

UK Mega Events Policy Framework September 2017



Background

Over the last decade, the UK has built a strong reputation as one of the world's leading hosts of international sporting events. For many years, the UK has hosted some of the world's most iconic annual sporting moments, such as Wimbledon, the Open and the London Marathon, but it has now added a global reputation for successfully hosting the world's biggest one-off events.

Since 2010, the UK has staged or secured the following:

- Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Commonwealth Games
- Rugby World Cup
- Rugby League World Cup
- Ryder Cup
- Solheim Cup
- Tour de France
- Giro d'Italia
- World Athletics Championships
- Cricket World Cup
- Euro Football Championships
- European (Sports) Championships

The very biggest sporting events have huge power to drive economic, social and sporting impacts – both locally and globally. These events can improve the way that our communities feel about themselves, whilst at the same time enhancing the way that the rest of the world sees us. They can showcase the UK, and its constituent countries and cities, as an aspirational and welcoming place, which has the capability to deliver complex, high-profile projects to excellent standards.

Through staging these events, the UK has developed some incredible hosting assets, including one of the most densely-concentrated portfolios of international sporting venues in the world, coupled with a level of delivery expertise that regularly exports its services to other countries. It is important that the UK seeks to exploit the reputation and assets that have been developed over the last decade.

Strategic Importance of Hosting Mega Events

In an increasingly competitive bidding landscape, the UK's competitive advantage lies in the quality and innovation of its product, and in the prestige, reputation and popularity of its events. The UK can continue to be a leading host of the world's biggest sporting events into and throughout the 2020s if it drives home this competitive advantage.

A framework which positions the UK as offering a high-quality, high-end product will require strong promotion. The single best way to showcase the UK's hosting capability is to ensure a steady stream of the very biggest events. Mega events engage a global audience and act as the best 'shop window' for what the UK can offer across the whole of its events portfolio. It is in all partners' interests that the UK regularly hosts mega events, to a high standard, and with real impact.

Not only do mega events offer the strongest opportunity to showcase the UK's events capability, but they arguably represent more secure long-term investments. The international event-hosting market is likely to remain volatile for the foreseeable future, with a range of new products and formats being introduced across most sports. Mega events are likely to be best protected in this uncertain market.

Rationale for a UK Mega Events Policy Framework

Whilst the UK is currently enjoying a golden period of hosting mega events, it needs to think about its collective long-term acquisition plans if this momentum is to be maintained into the 2020s. It is easy to become too focused on the immediate delivery of current events, and become distracted from the need to drive long-term hosting ambitions.

There is a clear recognition that the UK landscape is becoming increasingly devolved – at both city and home country levels. In many respects devolution adds strength, diversity and resilience to the UK's event-staging system. However, it also prompts an increasing need for collaboration and structured engagement between domestic partners. These partners within the UK remain inextricably linked through a number of areas including:

- Bidding protocols that often permit only one bid from the UK.
- A shared international hosting reputation.
- A shared domestic market in terms of spectators, event consumers and suppliers.

A UK Mega Events Policy Framework therefore needs to be based on cooperation, reflecting the fact that there are numerous organisations driving their own hosting strategies. This approach also recognises that these super-sized sporting events usually require the sort of financial resourcing that can only come from Governments, whether UK or at a devolved level.

To date, a UK-wide approach to identifying and pursuing mega events has not been as strong as the long-term strategic planning that has characterised the UK's approach to hosting major events. The potential benefits of a joined-up framework are a reduction in the likelihood of bidding and delivery conflict across the UK (which compromises our collective ability to secure and host events), whilst enhancing the potential to collaborate on hosting targets, and optimise the sequencing of mega events across the UK for maximum impact.

Objectives of a UK Mega Events Policy Framework

The UK Mega Events Policy Framework, as outlined in this document, will seek to ensure that the world's biggest sporting events continue to be regularly hosted in the UK; and that they are programmed and resourced through a collaborative approach to maximise opportunity and impact for countries and cities across the UK.

The following specific objectives of the Framework have been identified:

- To identify long-term mega event hosting targets across the UK, and optimise the sequencing and staging of these for maximum impact.
- To reduce the likelihood of bidding and delivery conflict, and enhance collaboration and co-hosting opportunities, within an increasingly devolved UK landscape.
- To assist and encourage Government(s) in their long-term planning for investing into and hosting mega events.
- To advise on the need for, and delivery of, other projects that may enhance the UK's attractiveness as a place to host the very biggest events.

The initial measures of success will be to:

- maintain a rolling 15-year programme of mega event hosting targets across the UK
- ensure that all mega events progressing to bid stage are underpinned by clear and credible business cases

- ensure that all hosted mega events produce clear and publicly-available impact reports.

Partnerships

The UK Mega Events Framework has been drafted and developed in partnership by the major event lead agencies across the UK and, to this effect, isn't intended to be owned or led by any particular individual organisation or group of organisations but by the event-hosting industry as a whole.

The UK has a multi-tiered approach to event-hosting strategy and responsibility. As a result this needs to be a collaborative framework, between organisations that recognise there are mutually-beneficial gains to working together. This Framework recognises and aims to complement the respective Home Country event strategies, as well as the Gold Framework (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport). The partners that will be responsible for overseeing the UK Mega Events Policy Framework are as follows:

- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) (on behalf of England until alternative arrangements can be considered)
- UK Sport
- Tourism Northern Ireland (on behalf of NI Government)
- EventScotland (on behalf of Scottish Government)
- Welsh Government

These organisations already meet on a quarterly basis as the UK Events Coordination Group (UKECG). This Group will act as the lead executive group to steer and oversee the UK Mega Events Policy Framework. It is proposed that there are four main elements to this work:

1. Collaborative Mega Event Programming

The foundation for strategic cooperation across the UK will be the development of processes that encourage collaborative and mutually-beneficial long-term programming decisions. This will be underpinned by a shared visibility of mega event hosting targets, alongside agreed protocols for addressing gaps and/or overlaps in respect of these targets.

