

Birmingham ready to open biggest ever Commonwealth Games which will leave lasting legacy for region

Birmingham 2022 boasts the biggest sporting and para-sport programme and more medals for women than men for first time ever at major multi-sport event

The biggest ever Commonwealth Games and the largest sporting event to be held in the West Midlands will open in Birmingham today on time and on budget.

Backed by £778 million of public funding, including £594 million from central government, Birmingham 2022 is the most significant investment in a major sporting event since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Prince of Wales – accompanied by The Duchess of Cornwall – will represent Her Majesty The Queen and officially open the Games at this evening's Opening Ceremony, taking place at the newly-refurbished Alexander Stadium in front of over 30,000 spectators and an estimated global television audience of over one billion people.

Birmingham 2022 will be the quickest delivered Commonwealth Games in history – ready in just four and a half years instead of the usual seven. It also boasts the biggest para-sport programme in Commonwealth Games history and more medals for women than men for the first time at a major multi-sport event.

Birmingham is hosting 6,500 athletes and officials from 72 Commonwealth nations and territories competing in 11 days of sport across the West Midlands. More than one million tickets have been sold for events across the West Midlands from Cannock Chase to Coventry.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The UK rightly has an outstanding reputation for hosting major sporting events, and the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham will be another fantastic opportunity to showcase the best of Britain on a global stage.

Not only will we be celebrating sporting success, we will also be strengthening the crucial ties between our 72 nations and territories – bringing businesses and governments from across the world together to encourage trade and boost economic growth that will leave a lasting legacy for years to come.

Good luck to all the athletes competing – let the Games begin!

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

Today the eyes of the world turn to Birmingham. We have an incredible 11 days of sport and I know that fans from across the home nations will get right behind our athletes. Beyond the medals won and records broken, these Games will deliver a fantastic legacy – sporting, cultural and economic – for the people of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

The investment in the Games will create a positive economic and social impact for Birmingham and the West Midlands; including:

- 40,000 new jobs and volunteering opportunities;
- A £38 million investment to kickstart a range of innovative programmes in the West Midlands to help those who need the most support to get physically active;
- A Business and Tourism Programme, supported by £21 million government investment, to attract more visitors and investors to the West Midlands, including a two-week UK House programme drawing global business leaders to Birmingham;
- A brand new aquatics centre in Sandwell, that will be used by the local people as a state-of-the-art sport and leisure facility for decades to come;
- The redevelopment of Alexander Stadium to transform it into a world-class sporting facility that will attract future major events to the region;
- The Birmingham 2022 Festival – the biggest celebration of creativity ever staged in the West Midlands with free events open to the public.

President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Dame Louise Martin said:

These Games have been four and a half years in the making and Birmingham has done an incredible job, overcoming challenging circumstances, to prepare for the biggest ever Commonwealth Games.

I'm absolutely delighted that over 1 million people will be attending and more than a billion people watching around the world to share in the excitement. I have no doubt that Birmingham 2022 will be a spectacular Games for the host city, and the Commonwealth.

Birmingham 2022 Chief Executive Ian Reid said:

Over the coming days, all eyes will be on Birmingham and the West Midlands, as we host the 22nd Commonwealth Games. After many years of hard work, I am delighted to say that we are ready and are looking forward to welcoming athletes and spectators from around the world to the region.

These Games will play host to the largest sporting programme of any Commonwealth Games and for the first time will see more medals awarded to women than men. Over the coming two weeks, we will be able to showcase the very best that we have to offer. Now is the time to celebrate our city and region. This is our moment.

Notes to Editors

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will take place from 28 July to 8 August 2022 and will be the biggest sporting and cultural event ever held in the city featuring thousands of world-class athletes and over a million spectators. Home to more than 187 nationalities, Birmingham 2022 will be a home Games for every nation.

