

DINNER/DISCUSSION SUMMARY**What will be the legacy of the 2012 London Olympics?**Held at The Royal Society on 9th July, 2008We are grateful to ARUP, The Michael John Trust and
London & Continental Railways for supporting this event.

- Chair:** **The Earl of Selborne KBE FRS**
Chairman, The Foundation for Science and Technology
- Speakers:** **Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP**
Minister for the Olympics and London
John Armitt CBE FREng
Chairman, Olympic Delivery Authority
Tom Russell
Group Director, Olympic Legacy Directorate, London Development Agency
The Lord Mawson OBE
House of Lords

TESSA JOWELL said that other cities had shared London's passion and self confidence, and the Beijing Olympics had confirmed China's arrival on the global economic and cultural stage. But their main focus was on physical regeneration, tourism and economic impact. London's goals encompassed the Olympic ideal: not just that the Games should be the greatest ever but that they would inspire faster progress to a healthier nation, higher aspirations among young people and stronger communities across the nation and particularly in East London. Better facilities, improved access to coaching and better information delivered through a ten year programme of sustained investment would deliver the objective of a sustained increase in the number of people playing sport. The Government was challenging local authorities and business to use the inspiration of 2012 to accelerate progress towards healthy lifestyles across the UK. Raising young people's aspirations had been at the core of London's successful bid. The education programme would begin in the autumn of 2008, and initiatives to reach out to business and encourage participation of diverse groups were already in hand. These would build on wider government programmes. The Cultural Olympiad would bring renewed national pride and confidence. Communities in East London would be strengthened through improved facilities, new jobs and better transport. It was essential that local communities should feel ownership of the Games. Local students were decorating the fence of the Olympic park, and the Greater London Authority was taking an Olympics roadshow to every London borough. Across the UK, people would be able to view the Games live on screens in public places. A commitment to enduring legacy was built in to all the preparations for the Games. Each individual should ask themselves what they wanted the legacy to be, and how they could make a contribution.

MR ARMITT said that London had risen to the Olympic challenge before, at short notice in 1908 following the

eruption of Mount Vesuvius which forced a change of location, and in the 1948 'Austerity Games' following the war. For 2012 the challenge included the largest inner city regeneration ever undertaken, and to be delivered in a very short timescale. 19th and 20th century industry had left a legacy of pollution and deprivation in the Lea valley. The regeneration programme would reinterpret Victorian achievements, delivering a new power station, aquatic centre and park. Innovative construction methods would emphasise recycling, address climate change, and build in flexibility to respond to unforeseen future needs. New bridges, roads and walkways would open up the area; and transport links, already good, would improve through a £600 million investment in railways. 80 people were working on site using skills gained at the new construction academy, and it was expected that 2,000 would be trained by 2012. 650 small and medium sized firms had participated in construction, gaining 75% of the £3 billion worth of contracts awarded so far. Of the £6 billion total planned expenditure, 75% should leave a lasting legacy.

MR RUSSELL said that London would benefit from encouragement to young people to participate in sport, and the nation's economic competitiveness would be enhanced by investment. A long term strategic plan was needed to ensure that the opportunity for comprehensive physical, social and economic renewal of East London was fully exploited. The plan would be a framework, rather than a blueprint, setting out a vision and set of principles against which proposals for expenditure could be evaluated. There would be wide consultation. The right management structures would be a necessary step to meet the imperatives: development of the Park after 2012 to provide 9,000 new homes, conversion of the media centre into 1 million square feet of highly specified office space, creation of 10,000 new jobs; management of the assets to safeguard public investment, and delivery of social and economic objec-

tives to improve quality of life for the community. Risks included disagreements among the rich and complex array of stakeholders. The challenge for the London Development Agency was to understand and represent the needs of the people of East London, achieving the right balance between need and opportunity.

LORD MAWSON recalled the observation that Government understands the shape of the forest but rarely understands what is going on under the trees. The legacy of the Olympics would depend on getting the detail right. Two recent local projects demonstrated the importance of positive and creative leadership. The first had transformed a church site in Bromley-by-Bow into an integrated childcare service, sharing ownership among local groups, after the director of social services had overruled opposition from his staff. The second had created an integrated healthcare centre, after intervention by the then Secretary of State for Health, overcoming defensive attitudes among local professionals. This had in turn provided a springboard for a multi-million pound social enterprise. There was now a once in a lifetime opportunity to build 'Water City' in the Lea Valley, a new metropolitan district for London, provided the 40 or more public sector bodies involved could unite under common leadership, fully engage the local community, reaching beyond the limits of the Olympic park, and work in new ways with social entrepreneurs. If Government's behaviour did not change, there was a risk that the legacy of the Olympics would be no more than a giant problemhousing estate.

Participants in the discussion agreed that the multiplicity of stakeholders created risks for accountability, and on the need for inspirational leadership. They admired the vision of a Water City, taking advantage of the Lea valley's excellent location and transport links, though not all were convinced that the proposal would overcome the problems. There were doubts about a new strategic plan, which might distract from the need to seize the moment, when the project had only four years to run. However, London's preparations were well advanced, planning could proceed alongside action, and the plan would lay foundations for a period much longer than four years, and would draw together the Olympic investment with other public and private sector initiatives.

The need for a national perspective was stressed, and the opportunity for sport to inspire young people to take an interest in science and engineering. Some regions were making more of the opportunity than others: Gloucester County Council had used the Olympic catalyst to forge links with Kenya.

Perhaps the most important legacy would be raising skill levels and employability in London's East End, through the new construction and civil engineering academies, recognising that many young trainees were starting from a low level of achievement, and came from families with no recent history of employment. The Signs of Life project to decorate the 11 mile fence around the park was run by local young people and showed what

they could achieve; but so far, they had been kept to the periphery rather than involved in the main projects. It was imperative that lasting jobs should be created. Despite the success of the Sydney Olympics, insufficient focus on social and cultural aspects and lack of follow through had led to a flawed legacy. The same was true in other host cities. There is a need in London now for a dedicated group to work alongside the Games organisers to focus on legacy outcomes alone; they need to know the area well and they need to have strong leadership. The Cultural Olympiad was due to be launched in autumn 2008, and no details were yet available.

Those who had attended earlier Olympics, as spectators and as volunteers, attested to enduring inspiration from witnessing heroic victories. The right question had been asked, and the answer had been good in parts, though there was scope to develop a stronger and clearer overarching vision at national level. The Foundation should hold a further discussion when the proposals outlined during the evening were more fully worked through.

Jo Durning

Presentations from the meeting are on the Foundation web site at www.foundation.org.uk.

Web links:

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www.arup.com

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www.bbcb.org.uk

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London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)

www.london2012.com

Olympic Delivery Authority:

www.london2012.com/plans/olympic-park/legacy/index.php

Research Councils UK

www.rcuk.ac.uk

Sport England:

www.sportengland.org

Sport Scotland:

www.sportscotland.org.uk

Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP:

www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page1395.asp

Reference:

The Social Entrepreneur: Making Communities Work, Mawson, A, 2008

ISBN 978-1-84354-661-0

Published by Atlantic Books, London

www.atlantic-books.co.uk