

Major Sporting Events: Report into Soft Power, Trade and Investment Benefits to the UK

Good morning, and thank you Lord Mayor for that introduction. It's a pleasure to be here for the launch of the 'Soft Power, Trade and Investment Benefits to Major Sports Events' research.

First, I want to thank UK Sport, the City of London, Ernst and Young and all the consultees of the project, including colleagues at the Rugby League World Cup, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games for their contributions.

The Government has long championed the wide-ranging benefits of hosting major sports events. They build stronger communities, improve mental and physical wellbeing, and inspire the next generation.

The UK has a world-class reputation in hosting major sporting events. This is a credit to the sector, including so many here this morning, and of course a credit to many cities that are pivotal in hosting.

During the pandemic, major sporting events played an important role in boosting public morale when we really needed it, bringing excitement to homes right across the country.

And, after a tough two years, this Government knows that we can't rest on our laurels but must continue to build our reputation of being amongst the best in the world at hosting major sporting events.

In 2022 alone, we will host a prolific programme of sporting events: the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, the biggest multi-sport event in the UK since London 2012; the World Gymnastics Championships; the UEFA Women's European Championships; the Rugby League World Cup; and many more.

Alongside the Jubilee and the Unboxed festival, this will be an incredible year to showcase the country and deliver on Government objectives. As set out in this report, that will mean maximising all these so called soft power, trade and investment opportunities. We should never underestimate the power of these events to generate jobs and contribute to the economy.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Business and Tourism Programme is one example of targeted government investment specifically aimed at converting the excitement and enthusiasm of a major sporting event into trade and tourism benefits. We must ensure there are many other similar initiatives as we look forward.

As you know, the Chancellor recently announced funding to support bids for the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup, the 2026 Tour de France Grand Départ and the ongoing feasibility work into a potential UK and Ireland bid to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

In order to secure this funding, my department worked with UK Sport and key partners to ensure we demonstrated the breadth of socio-economic benefits that hosting events of this magnitude entails.

The report launched today underlines those significant benefits and demonstrates them to the rest of Government, the sporting sector, industry, and importantly to the public.

This report expertly highlights how Soft Power, Trade and Investment benefits directly help achieve the Government's policy goals – such as promoting Global Britain and Levelling Up. Not to mention, providing opportunities for the UK to bring its influence to bear internationally.

And, of course, the report concludes that major sporting events in the coming decade have the potential to deliver £4 billion in soft power, trade and investment impacts for the UK.

These findings will help support partnerships between the Business and Sport sectors to achieve all these outcomes, and more. They will also support the development of our future approach to Sport Diplomacy – and how we can use sport to strengthen the UK's influence as a global power and force for good.

We must continue to work together to ensure we apply the findings of this report and capitalise on the pipeline of events over the next ten years and beyond. I know that you are all as committed as I am to doing just that.

So thank you again for the invitation this morning, and to all those involved in producing this crucial piece of work. It is a timely intervention and will serve to bolster our arguments regarding why it is crucial that we make the next decade a golden one of sport in the UK.