



Rowena Macdonald
Culture Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA

2nd October 2006

-
- > Influencing policy

 - > Underpinning advocacy

 - > Increasing capacity
-

89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP

T 020 7820 7796

F 020 7820 8620

E mail@heritagelink.org.uk

W www.heritagelink.org.uk

Heritage Link response to CMS Committee Inquiry London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Background: Heritage Link brings together 80 voluntary organisations concerned with heritage in England representing interests from specialist advisers, practitioners and managers, volunteers and owners, to national funding bodies and local building preservation trusts. Much of the historic environment is cared for - supported, managed or owned - by these organisations. They are supported by some 4 million members making it the biggest alliance of heritage interests in England.

1. Funding. The heritage sector is, naturally, concerned that the Olympics may have an adverse effect on the funding available for heritage projects, particularly through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the other non-Olympic lottery distributors. However, it is also hoped that some of the funding which may become available for the cultural programme will apply to heritage projects, particularly those which are tourism related. Heritage Link is waiting for information to become available on the various funding programmes before it is able to comment more fully on this, and in particular information on what funding will be available from LOCOG for external events in the Cultural Olympiad, if any.

2. Legacy. For the heritage sector, this is perhaps the most important aspect of the period leading up to the Olympics and the years beyond 2012. For the Olympics to have a truly lasting social and economic impact, there need to be considerable benefits accruing both to the areas in which the events are staged and to other parts of the UK. This applies both in terms of the regeneration of existing buildings and also the quality of the new-build specifically for the Olympics.

The quality of design and construction needs to be addressed to ensure that all construction and refurbishment meets the highest possible standards.

2.1 East London. Looking at specific opportunities around the historic built environment, although the area of London where the main Olympic events will be staged is not noted for its historic buildings, there are nonetheless some significant individual buildings and streetscapes which should be targeted for restoration and regeneration work.

One such is the Abbey Mills Pumping Station in Newham, where a consortium of stakeholders including the owners, Thames Water, Heritage of London Trust Operations Limited, funders including the Architectural Heritage Fund and English Heritage, the Local Authority, Buildings Crafts College and Groundwork UK is already developing plans for the restoration and reuse of some of these magnificent buildings. There are opportunities for use of the Abbey Mills site around the Olympics, in particular for hospitality purposes, and this is being discussed with LOCOG and the ODA.

The streetscapes of East London also contain some fine historic buildings, including civic buildings, many of which are badly neglected, and the regeneration of these would be of considerable benefit to the local communities, in one of the most deprived areas of the UK. This will only take place, however, if it is recognised early on that this needs to be a priority of the work in the run-up to the Games.

The opportunity presented by London 2012 should enable the major heritage bodies, including English Heritage, to tackle the key Buildings at Risk on the register in the five London Boroughs mainly involved in the Olympics. Additional funding will be required, but this could become a special 'Olympics theme' for funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is particularly important that those buildings on the major transport corridors are tackled so that they do not remain as a blight on the routes into the Olympic Park.

2.2 Nations and Regions. There are also opportunities to be exploited in the rest of the UK, particularly where events are being held or training camps will be based. Two of the main event sites are World Heritage Sites (Greenwich and Weymouth/Jurassic Coast) and as well as ensuring that these are properly managed and protected during the Games themselves, additional funding should be brought in to make the most of the extra visitors and to carry out restoration works where necessary.

3. Skills Development. It is also essential that the opportunities for developing skills, in the construction industry and in hospitality and marketing, are exploited to the full. There is a serious shortage of skilled craftspeople throughout the UK and the work around regeneration projects could provide considerable opportunities to address this issue. Similarly, skills training is needed within the hospitality industry to ensure that the major attractions, including heritage attractions, are fully geared up for dealing with additional visitors before, during and after the Olympics, and that the attractions themselves are presented as well as possible. Organisations involved with the Olympics should also be given encouragement and support in reaching a compatible level of technological development, particularly where they are dealing directly with the public - for example in taking bookings over the Internet - so that the Games and all the surrounding events are genuinely accessible worldwide.

4. Engagement with the voluntary sector. Concern is already being expressed by smaller voluntary sector organisations within the heritage and arts sector that they feel marginalised by the Olympics discussions. Heritage Link is in discussion with LOCOG to address this, but it is something which the Committee should be aware of; for the Games to be successful in reaching the widest possible communities engagement with smaller organisations will be essential, otherwise community groups may feel disenfranchised.

4.1 To this end, it is somewhat surprising that the heritage sector is not properly represented on the Creative and Cultural Forum, chaired by the Minister of Culture, David Lammy MP, which is meant to be steering the cultural sector's response to the Olympics. The only representation is from the Heritage Lottery Fund, whilst the Government's own heritage advisor, English Heritage, is not on the group.

Heritage Link
2nd October 2006