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Introduction

The Commonwealth Games are a regular event held every four years and are regarded by some as the second-most significant multi-sport competition after the Olympic Games. They are exclusively available to athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations and are also known as the "Friendly Games." (Révauger, 2022)

The second largest city of the United Kingdom and one of the youngest cities in Europe, hosted in July and August 2022 the 22nd Commonwealth Games.

Birmingham was chosen as the games' host city because of its rich cultural diversity and status as a global hub for creativity and innovation that is constantly growing.

Before the event took place, the expectations were that Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022 will represent the best of Global Britain to the world, exhibiting the area's advantages in terms of connectivity and accessibility, youth and inclusivity, and a focus on redevelopment and renewal. (Surplice, 2022)

And that is exactly what happened as Birmingham delivered successful and inclusive Games, getting the nation together to proudly celebrate.

Summary

Birmingham 2022 turned out to be a magnificent sporting exhibition. There were outstanding victories for all the Home Nations, including the awarding of 877 medals, the breaking of 96 Commonwealth Games records, and the setting of 4 world records. There were more parasport events than ever before at a Commonwealth Games, more medal events for women than men for the first time ever at a significant multisport event, and women's T20 cricket as well as wheelchair basketball 3x3 and basketball 3x3 debuted at the Commonwealth Games.

The most medals ever won by England at a Commonwealth Games were awarded to the Birmingham 2022 hosts, Team England, who sent the most inclusive and diverse English sports team to participate there. They received a record 176 medals, including 57 golds.

In Birmingham, the West Midlands, and London, there were 15 locations where events were held.

The Games attracted over 1.5 million ticketed attendees and featured 19 different sports.

In Birmingham, there were nine free festival locations, including neighbourhood festivals that took place over the course of 11 days in 7 various locations. Additional Festival Sites in the West Midlands and London were held in ten other towns or cities.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement of this paper is that the Commonwealth Games are much more than just a sporting event; they are a form of sports diplomacy and have acted as a catalyst for progress in countries around the world.

Nelson Mandela said in 2000 that sport has the potential to impact global change. It has the ability to motivate and to bring people together in a manner that very few other things can. Youth are addressed in a language they can comprehend. Sport may instil optimism where there was once just dejection. It has greater capacity to dissolve racial barriers than governments. It scoffs in the face of all forms of prejudice. Nelson Mandela's words have a special significance in this context.

A successful and inclusive Games that made our entire country proud and helped to bring us together in celebration was made possible in large part by athletes from each of the UK's Home Nations and the Crown Dependencies. Scotland won more medals than at any other Games outside Glasgow 2014, while Northern Ireland saw its most successful Commonwealth Games history. Wales was led by para-athletes, who were responsible for half of the team's gold medals. Guernsey earned its first medal in athletics and first medal at the Commonwealth Games in 28 years, while athletes from Jersey and the Isle of Man excelled and brought honour to their home islands.

Birmingham 2022 was always intended to be more than just two weeks of competition in sports; it was envisioned as the Games for Everyone, with every community having access to the activities, opportunities, and advantages the Games offered.

The Organisers put first the tickets accessibility and created "Games for Everyone", mindset that sold more than 1.5 million tickets and made Birmingham 2022 the most sold Commonwealth Games in the United Kingdom.

For the first time, West Midlands residents had the opportunity to buy tickets specially reserved for their postcodes, and they bought a total of 700,000.

Children and young people in care have been provided with 5000 tickets and 206,000 have been sold to be used by teenagers under 16.

Young people with ages between 16 and 24, category Generation 22, have been provided with 2000 tickets.

Regional Active Partnerships made possible for 5000 children to receive tickets.

The goal of the "Games for Everyone" programme was to make tickets as accessible as possible. As a result, nearly 1 million tickets were made available for \$22 or less, with a median ticket price of no more than £25. Concessionary tickets, which made up a minimum of 10% of the total tickets offered, were available for all sports and both ceremonies starting at £8. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

The aim of the Commonwealth Games is to bring together communities using the tools of engagement and participation. To help achieving the togetherness goal, Birmingham created 34 Community Hubs, 125 Community Roadshows and 18 Community Engagement Forums.

The current strategic plans that were implemented appear to be changing the course of the Games. With the Transformation 2022 (2015–2022) and Transformation 2022 Refresh (2019–2022) plans, which give sport the responsibility of fostering social transformation, a long-term approach has been presented. (Révauger, 2022)

With a clear goal of an inclusive Games, available to everybody who wanted to enjoy it, whether by participating or simply watching, equality, diversity, and inclusion was the golden thread that ran throughout the delivery of the Games.

Birmingham's diversity is one of its wonderful qualities. More than 180 different nationalities call the city home, and many West Midlands citizens were born outside of the Commonwealth of Nations. Its youth reflects that of the Commonwealth as a whole. It is the youngest city in Europe. In order to promote this variety, Birmingham 2022 used the Games to bring people together for a global festival of sport, culture, and commerce.

