

# Perspectives

## Reaction to the news that London will stage the 2012 Olympics



Visualisation of proposed design for Stratford Station - courtesy of London 2012

### Mike Dodds

On D Day, or « Jour J » as it's referred to in France, I found myself giving a presentation in Toulouse. I finished just in time to dive into a hotel off the main street and find a television on in the bar.

Working in France, I had been spared all the UK media build-up, so I enjoyed seeing the London ad campaign for the first time. The workman pretending to do the pole vault was in stark contrast to the Amélie-style images of Paris in Luc Besson's movie. Would this strike the right chord? 'London', was Rogge's reply. Wow, they did it! The result provoked indifference in the Toulouse bar. They weren't going to grieve for Parisians.

I genuinely had mixed emotions. I was delighted for London. I knew what this could mean for British sport and the regeneration of east London. But I knew that a Paris victory would have boosted moral in the French capital and brought all sorts of work opportunities flying in our direction.

I didn't want to be accused of rubbing salt into any wounds, so I left it a good half hour before ringing my client contact at the Stade de France, where I have been working on a quality service initiative.

'Tout le monde est par terre', was the response. The whole of the Consortium Stade de France had been watching live with an open line to Pascal Simonin, the Directeur general, who was alongside the Mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, and the Sports

Minister, Jean-François Lamour, in Singapore. Each member of staff now had to be picked up off the floor, one by one.

For those working at the Stade de France, they had just seen one of the main raisons d'être for the Stadium disappear. The Stadium had been renamed Stade de France Paris 2012! This was meant to have been Paris's turn: at the third time of asking, they thought they had produced a technically perfect bid, with most of the infrastructure already up and ready. It couldn't be turned down, surely.... But it was, and Paris would not host the Games for a very long time.

While an emotional Mayor of Paris sensed injustice and took the high ground of not having entered into any deal-making, others accused the French political team of naivety, and raised their hats to the leadership and influence of a sportsman, Sebastian Coe. After all, 'lobbying' was an English concept that maybe the French still hadn't grasped.

There would be no artificial boost to Parisian moral and the French economy. The social and economic climate would remain morose, and unpopular reforms might actually have to be implemented.

Oh well, there's always next year's Tour de France, the Rugby World Cup in 1997 and a little soccer tournament in Germany in between.



### Kirk Ireton Church of England Primary School, Derbyshire

When we have been thinking about the Olympics and its legacy, there has been a great deal of emphasis on children and the participation of young people. Indeed, the London bid for the Olympics hinged on inspiring children through sport. However, has anyone actually asked children for their opinion on the Olympics coming to London?

As part of a school exercise, Locum Consulting asked Kirk Ireton Church of England School in Derbyshire to compile and complete a questionnaire about what the Olympics in 2012 meant to them. The children, aged between 5 and 11 years of age, undertook the task enthusiastically and revealed some interesting results.

- The majority of the children were more interested in the Olympics as a result of them being hosted in Great Britain.
- Children and young people do seem to be interested in London 2012, with 70% of the children wanting to visit the Games.
- The children's views were very eco-friendly towards the transport issue of the Olympics, with over half wanting to travel by train and only a quarter by car. (None of them wanted to walk to watch the Games!)
- The majority of the children wished to stay in a hotel.
- When asked how much they were prepared to pay for visiting the Games, 45% said £75 and 40% said £250. Two of the children said they would be prepared to pay £1,000 for a trip to the Games!



#### Kate Gillie, retired social worker, Gloucestershire

I confess I was against our winning the bid at the time because of all the hype. I have a feeling that we are not good at controlling

big projects and getting all the things done on time. I have felt mildly guilty since. I was cheered by the lift it gave many people when we won but my anxiety about our basic efficiency remains! I fear a lot of money will be squandered.



#### Jeremy Gow, antiques restorer, Forfar

I think it is great we are hosting the Olympics; the real question is can we, now as a country, get behind it - make it work and get organised, to show off to the rest

of the world we are not a nation living on past glories? It's unlikely that I will go - just too far away, but one never knows! If it works well as a sporting event the nation will have something to be proud about.



#### Jill and Tony Howling, university lecturer and chartered surveyor, Derbyshire

We both think it is a good thing for the country as a whole. We even signed the

on-line petition as part of the Bid. It should help get sports back on the agenda - particularly school sports. There needs to be a focus on schools and maintaining the momentum post 2012. In reality, we probably will not visit the Games, unless some of the heats are held outside London.



#### Nick Elliman, insurance broker, London

At a time when much of the world has a somewhat negative view of London, and Britain generally, this will be a great opportunity for the city to showcase what it can

achieve. Whilst there will be a very substantial cost to Londoners, the Olympics should regenerate one of the city's most deprived areas. I will most definitely visit the Games - this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. The one negative for me is the traffic congestion that will be created, particularly on my drive in to work! However, a very small price to pay for such a prestigious event.