A number of sub-groups that developed a suite of projects within the following thematic areas:
 - Conservation and urban greening initiatives
 - Addressing the negative aspects of environmental quality such as tackling litter and addressing community safety fears

Over £2m of funding raised over the life of the programme.

- Community investment through the efforts of employees from London 2012 sponsors
- Encouraging new volunteers from the surrounding community
- Skill development

From these groups, a series of projects were developed and funding sought. Not all of the groups' ideas came to fruition as funding was not secured for each. However, over the life of the programme, more than £2 million was secured from a variety of sources. The funders included:

- City Bridge Trust
- Defra
- Environment Agency
- Greater London Authority
- Keep Britain Tidy
- Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
- London Trees and Woodland Grants Scheme
- Olympic Park Legacy Company (now the London Legacy Development Corporation)
- Safer London Foundation
- SITA Trust
- South West Development Agency
- Veolia Environmental Trust

The creation of an independent charitable organisation was considered in the early stages of the programme's development as this would enable access to more funding opportunities.

However, following careful consideration the decision was taken to retain Changing Places as a London 2012 programme. It was felt that bringing the community and partners together under one programme directly associated to the Games would be more important than having access to a larger funding portfolio. The direct association to the Games enabled Changing Places to reach more local people and it was felt that the

excitement of the Games was a key factor in retaining many volunteers throughout the life of the programme. The decision did result in other challenges, such as branding, but on balance it was the right decision.

Places changed

The development of the Changing Places programme was a fluid process with some existing projects rejuvenated through the association to the Games, while new projects were created where there was a need. The Changing Places programme was effectively an umbrella under which a suite of projects sat.

A key problem posed by the tight Olympic and Paralympic branding rules was the association that the partners would get through their involvement in the programme's projects. In previous Organising Committees the use of the brand was restricted to the OCOG and its sponsors. This would not have worked for Changing Places, which relied as much on the programme's partners as it did on being part of the London 2012 family of programmes. The branding problem was overcome when the London 2012 Organising Committee created the Inspire mark, which was the non-commercial version of the London 2012 brand. The Inspire programme provided a mechanism through which the Changing Places partners could be associated to the Games in the delivery of their projects. This was important as it strengthened the partnership and resulted in new funding opportunities for the programme. The innovative use of the London 2012 brand was crucial to the delivery of Changing Places.



Volunteers help to clean the Regents Canal, close to the Olympic Park.

Engaging young people

'Inspire a generation' was one of the key bid promises and a theme running through the whole London 2012 programme. This focus on youth meant that the programme was able to challenge some of the stereotypes that surround volunteering by engaging a younger audience who are often overlooked when decisions are made about public spaces.

When the programme launched and the first few events were delivered, it was clear that more needed to be done to attract younger volunteers that were representative of the local community. To address this, a number of projects were created that targeted young people. A micro-grants programme was created that was aimed at community centres and schools. This source of funding was taken up by a number of schools that used the money to transform unused areas of the school grounds into a resource for the pupils. One particularly good example was a primary school in Greenwich where a sensory garden was created in a previously unused part of the school grounds. Since its creation the garden has been used to hold meetings with parents and pupils, and support the learning of vulnerable pupils. The grants programme was very successful yet the level of involvement from the young people was variable.

The next initiative, Project Develop, put the onus more directly on young people through a successful funding application to the Safer London

Foundation. Working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, the Changing Places team worked with schoolchildren across London to identify what they liked about their local area and those factors that they would like to change. Using the medium of film and photography the young people were asked to create a picture board to demonstrate the issues that they encountered and identify possible solutions to the problems. It was interesting to see the consistency of the concerns between the young people and the rest of the community, yet the young people had more imaginative ways of tackling the problems. One particularly good example was the Games-inspired artwork that was created on hoardings in Greenwich to address the problem of graffiti. The ownership that was provided by the young people's involvement has prevented the return of graffiti since its creation in early 2012.

Further projects have been delivered with young people through a wildflower meadow growing competition and a piece of work to transform some of the estates in Tower Hamlets with the creative thinking of the Poplar Harca youth board. The involvement of young people has been particularly important for the programme but also to change the role that young people play in local decision-making. Young people are often blamed for anti-social behaviour and increasing the fear of crime, yet Changing Places has demonstrated that young people want and are able to play an active part in their community if they are given the opportunity.



Olympic and Paralympic inspired art painted by young people from Greenwich.