Backed by £778 million of public funding, Birmingham 2022 will deliver 11 days of amazing sport. Alongside the sport programme, the Games will be accompanied by a six-month cultural festival and the Queen's Baton Relay will travel around the Commonwealth and the UK before arriving in Birmingham for the Opening Ceremony. A £24 million business and tourism programme will convert the excitement and interest generated by the Games into increased trade, tourism and investment opportunities for the West Midlands, promoting the region and the UK to the world.

www.birmingham2022.com

[Leaseholders protected from unfair bills to make homes safe](#)

- £4.5 billion Building Safety Fund reopens for new applications
- Leaseholders now able to prove that they qualify for legal protections against unfair bills under the Building Safety Act
- New online Leaseholder Protections Checker to empower homeowners with the information they need to hold building owners to account on costs

More leaseholders in high-rise homes will be spared unfair bills for building safety costs as the government's £4.5 billion Building Safety Fund [reopens for new applications](#) today, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has announced (28 July 2022).

Buildings over 18 metres with cladding issues are eligible to apply for the fund, which has allocated over £1.3 billion towards making homes safe since its launch in 2020.

A new online [Leaseholder Protections Checker](#) will help leaseholders understand if they qualify for financial protections under the Building Safety Act, whilst legislation that is now fully operational means leaseholders can prove legally for the first time that they are protected from historical building safety costs.

The protections prevent qualifying leaseholders from paying the majority of costs to fix fire safety defects in their homes, and make those responsible, and those who own the buildings, pay instead.

Any building owner that invoices qualifying leaseholders or continues to seek payment of outstanding bills for work to fix historical building safety defects that are needed could now face criminal action, unless they can prove they are legally entitled to recover these costs.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Greg Clark said:

We must make homes safe. The relaunch of the Building Safety Fund today will help achieve this, but we must also ensure those in industry who acted irresponsibly pay their fair share to put things right.

The Building Safety Act makes clear building owners' liabilities and gives us powers to pursue those that continue to flout the rules.

It has also introduced far-reaching legal protections to relieve many leaseholders from the financial burden of fixing their homes. With these now fully up and running, I urge any homeowners who may qualify to see if they are eligible using our online Leaseholder Protections Checker as soon as possible.

Under the Building Safety Act, building owners and landlords are now responsible for making buildings safe and the first port of call to fund any necessary repairs. It is also illegal for costs of cladding repairs and those beyond the leaseholder caps for non-cladding defects to be passed to qualifying leaseholders.

Those that the protections apply to will need to complete and submit a leaseholder Deed of Certificate to their building owner to confirm if they have anything to pay or not. Further [guidance](#) to support leaseholders with demonstrating their eligibility has also been published online.

Where there are no clear plans in place to fix buildings over 18 metres with cladding related issues, building owners and landlords can check their eligibility for the Building Safety Fund, which is taking new applications from today.

For buildings 11-18 metres in height where the original developer or building owner cannot be identified or held responsible, the government is also launching a new scheme to cover the costs of remediating unsafe cladding. Further details of this scheme will be announced in due course.

So far, [48 of the UK's major housebuilders](#) have signed up to the government's [Building Safety Pledge](#) , agreeing to pay to fix buildings over 11 metres with life critical fire safety defects they developed or refurbished in the last 30 years.

On 13 July the Levelling Up Secretary [published](#) a draft contract to turn these pledges into legally binding commitments for industry, leaseholders, residents and other parties to review before being finalised in August.

He also warned industry actors that fail to take responsibility to carry out and fund repairs will be targeted by the Department's new Recovery Strategy Unit, which will use new powers under the Building Safety Act to pursue individuals and companies through any means possible, including through the courts.

Leaseholders with concerns about how repairs to their home will be made and funded are advised to speak to their building owner, who is legally required to provide regular updates on the progress of fire safety works.

[Lord Ahmad statement on the Tunisian constitution referendum](#)

Press release

Minister for North Africa Lord (Tariq) Ahmad statement following the Tunisian constitutional referendum on 25 July 2022.



Minister of State for South and Central Asia, North Africa, UN and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad said:

The UK recognises the calls for change during the constitutional referendum in Tunisia. Along with our US and EU partners, we also note the low level of participation and concerns regarding the lack of an inclusive and transparent process.

The inclusion of key stakeholders – including political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions and the media – and genuine public debate will be essential to address the political and economic challenges ahead, and underpin the legitimacy, viability and sustainability of structural reforms in Tunisia.