Mega Event Definition

To date there has been no common consensus on what constitutes a mega event. The following indicators will be used to guide the identification (and maintenance) of a list of mega events between the partners. These indicators have been considered based on an evaluation of the likely size and scale of the event were it to be hosted in the UK. An event need not necessarily fulfil all criteria in order to be considered a mega event:

- *Event represents the pinnacle of the sport at World or European level*
- *Event is itinerant – i.e. not considered as permanently resident in the UK*
- *Event is likely to have a staging cost in excess of £10m*
- *Event is likely to attract in excess of 100,000 spectators*
- *Event may require partial or full underwriting by the public sector*
- *Event may require government guarantees*
- *Event may entail significant delivery complexity*

The application of these criteria has produced a listing of mega events. This listing will, increasingly, include up-to-date and high-level information about the availability, costs

and benefits of each mega event.

It is proposed that this listing be updated every six months, coordinated by UK Sport and the Home Country Event Agencies, with the input of various organisations. This listing will detail where a partner has an interest in hosting a mega event. Whilst this may be informed by discussions with sporting organisations, the list will principally represent each partner's hosting targets, rather than simply a composite of the sports' hosting targets.

The framework recognises that, based on the criteria outlined above, there are a number of non-itinerant mega events, (e.g. The Open,, Wimbledon) sometimes recognised as the crown jewels of the British major event hosting content which equally require a level of support and protection to ensure they remain within the UK and as leading events within the major event hosting landscape. The framework aims to work collaboratively to ensure these events remain in the UK and staged to the highest possible standard of delivery.

Minimising Conflicting Targets

Where more than one home country has identified the same mega event as a potential future hosting target, this should trigger a protocol that would (in sequence):

1. Consider whether co-hosting is an option between interested parties.
2. Prompt a discussion on whether agreement can be reached for one location to progress unchallenged, perhaps because it has a significantly greater chance of success, or because an agreement can be reached for one location to step aside in exchange for support for a future event.
3. Trigger a venue selection process (for events where only one bid can be submitted from within the UK) overseen by the National Governing Body with the support of UK Sport.
4. Accept that competing bids will progress, but maintain open channels of communication throughout the bidding process.

This approach is highly dependent on all partners agreeing to respect the principles of cooperation and trust. All partners will need to be willing to walk away from a hosting opportunity if it contravenes the collaboration protocols laid out here to allow the system to function effectively.

Optimally Sequencing Mega Events

Collaboration should also be extended into optimising the sequencing of mega events that are being targeted for the UK. It is recognised that the impact of these big events may be diluted if they clash with (or are in close proximity to) other hosted events in the UK. It is preferable to achieve a sustained 'drip-feed' of mega events in the UK market to encourage regular and habitual engagement of the public, and which allows each event to have its 'moment in the sun'. Partners will therefore seek to phase and sequence the timing of mega events, in order to maximise their social, economic and sporting impact.

This will further allow for collaboration and consideration of delivery models, structure and relationships designed to ensure effective use of resources when mega events are delivered in the UK.

Addressing Hosting Gaps

The UKECG will consider which mega events the UK is not scheduled to host but perhaps should be, given their potential benefits to the public. These discussions may lead to the development of hosting or co-hosting proposals, which are in line with UK Sport's new strategy to become more proactive in helping to identify and progress hosting targets.

2. Aligning Resources

Whilst mega events typically bring meaningful revenue-generating opportunities, most will still require significant public sector funding to subsidise capital and/or delivery costs. They may also require underwriting provision from local or national government. There are three main sources of public sector financial support to mega events:

- UK-level. Currently the only UK-level funding stream to support the hosting of mega events sits with UK Sport. UK Sport's four-year budget to support all international events is currently £20m, and so its capability to fund mega events is limited. UK Sport has therefore only been able to consider one mega event per cycle, and at the lower end of the investment scale.
- Home Country level. Most of the financial support for mega events is currently provided by home country governments, on request/recommendation from their lead event agencies/teams.
- City level. Whilst financial investment to support mega events will be expected of cities, this has tended to be a smaller investment than at home country level, and has focused more on the provision of value-in-kind support in respect of facilities, services and staff.

The exact blend of financial support from across these sources will differ based on a range of factors, including the size and scale of the city and the event.

The Mega Events Policy Framework will assist all of these organisations in their planning for future investment, by identifying forthcoming bids for consideration within future spending rounds. The UKECG may seek to use this forward planning to make the case for additional UK Government investment.

3. Governmental Support

There are areas of UK Government policy (reserved matters) that are important in terms of how mega events are staged across the UK. The Gold Framework has done a good job in capturing many of these areas, and explaining what support can be offered. Requirements of other departmental resources will also be considered.

In considering the opportunity for the UK to host mega events in the coming decades, the members of UKECG will work together to advise UK Government and the devolved administrations on those areas where further support would help to make the UK an even more attractive and competitive host of the very biggest events.

4. Cooperation

The UKECG will consider the development of cross-UK approaches to enhance co-operation around event-staging, including, but not exclusive to:

- Systems to share hosting and impact data.
- Co-authored research methodologies.
- Knowledge sharing on international relationships and bidding intelligence.

Associated Documents:

[Scotland The Perfect Stage: Scotland's Events Strategy 2015-2025](#)

[Event Wales: A Major Events Strategy for Wales 2010-2020](#)

[Northern Ireland: Events Strategic Vision to 2020](#)