In order to ensure that all 69 council wards could embrace and mark the Games, increase local level engagement, and celebrate Birmingham's local diverse history and links to the Commonwealth, Birmingham City Council invested £6 million in the Commonwealth Games Community Fund, including £2 million in the "Celebrating Communities" scheme. Street parties, picnics, and neighbourhood celebrations were among the events.

Youth involvement

A generation of young people have been inspired by the "Bring the Power" programme, which was provided by the organising committee. For programme delivery within the city, Birmingham City Council contributed £500,000.

In addition to Birmingham, "Bring the Power" has also started a national campaign, giving schools all over England the chance to be inspired and feel a connection to the Games through a variety of tools like lesson plans, assemblies with Games themes, workshops, and more.

Young people from all across the Commonwealth may now exchange knowledge through sports, the arts, and culture thanks to Commonwealth Connections, a global initiative that the organising committee and the British Council jointly sponsor. As part of this programme, 60 schools in the West Midlands have been paired with schools all over the Commonwealth to foster partnerships and promote learning about common values.

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

Participation in community

The Commonwealth Games, sometimes known as the "friendly Games," unite participants from all around the Commonwealth, regardless of their socioeconomic status, gender identity, or cultural heritage.

There was a substantial community programme that intended to engage and involve communities in the Games in meaningful ways, and it included things like:

In Birmingham and the West Midlands, 34 Community Hubs were delivered, and 125 community roadshows and events engaged 183,000 people.

There were 18 community engagement forums, which brought together stakeholders from all around the West Midlands and promoted opportunities for involvement and participation across the relationship between the organising committee and the games. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

Health and well-being improvements

The Games partners have worked to motivate and empower people to improve and sustain their levels of physical activity and raise their awareness of mental health, with a focus on the least active and underrepresented groups. Building on the strength and momentum of the Games, they have sought to inspire and enable this. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

Sustainability

The goal of the events was to produce the most environmentally friendly Commonwealth Games yet. Birmingham 2022 promised to calculate its carbon footprint and adopt a reduction-first strategy, concentrating on major emission hotspots. One strategy is to incentivize spectators to take public transportation by including it in the price of every ticket. Where emissions could not be totally reduced, initiatives were taken with the intention of eventually offsetting the full carbon footprint of the Games. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

The Midlands will soon be home to a 2,022-acre Legacy Forest, a first for any Commonwealth Games, thanks to a cooperation with Severn Trent Water, the organisation that is supporting the games' efforts to be carbon neutral and environmentally friendly.

Creating jobs

The Games generated 40,000 jobs and training opportunities, which benefited the people of the West Midlands.

The Jobs and Skills Academy committed £5 million to preparing the region's unemployed inhabitants for employment opportunities during the Games. Over 7,500 people received training in the major Games-related professions of security, stewarding, hospitality, logistics, and cleaning through the Jobs and Skills Academy. This was crucial for the Games and is also enhancing the region's skill pool for the workforce.

Furthermore, the West Midlands Combined Authority was successful in gaining a £5.2 million programme called "Find Your Future" that was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and intended to help over 3,500 locals find employment and training both before and after the Games. The European Social Fund contributes toward the cost of the project.

With the support of an additional £812,000 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, the West Midlands Combined Authority will be able to link 1,000 young people with opportunities related to the Commonwealth Games through December 2022.

In order to provide workers with higher-level skills training, the Jobs and Skills Academy also contributed £1 million.

A total of 14,000 qualified volunteers helped with the Games' execution, with 500 of these positions reserved specifically for children and teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17. A million hours of volunteer service were provided, and about 250,000 hours were spent on training. These volunteers, 63% of whom were from the West Midlands, 61% of whom were female, and 21% of whom self-identified as coming from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds, were proud ambassadors for Birmingham, the West Midlands, and the UK.

In addition, more than 750 young people have been enlisted to serve in their community as part of the Gen22 youth social action programme. Youth (aged 16 to 24) who might normally find it difficult to access opportunities associated to the Games can now do so through this programme, which also gives them the chance to obtain skills and work experience. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

Establishing Birmingham's reputation

With a worldwide audience, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games have provided the city, the West Midlands region, and the UK with an unmatched platform to showcase their best assets, raising the profile of the region and our country and shining a light on all the opportunities they have to offer across the Commonwealth.

The impact of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games on the economy, society, and environment is currently being independently assessed, and in the latter half of 2023, a report summarising the legacy effects of the Games will be released. Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: The Highlights. (GOV.UK,2022)

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the Commonwealth Games are an incredibly powerful tool for promoting peace and understanding between countries, as well as a force for driving global development.

Commonwealth Games act as a powerful vehicle for creating solidarity and friendship amongst communities and nations, representing more than just a sporting event.

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