Ahead of planned legislative elections later this year, we urge the Tunisian authorities to respect the separation of powers, with sufficient checks and balances in place, develop an inclusive and transparent electoral law, and promote full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The UK has always been a constructive and candid partner to Tunisia and the Tunisian people. We will remain so at this crucial moment and in the years ahead.

Published 27 July 2022

The youngest body of the UN system has matured and has greater potential

Thank you, President.

The United Kingdom is grateful for the work of Egypt and Bangladesh in driving the Commission these last 18 months. Sustaining Peace is the shared responsibility of all pillars of the United Nations, but the Commission is the only dedicated global forum for supporting countries with their peacebuilding processes.

Under Egypt's stewardship, the Peacebuilding Commission continued to expand its geographic reach, and increased its engagement with women peacebuilders. Under Bangladesh's leadership, we have an ambitious work plan and a renewed focus on impact.

And I also want to recognise the tireless work of the Peacebuilding Support Office.

President, the United Kingdom sees the potential of the Peacebuilding Commission. Through activist Chairs, including Egypt and Bangladesh, this youngest body of the UN system has matured.

By continuing to deepen its follow-up on the countries with which it engages, and by rallying collective responses to peacebuilding challenges, the PBC will continue to grow in value.

With emerging new threats to peace and security, it is more important than ever that we take a comprehensive approach to addressing global challenges. The PBC has a valuable role in advising the Council and its mandates on practical action to achieve this. I would like to thank Kenya in its role as Council coordinator here.

The world can no longer afford the cost of conflict. We must focus on prevention. Peaceful, just, and inclusive societies are critical to achieving sustainable development and resilience. And we encourage all national and international actors to put Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace at the centre of their policies and approaches.

This means more integrated, inclusive and strategic policy approaches, smarter financing, and casting the net of cooperation and partnership more widely.

The Peacebuilding Commission – through its bridging role and, increasingly, in and of its own right – is a critical part of this equation.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Government publishes review into automation in horticulture](#)

Defra has today (Wednesday 27 July) published the results of a review exploring how the horticulture sector can make use of innovative technologies such as packhouse automation, AI enabled robotics and autonomous guided vehicles to help with tasks like the picking, packing and transporting of fruit, vegetables and flowers.

With labour shortages continuing to affect the farming sector globally, the Environment Secretary George Eustice and Professor Simon Pearson from the University of Lincoln co-chaired the [Review of Automation in Horticulture](#) in support of the wider aim of reducing the sector's reliance on migrant workers.

The Review brought together experts across horticulture, technology and supporting industries to understand what would be required to accelerate the development and uptake of automation technologies, in both the edible and ornamental horticulture sectors. The recommendations include:

- establishing a consortium that brings together government and industry

to drive adoption of proven technologies

- adopting a mission-led approach to fast-track new technologies;
- the horticulture sector setting up working groups to share novel harvest practices and consider how best to make the industry more attractive for workers.
- developing the sector's skills pipelines and consider ways to attract and retain staff
- considering a long-term Seasonal Workers Scheme for edible and ornamental horticulture to help stabilise workforce pressures;

The Government will consider the report's recommendations and publish a response in due course.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice said:

"I would like to thank Simon Pearson for chairing this review and for the technical knowledge he brought to it. There are opportunities for new robotic technologies to reduce costs and labour requirements in horticulture in the years ahead and this review highlights the potential for this."

Professor Simon Pearson, co-chair of the Automation Review said:

"Our successful horticulture industry is facing unprecedented pressure to step change labour productivity. Productivity gain reduces the reliance of the sector on seasonal migrant workers, secures vibrant rural businesses and the flow of high health foods at fair values to consumers. This review was undertaken to understand how we can accelerate the development and adoption of automation and robotic technologies across the fruit, vegetable and ornamental production sectors.

"My role at the Lincoln Institute of Agri-Food Technology at the University of Lincoln is to support and enhance the future of food and agriculture productivity, efficiency, and sustainability through research, education, and technology. Therefore, I was delighted to Co-Chair the Automation Review and hope to see the recommendations taken forward to best support colleagues in the industry."