Key learning point: to attract a demographically varied group of volunteers it is necessary to use a variety of ways to promote the opportunities. The ways used by Changing Places included face-to-face methods such as door knocking and volunteer fairs, through to new media. Other useful networks included local universities and church groups. In both cases the groups were looking for ways to support their local areas and Changing Places provided the right opportunities for their students/members. Traditional avenues such as the local volunteer centres and the local authority's own volunteer networks were also used but these did not result in as many volunteers as other methods.

Local people

Changing Places has been successful in engaging thousands of people living locally to the London 2012 competition venues. The programme has identified the appetite that exists within the community to do something positive for their local area. It is not clear whether the enthusiasm was solely due to the Games coming to their neighbourhoods, but what has been obvious is that Changing Places has provided a focus and a conceivable timeframe for the volunteers' efforts

Setting new targets

During the course of the programme Changing Places built up a small core of regulars who would give up their time and volunteer irrespective of the task, location or weather. To our knowledge there is no industry standard of volunteer retention, but following the pilot year a target of five per cent repeat volunteering was set. As outlined below, the target was easily met, but what was interesting was that the Changing Places volunteers tended to support a specific cause that was close to their heart. It was helpful to understand these preferences as it made the marketing of events more effective and ensured a varied programme of events was created to cater for all the volunteers.

Timebanking

Having developed significant interest in volunteering within the surrounding area, the decision was taken to assess the feasibility of creating a timebank^a to further the volunteering work and community development of the programme. Working on the basis of both person-to-person and person-to-agency exchanges, the potential of creating a timebank attached to the Olympic Park was significant. It was envisaged that a

timebank could help maintain the Park, bring the existing and new communities together, and utilise the fantastic venues created. Following the decision to create an Olympic Park timebank a pilot was funded and run by the London Legacy Development Corporation through the Big Waterways Clean-up project, with the view of growing the timebank into the Park once it is open in legacy.

Transformation

Early in the programme's development it became apparent that through Changing Places small plots of neglected land were being transformed into a resource for the community. In a small way Changing Places was replicating the regeneration of the Olympic Park but at a neighbourhood level. Research identified that there were hundreds of these small neglected sites across east London that were just waiting to be transformed for the benefit of local people. With the support of London in Bloom^b, the London Wildlife Trust^c and Thames21^d, Groundwork London^e submitted a bid to lead on a wide-ranging set of land transformations on behalf of the Changing Places programme.

Once funding was secured, an application process was set up to enable the community to apply for funding and support that would be delivered on behalf of the Changing Places programme by Groundwork London. The application process was key as it ensured that the ideas were coming directly from the community, project sites and ideas were identified for Changing Places and, most importantly, the community groups applying were taking ownership of the sites from an early stage. This was essential as there will be a greater chance that projects will continue long after the Games.

- a Timebanks work on the principle of exchanging time as a currency as opposed to money. The concept works on an hour for an hour exchange and utilises the breadth of skills that exist within the local community. For further information please refer to Timebanking UK <http://www.timebanking.org>.
- b London in Bloom is the organisation responsible for London's annual horticultural campaign and competition.
- c The London Wildlife Trust is the organisation dedicated to protecting the capital's wildlife.
- d Thames21 is the waterways charity which protects and improves the capital's rivers, canals and lakes.
- e Groundwork London is the regeneration charity working to improve communities across London.



Before and after – First Avenue Community Garden

Key learning point: the community groups that Changing Places worked with were sophisticated and well organised. The Government has championed the joint delivery of local services with the community and third sector. The projects delivered in deprived areas of London demonstrate that to an extent this could work in communities across the country

29 new nectar rich wildflower meadows created around the Olympic Park.

Having secured funding from a number of sources, three levels of grants were available for the community projects: small grants for projects of up to £5,000; mid-level grants for projects up to £11,000; and a flagship set of grants for large projects costing in the region of £50,000. Due to the nature of the funding, the mid-level and flagship grants needed an element of match funding and were more popular with constituted community groups who had access to other forms of revenue.

A key learning from the exercise was that the community groups involved were dynamic and dedicated with many groups formerly constituted, able to put together very good funding applications and capable of delivering projects. However, there were equally some incredibly enthusiastic individuals who wanted to change their local area but lacked the structure of other groups. Where possible these individuals/small informal groups were also supported with bespoke guidance to get them to a point where they could become formally constituted and had the skills to lead on projects.

