

## Joined in and joined up: legacy in action in Notts

**With national agencies and government spinning every bloke on a bike into their Olympic legacy narrative, Simon Starr of Sport Nottinghamshire offers some hard evidence that London 2012 is still working.**

We currently find ourselves in an absolutely crucial time for sport in Great Britain. Having hosted the most successful Olympic Games in history and shortly to follow this with the most successful Paralympic Games ever – and don't even think about arguing against these claims! – we need to ensure that the promises made to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to inspire a generation and to create a legacy for sports participation do not founder at the first hurdle, always assuming that we put the right number of hurdles up.

With the firework debris from the Olympics closing ceremony still being swept away, it is with almost indecent haste that the questions are starting to be asked as to what impact the Games have had. Is there a legacy effect? Has a generation been inspired? Have people stopped growing Wiggo sideburns yet?

County sports partnerships (CSP) and national governing bodies of sport (NGB) are already being pressed to provide evidence of legacy even before it has had a chance to begin. Recent media attention has been intense. Here in Nottinghamshire, we have seen a significant increase in enquiries from the regional and local press, with six interviews on local radio, three showings on local TV and extensive coverage in local papers, including, at the very local level, our local Village News, the font of all knowledge on what is happening down our way. This month's edition is a commemorative copy, wrapped in a red, white and blue design to celebrate the bronze medal won by a young local hero in the men's gymnastic team event. If that and the open-top bus tour being planned does not inspire every child to take up the sport, what will? Not even the Queen's Jubilee got a colour cover in this fiercely patriotic corner of the land.

With so many new role models to call upon, from Mo to Laura, from Nicola to Tom, we really do have the tools to encourage young people in particular to be active, healthy and involved in sport. The media has a vital part to play in helping to promote these medallists and all of our Olympians and Paralympians as shining examples to the country. It is also important that they remain accessible to local clubs and communities. Seeing them on television is great but when they turn up at a school or an event, that is when the impact is palpable.

In Nottinghamshire we have just had the Join In local sport weekend, a concept designed to harness all the excitement from the Games and to get people down to their local sports clubs. There were over 400 clubs and activities signed up to the initiative in our county alone, out of a total of over 6,000 nationally. The 'Join In Battle Bus' toured the country, packed full of sporting legends such as Daley Thompson, David Moorcroft and Sharon Davies to raise the media profile. On Saturday the 18 August they visited the Hellfire Harlots at Southglade Leisure Centre in Nottingham and it worked. The media and public alike turned out in great numbers to welcome them and try an exciting sport. Some 50 potential new participants were identified.

The Harlots were not alone in generating interest in their sport with local intelligence reporting some fairly impressive statistics. Nottingham Rowing Club has reported over 200 enquiries about membership. Gedling Handball Club has reported an increase of 30 new people on club nights. Newark Junior Handball Club report 12 new enquiries. Oaktree Leisure Centre, Mansfield wants to set up a handball session. Nottingham City Council have reported a rise in usage year on year of 140%. And Radcliffe Sword Club have had 30 new enquiries about learning to fence.

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We hope that these clubs and facilities can cope with the demand and therefore sustain this wave of enthusiasm. To help them Sport Nottinghamshire has produced a 2012 Club Resource Pack containing a wealth of information on where to get help and support on all areas of sports club development. The pack, which is downloadable from the website [www.sportnottinghamshire.co.uk/clubs/](http://www.sportnottinghamshire.co.uk/clubs/), was put together at the end of 2011 by the local authorities, NGBs and the CSP in anticipation of the rush of interest from the Games. Early in 2012 two workshops were held, north and south of the county, to alert local sports clubs to the need to be prepared and over 130 people attended. Let's hope that they listened.

In the time leading up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games we have made many new connections to local communities, clubs, coaches and enthusiasts. We will continue this work and have recently launched a new website is designed to enable partners and clubs to promote their activities, events, courses, job opportunities and news. It will also do all the usual CSP functions of providing advice and support on funding, volunteering, safeguarding and coaching. Our aspiration is for the website to be representative of the local community and not just a means for Sport Nottinghamshire to display information.

We are not claiming to have it cracked in Nottinghamshire, far from it, but we do believe that legacy is happening already and that our job, with our partners in NGBs and local authorities, is to provide an environment in which it may flourish and grow. We will never have a better chance of making it happen.

**Simon Starr is the director of Sport Nottinghamshire and during the Paralympic Games can be seen behind "the table" at wheelchair rugby matches.**

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