Breifing for the British Isles and Mediterranean Region Conference: The Commonwealth Games in Scotland

Background

The Commonwealth is an intergovernmental organisation of 54 member states. Most were part of the British Empire (although Rwanda, Cameroon and Mozambique have elected to join in recent years). The members work together towards agreed goals in democracy and development.

The Commonwealth games are a multi-sports event, held between members of the Commonwealth. The games were first held in 1930 in Hamilton, Canada under the name of the British Empire Games. Since then, they have been conducted every four years (except during World War II). In 1978, the name was changed to the Commonwealth Games. Other changes include the introduction of the Commonwealth Youth games (for athletes under 18) in 2000. Athletes with a disability took part in games alongside the main Commonwealth games from 1962 but were first included in national teams, competing in full medal events in 2002. Over its history, the games have grown from 400 athletes from 11 countries participating in 6 sports in 1930 to 4352 athletes from 71 countries participating in 17 sports.

The Games are overseen by the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), which also controls the sporting programme and selects the host cities as laid out in its constitution. The last games took place in October 2010 in Delhi.

The Commonwealth Games in Scotland

Glasgow was selected by Scotland’s Commonwealth Games Association (Commonwealth Games Scotland) in 2005 as a candidate city. At the Commonwealth Games Federation’s General Assembly in November 2007, Glasgow defeated Abuja (Nigeria) by 47 votes to 24 to host the 2012 games. This will be the third time that Scotland has hosted the Commonwealth games (the games took place in Edinburgh in 1970 and again in 1986). Only Australia and Canada have hosted them more often.

The sports included in the Glasgow games will be aquatics, athletics, badminton, boxing, cycling, gymnastics, hockey, judo, lawn bowls, netball, rugby 7s, shooting, squash, table tennis, triathlon, weightlifting and wrestling.

\[1\] Although there are 54 members of the Commonwealth of Nations, 71 teams participate in as the separate UK countries, a number of British overseas territories, Crown dependencies, and island states compete under their own flag.
Most games venues are within Glasgow and 70% are existing venues including Celtic Park, Ibrox and Hampden Park. Outside Glasgow, the Royal Commonwealth Pool in Edinburgh will be used for diving and Barry Buddon MoD Range for shooting.

Organisation and costs

The Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill (see SPICe briefing) was introduced on 9 November 2007. The Glasgow Commonwealth Games Act 2008 received Royal Assent on 10 June 2008. The Act provides powers to ensure the delivery of the Games. This includes protection from ambush marketing and ticket touting as well as transport and compulsory land purchase measures.

There are three partner organisations involved with the games: the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, and Commonwealth Games Scotland. The Scottish Government will contribute 80% to the net public cost of the Games while Glasgow City Council will contribute the other 20%. The partners are committed to delivering the Games to the required standard within the £524 million Games budget.

The Scottish Spending Review 2011 and Draft Budget 2012-13 lays out the Scottish Government’s plans for spending on the games in more detail. The report states that the games will:

“stimulate investment of over £1 billion in infrastructure for Games venues and associated transport networks and support an estimated 1,200 jobs across Scotland. The Games will bring particular benefits to the East End of Glasgow, where the injection of housing development and supporting infrastructure will promote sustainable economic growth.”

Glasgow 2014 (representing the three partner organisations) produces progress reports, the latest of which was published in May 2012. This describes the progress towards finishing work on the various games venues.

A review published by Audit Scotland in March 2012 found that in general, Glasgow was well organised for the games. It found that preparations were generally on track for completion at the planned budget and on time. Key risks identified were the completion of Hampden Park and the Athletes’ village and the risk that security costs may be higher than expected based on the experience of other Games.

Games Legacy

The Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council have stated that they want to bring a longer living legacy to the city of Glasgow and more broadly, the people of Scotland. A games legacy for Scotland was launched in 2009. It aims to deliver a lasting and positive legacy from Glasgow 2014 and other major events, such as the London 2012 and the Ryder Cup in 2014. It is based around the four themes: Active, Connected, Sustainable and Flourishing. Initiatives cover a wider range of areas for example, the
Cultural Plan for London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 aims to promote Scottish culture and creativity on the world stage over this period.

In February 2012, the Scottish Sport Relief Home and Away Programme was announced, starting with a budget of £5 million – £2.5 million raised through Sport Relief, matched by Scottish Government support. The aim of the fund is to use money raised through sporting activities to help some of the most disadvantaged people living in Scotland and across the world’s poorest countries.

In March 2012, the Scottish Government announced a £10 million legacy fund to encourage participation in sport in the wake of the Commonwealth Games. The fund will be administered by SportScotland and awards will be spread over three years, culminating in 2014-15. A youth employment initiative worth £5m has also been announced. Further details are expected later in 2012.

The impact of the games will also be evaluated over time as described by Shona Robison, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport:

“A framework to evaluate the legacy of the Games has been developed and is available on http://gameslegacy.scot/how-are-we-doing. Reporting against this framework will provide evidence of economic impact, including employment, as a result of the 2014 games. The Scottish Government is currently undertaking economic modelling to estimate the total number of jobs supported through building and refurbishment of Commonwealth Games venues. In addition a full economic impact study will report during 2015.”

Katrina Marsden
Senior Researcher
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