Improving habitat

Many of the projects that were delivered through the programme had a direct benefit to urban habitats, extending the reach of new wildlife that will be attracted down the Lee Valley and into the Olympic Park. Through the Trees for the Hosts programme, more than 4,000 new trees were planted on school grounds and at community centres across the six Host Boroughs. Using native trees such as hornbeam, oak, hazel, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and elder, the community were able to learn about the

importance of trees, the role they will play within our changing climate and the benefit that they bring to local wildlife. School grounds were chosen for this project due to the sterile nature of many school playing fields, which provide very little benefit for wildlife. The project has been successful by increasing habitat in school grounds, enabling young people to learn about native trees, and improving the school grounds in times of budget pressures.

Building on the inspiration from the Olympic Park, another project focused on the creation of new native wildflower meadows. Consistent with the tree planting initiative, the aim was to create new habitat, enhance public spaces and promote their benefits. The appetite from the public sector to be part of the project was significant given the pressure they are under to create quality parks while saving costs. The creation of meadows was found to be one method of doing this. Using a native wildflower mix, 29 new meadow sites were created totally more than 6,000m² of new nectar-rich habitat.

Apart from enhancing the experience of park users, wildflower meadows can also save the local authority money through reduced frequency of grass cutting. For example, a 1,000m² perennial meadow can be created for as little as £150, or 15p per square metre. For a further 10p per square metre some first-year colour can be gained with the addition of some annual wildflower seed. Although there may be some costs involved in creating a meadow through labour, these would be quickly paid back through the reduction in grass cutting.



A bee enjoys a new wildflower meadow created on Hackney Downs, east London.

15,397 people actively involved in the programme.

Community investment

An interesting area of the programme was the relationship between the community and the Games sponsors. Initially it was believed that the Games sponsors offered an opportunity to leverage significant funding into the sustainability projects; while this did not come to fruition, the sponsors did support aspects of the Changing Places programme. Engaging the sponsors at an early stage may have presented an opportunity to influence their activation projects to a greater extent than actually happened.

Most visibly the support of the sponsors was in the form of employee volunteering initiatives such as the large-scale volunteering days that some were involved in. The impact they had was significant and many of the improvements they made remain today. In addition to the physical employee volunteer days, the sponsors were able to support the community by mentoring and transferring skills. Although small in terms of numbers, the mentoring of some young people on one project was invaluable and has inspired them to go on to further education to learn further skills.

The work with the Games sponsors led to the development of some really beneficial projects. However, there was also a missed opportunity as far more investment, not necessarily capital, could have been made by the sponsors. A key learning for future event organisers hoping to replicate the Changing Places programme would be to engage the event sponsors at an early stage to try and influence their programmes of sponsorship activation. The synergies between

Changing Places and the activations of the Games sponsors were limited, but if planned earlier joint programmes of activity could have been developed.

Measuring success

It is thought that a programme like Changing Places has never been attempted before within the context of a major sporting event. Through research, no record could be found of a previous Organising Committee attempting a small-scale regeneration programme in the communities that surround the Olympic and Paralympic venues, so consequently there are no benchmarks for comparison. There were some initiatives that we were aware of such as Barcelona's project to brighten the city with hundreds of window boxes, or Vancouver's scheme to give local unemployed individuals new construction skills through the building of Games products. However, neither initiative was particularly similar to the objectives for the Changing Places programme so comparison was difficult.

The success of Changing Places would depend significantly on the ability to engage people living locally to the venues and encouraging them to volunteer. Volunteering is nothing new and the UK has a long history of utilising volunteers in conservation activity and general environmental enhancements. However, the breadth of focus and the direct link to a global event meant that other environmental volunteering initiatives were not comparable to the London 2012 Changing Places programme. Consequently it was very hard to set any kind of targets for the first year of the programme.



Angela and Jan – two of the Changing Places 'regulars'

Improvements at 582 sites.

Targets

When the programme was launched in 2009 it was decided that the first year would be used as a baseline to which future years could be compared. After year one of the programmes, the following outputs were achieved:

- 1,493 people involved in the programme resulting in 5,798 volunteer hours
- Projects at 89 locations
- 40 per cent of projects involved an element of habitat creation, although this was largely due to a tree planting project which skewed the results
- Two per cent of participants were repeat volunteers

With interest in the London 2012 Games likely to increase year-on-year it was decided that the programme's targets should be increased significantly in years two and three

to harness increasing interest and drive project delivery. Consequently the following targets were set for the life of the programme:

- 10,000 people directly involved in the programme
- 40,000 volunteer hours delivered for the benefit of the community
- Projects at 500 locations
- One-quarter of all projects to include habitat creation
- Five per cent of participants at Changing Places events to be repeat volunteers^f

At the time it was considered that if these targets were met then Changing Places would leave behind communities that felt they were involved in the Games, noticeable benefits in very local areas to the venues, and people who believe they have the skills to help shape their local area.

