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LESSONS LEARNED FROM LONDON 2012

As a panel member at your recent 'Making the Games: Delivering London 2012' event, I set out what I believed were the crucial factors in making the Games a success. I thought it would also be helpful to set out these thoughts in writing.

I was interested to see the document you have already pulled together on lessons learned across the Government domain, and I recognise many of the messages within that. I think that Government and industry as a whole can learn important lessons from our experience over the last few years of organising the Games and these could be applied again in future major projects. Good practices are transferable and not restricted to a 'unique' Olympic and Paralympic Games.

1. Clarity of Government's role

In a large project such as this, there are often a large number of different organisations involved. In the case of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, this includes both the public and private sectors in significant measure.

Because of this it is important for each player – including Government – to understand their role. Fundamentally, our role was to account for public money for the Games. However, the Games would not have happened without public sector support, and the Government's role was wide:

- To ensure continuity of political support, including through a change of Government.
- To contribute to clarity of purpose – including longer term benefits; such as the regeneration of Stratford; lasting benefits across the country; inspiring young people; and providing a reflection of modern, creative, diverse country.
- Providing public finance (the Games were 80% funded by public money) and appropriately accounting for it.



- Oversight of risk, and assuring Ministers that these risks are being managed.
- Contributing to delivery – for example, through public services, accreditation, border control, transport and security.

It was also important that ministers understood their role, and in fact did this with significant skill. They mostly recognised that they were not there to be operational, but equally could always have their say. Politicians were actually crucial to delivering London 2012.

It was also important within this that Government understood what its role *did not* include, i.e. we were not there to build the structures, to run the opening ceremony, to raise sponsor money, or to deliver the sporting events.

Clarity of purpose enabled us to be certain about what we needed to deliver; why we needed to deliver it; and that our plans were the right way in which to deliver.

2. Clarity on structures to successfully deliver

Whilst clarity of roles is important, it is equally important to be clear about what structures are required to manage a large project like the Olympics and Paralympics. In particular, these structures need to provide a clear understanding of the interdependencies.

Clarity on structure is important to help ensure political engagement; to ensure accountability and control of public money; to maximise opportunities for private contributions; but also to give organisations the freedom to deliver.

The Olympic Board was established to govern the programme as a whole. As a central coalition, it consisted of Government, the ODA, LOCOG and the GLA, and provided certainty on processes and roles. There was an emphasis across the programme on building strong relationships, with structures in place to support these and the Olympic Board provided the overarching guiding coalition.

We also put in place purpose-built delivery bodies: the ODA (closer to Government and more heavily reliant on public money); and LOCOG (privately funded). These were given a clear scope and clear budgets with strong risk and contingency planning. Government does not always think enough about structures and frameworks, but these are vital to long term success.

It is also vital to recognise that different organisations are needed to fill different roles. We recognised from the start that Government is not the expert in delivery. However, DCMS is very experienced in delivering through others – and this is what we did for the Games.

3. The right capabilities

Business continuity is a key part of project planning, but equally as important can be continuity of personnel. Something which was immensely beneficial to the Games was the steady state of personnel throughout planning and delivery. I believe it is a testament to early thinking on the Games that senior personnel showed a willingness to stick with the project and the wider structures around it.

Within Government, we established the Government Olympic Executive (GOE) as a dedicated temporary organisation with its own budget. DCMS created GOE to provide a focus on the project and ensured it was equipped to understand and deal with a wide range of issues. We ensured that it had the right project management, finance and leadership skills to deliver on behalf of Government as part of a cross-cutting team. The GOE also provided purpose-built oversight of Government's role throughout the process.

4. The right relationships

Within Government, we had to be clear about roles and accountabilities in order to be able to deliver. These Games would not have happened without Government support – but we were always clear that Government is not expert at organising or running sporting events, and it should not try to be. DCMS was therefore the right choice to be lead Government department, as is well versed in delivering through others.

We were also careful from the beginning to ensure that good relationships were in place between the key players. LOCOG, the ODA, the GLA and Government had strong formal and informal relationships.

Important to Government was that these processes were transparent, accountable and open to scrutiny – probably much more so than if this had been a purely private sector exercise. The need for transparency was unavoidable, and so we actively planned for it. Transparency and accountability were embedded within the wider processes, with quarterly reporting and Parliamentary scrutiny. This fundamentally helped to build confidence in delivery.

5. Open to change

Finally, it was important that Government – and DCMS specifically – was open to change. The 2012 programme went through different stages, including build, delivery and now legacy. We had to be able to respond to these changes and deal with them and change our structures as required. Because we were aware of some of the changes to come, we were more able to plan for them – for example, legacy was central to the planning from the very start, so that even before it was built we were already thinking about transformation of the park in legacy. The change of focus from

preparation to build to staging to legacy was therefore integral to the wider planning.

Being open to change also meant that we could be prepared for the unexpected. Whilst we could not predict the role we would be required to undertake in terms of transport and security, we were able to respond quickly and effectively.

One of the most vital parts of being open to change was the setting of a realistic budget from the beginning. This meant that we were able to plan in the long term, as well as think in the short term. Knowing that contingency was available if we needed it meant that we could be flexible and not be afraid of change.

Conclusion

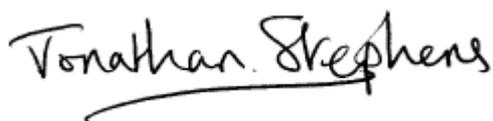
I believe that we can firmly call this a 'public service' Games. Government and the civil service behind it provided the ethos at the heart of 2012. From the first time it was suggested in DCMS that we could bid for the Games, right to the current transformation of the Park into legacy mode, Government has been at the heart of this programme.

Not only was Government key working in the background, it also helped to fundamentally deliver services which formed a key part of the Games-experience itself, including the transport and emergency services, as well as the armed forces to provide additional security.

I think that we can be satisfied that we comprehensively delivered for the country: we delivered big; we delivered change; and we delivered in partnership.

Such successful delivery was not a one-off. I have no doubt that – provided lessons are captured and learnt – it is an experience which can be repeated in many future major projects.

Jonathan Stephens

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Stephens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

Jonathan Stephens
Permanent Secretary