



# On your marks and get set for London 2012

With just two years to go, it's not only the athletes who need to be preparing for the 30th Olympiad. As Games related activity and interest intensify, it is timely to consider the impact that the Olympics and Paralympics will have on the capital and beyond – perhaps even on your own business.





**500,000 spectators per day are expected at the Games, along with 25,000 visiting members of the media, 2,000 team officials and let's not forget the 17,000 international competitors.**

All these people mean welcome revenue for tourism and associated industries but they also place a huge demand on resources. It's therefore important that businesses review their own plans and identify how the Games will affect them, before it's too late to act.

Take hotels; according to the Institute of Hospitality, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) have already set aside 53,000 London hotel rooms for the duration. These are not designated for the public but for officials, coaches and journalists. That leaves thousands of overseas and UK visitors still to be accommodated. And it's not just about a bed for the night. The many official sponsors are expected to bring guests galore – Coca Cola alone anticipate hosting 8,800 people – and they're likely to want to conduct some business in between witnessing the sporting prowess.

As David Bland, Commercial Director of The Event Business, specialists in experiential marketing and event management, points out ***“Hotel accommodation, convention, conference and meeting facilities are all going to be in high demand in the lead up to and during the Olympics and Paralympics. Many venues are already booked – for example, the French have secured***

***Old Billingsgate for the entire duration. Any company that is thinking of holding an event in London during the first three quarters of 2012 should either book it now or consider bringing their plans forward to 2011.”***



Suppliers of event infrastructure are also preparing for a surge in uptake. Giles Stanford of SLS Group, a well-established event delivery and implementation company highlights the fact that it will be 'business as usual' for many annual events. ***“The Golf Open, music festivals and other rotational fixtures aren't going to be cancelled just because of the Games”*** he says ***“and although many larger suppliers will successfully complete the complex tender process to secure Games related contracts, the knock on effect will be that smaller outfits who aren't chasing***

***such jobs will find themselves in demand with other customers. There could therefore be a real shortfall in resources – commodities such as generators, marquees, portaloos – and also a skills shortage with there simply not being enough event and production management professionals to go around.”***

## A nation in anticipation

It would be a mistake to think that only London-based events will be affected as in fact the fun and games take place in 34 locations across the UK including Glasgow, Manchester, Cardiff, Coventry, Newcastle and Weymouth. All these locations are expecting unprecedented levels of visitor activity. Venues and amenities in and around the 600 official pre-training camps distributed across the country will also experience increased bookings. For example, Birmingham has signed multi-million pound deals with



both Jamaica and America for those countries to use the city as their pre-Olympic track and field training base. So, any company thinking of holding an event in the Midlands region during the spring or summer of 2012 needs to cement its plans pretty quickly – and the story will be similar in cities nationwide.

Another consideration is the huge level of interest that will be generated amongst the UK workforce. Some companies will be implementing more flexible working policies to minimise potential disruption caused by staff wanting to watch events, but it is expected that many more people than usual will take annual leave during the Games (27th July – 24th August for the Olympics and 29th August – 9th September for the Paralympics). Another good reason for companies to plan ahead and get their timing right.

It is of course important to remember that, overall, London 2012 is a huge cause for optimism and opportunity. New, really impactful venues are being built or refurbished on the strength of the Games and some of these will be open well ahead of time. ***“The Renaissance St Pancras is a good illustration.”*** says David Bland ***“This is a massive restoration of a much loved London landmark which will offer state of the art hotel and meeting facilities when it opens for business in 2011. It’s just one example of some great new event locations that have been spurred on by the Games and will form part of their long-term legacy”.***

The Games also present a potential focus for corporate hospitality. LOCOG have yet to announce the official ticket sales strategy but although the vast majority of the approximately 10 million tickets will be on sale to the public, a proportion are reportedly already allocated to two hospitality packaging firms, suggesting that there will be some really special client entertaining

opportunities. Even the 70-day Olympic Torch relay around Britain will be accompanied by crowd-pulling activities that will appeal to a diverse audience. And whilst the Olympic brand and its associations are fiercely guarded by the International Olympic Committee on behalf of its lucrative sponsorship deals, there is nothing to stop companies informally ‘capturing the spirit’ of the Games for their own purposes, for example at team building or motivational events.

**“London 2012 will really put the UK front and centre and it’s a good opportunity for businesses to attract the attention of overseas customers”** confirms David Bland.

***“It’s also important to stress that steps have been taken to ensure that businesses and individuals are protected from profiteers trading off the back of the Games. We, along with other reputable suppliers, have signed up to a voluntary event industry code of practice called ‘The Fair Pricing and Practice Charter’. It’s the first initiative of its kind, launched across the UK to coincide with the handover of the Games, and it will help present a unified approach to ensure all business events taking place up to and during 2012 and beyond reflect the right values and aspirations”.***

Suppliers and venues emphasise that there is no suggestion that the Olympics should deter any



company from holding their own events in the UK. ***“All we’re saying is that forward planning is vital”*** explains David Bland. ***“Businesses need to factor in the Games and ensure they secure the resources that they need. It’s always worth thinking laterally***



*too – if you usually hold a summer event in or near London, 2012 might be the year to try an alternative location or a different date on the calendar”.*

So, if you haven't already begun planning the events and activities likely to be hosted by your business over the next two years, now is the time to do so. Make contact with your suppliers, secure venues and resources – the finer details can be left until later, but the sooner you get yourself into those starting blocks the better.

**For help planning your organisation's forthcoming and future events please contact David Bland of The Event Business on 01295 268111 or by emailing [david@theeventbusiness.co.uk](mailto:david@theeventbusiness.co.uk)**