Achievements

By the start of the Olympic Games on 27 July 2012 the following outputs had been achieved against the targets set:

Overall target	Outputs to start of Olympic Games
10,000 people actively involved in the programme	15,397
Deliver 40,000 hours of volunteering	49,287
Changing Places to deliver improvements across 500 sites	582
20% of projects to include an element of biodiversity enrichment	40.72%
5% of participants at Changing Places events to be repeat volunteers	23.2%

Legacy

The focus for Changing Places was always intended to be the pre-Games period when levels of interest were high and the local community were looking at ways to get involved. However, it was clear that if the programme was going to be successful then the projects would

need to be developed in a sustainable way so that they could continue long after the Games finished. Virtually every project developed through the programme will leave either a physical legacy of a 'changed place' or a social legacy through the new skills that members of the community have learnt through their involvement.

^f Defined as either a regular volunteer or somebody who had been to more than one event.

With the Games now finished, Changing Places will cease to exist – but the individual projects will continue independently.

Recommendations

A London 2012 Changing Places programme could be easily replicated by future Organising Committees or the organisers of other major events. Changing Places developed in the way that it did primarily due to the widespread nature of volunteering and the range of third-sector organisations that exist within the UK. Also, the drive of legacy and the desire to extend the benefit of the regeneration of the Olympic Park to as many of the communities local to the Park helped to shape the programme. The principle of bringing the community together through a major event and coordinating activity for their benefit could be replicated in many different ways. Some of the key learnings from Changing Places were:

- Agree a tight scope and ensure that the scope is maintained to ensure effective delivery of the programme. The scope could be either a geographical area or themed on a specific issue, such as skill development. Changing Places had a fluid development with both a broad geographical focus and a range of themes running through the programme. While this allowed access to a broader funding base the approach limited the programme's impact in some areas.
- Start the programme as early as possible, ideally once a Host City/event has been awarded, to enable development and the building of interest.
- The impact that the community can make should not be underestimated. Given the right support and resources, the community can lead on transforming their local area.
- Changing Places brought the community together by instigating interactions that may not have otherwise happened. Using vacant public land for community benefit led to cohesion that may have otherwise taken years to develop.
- The use of volunteers can be incredibly beneficial but it takes considerable effort to recruit and maintain interest. There will be a high dropout rate of volunteers but this can be managed – and in some

- cases avoided – by improving a volunteer's experience. Simple forms of recognition can help.
- Do not rely on the easy-to-reach 'usual suspects'. Some of the most innovative projects that Changing Places delivered came from some of the hardest to reach groups. Perseverance is key to engaging all sections of the community and it will be necessary to use a variety of means to reach the volunteers. Everything from door knocking to social media was used to recruit the Changing Places volunteers.
- Seek and secure funding at an early stage for a team to develop and manage the programme.
- Engage the big sponsors as part of their requirement under Corporate Social Responsibility as early as possible and build some of this into the sponsorship deals to ensure solid development and ongoing legacy from a Host City holding a Games.

Partnership working was fundamental to the success of the programme. The merits of partnership working are widely accepted, but the argument for working in partnership was clear for Changing Places. Funding was accessed that would otherwise have not been available, projects were delivered by the right organisations with the right expertise, and stronger funding bids were created with involvement from more organisations.

Conclusions

With the Games now finished, Changing Places will cease to exist – but the individual projects will continue independently. For example, the Olympic Park timebank, which was initially developed through Changing Places, has been passed onto the London Legacy Development Corporation who plan to launch the initiative in autumn 2012. However, the continuity that runs through all of the Changing Places initiatives is the involvement of the community. People living close to the Games venues have been involved in the programme since the start, and their ongoing involvement in the projects that Changing Places created will ensure that there is a legacy from the programme for many years to come.

Acknowledgements

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Scoping and project management of the LOCOG Sustainability Learning Legacy Programme was provided by Action Sustainability CIC.
Funded equally by Action Sustainability CIC and Defra.

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