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## **The 2012 Olympic Ambassadors and sustainable tourism legacy**

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## **The 2012 Olympic Ambassadors and sustainable tourism legacy**

### **Introduction**

This paper examines how the Ambassador programme involved volunteers in enhancing the tourism experience of visitors during, and potentially after, the 2012 Olympic Games. It explores the potential role of volunteers within sustainable tourism provision in order to understand the opportunities and potential limitations to realising a sustainable post-event tourism legacy. Since the publication of Wearing's seminal text 'Volunteer Tourism' in 2000 research on volunteering and tourism has grown substantially, including major review papers (e.g. Wearing & McGehee, 2013) and special issues on the topic (e.g. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 22(6)). However, much of this research has focused on volunteer tourism, that is, individuals travelling to a destination to volunteer. In comparison there has been little attention given to individuals volunteering within tourism contexts in their home destination (Holmes & Smith, 2009) and in particular, how this can be developed as a legacy of mega sports events, such as the Olympic Games.

This paper addresses this imbalance by investigating how local government established and managed volunteer programmes at the host cities of the 2012 Olympic Games as 'Ambassadors' to enhance the visitor experience, and how it attempted to develop a pool of volunteers to promote

further tourism. While the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) was focused solely on delivery of the Games (Nichols & Ralston, 2015) local governments had a long-term interest in promoting the image of their cities and encouraging repeat visits, potentially supported by a legacy of volunteers.

Promoting repeat tourism is an important potential legacy of mega-sports events, creating longer term benefits for both host cities and local residents from the major investment in the event (Dansero & Puttilli, 2010; Taks, Chalip, Green, Kesenne & Scott, 2009). A positive legacy was achieved in Manchester following the 2002 Commonwealth Games, in part by the development of a pool of specialist local event volunteers (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). Other studies of event volunteers have suggested the considerable potential for engendering repeat volunteers in this way (Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). The UK government attaches considerable importance to tourism as the third-largest export earning industry, directly providing approximately 1.6 million jobs in 2016 (DCMS, 2016). The 2012 Olympics were seen “as a once-in-a-generation chance to boost Britain’s tourism industry by attracting 4 million extra visitors to our country and creating 50,000 extra jobs over the next four years” (DCMS, 2011, p. 15), a legacy in which volunteers might be expected to play an important role. In this paper, we investigate how a tourism volunteer programme created as part of the 2012 London Olympic Games was able to promote tourism both during, and potentially after, the Games, to leave a sustainable tourism legacy.

### **Volunteering and tourism**

Research on volunteering and tourism has primarily focused on volunteers as ‘guests’ or volunteers as tourists visiting a destination other than at their normal place of residence (Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Taplin, Dredge & Scherrer, 2014). In contrast, the role of volunteers as ‘hosts’, welcoming tourists to their home town has been largely overlooked (Smith & Holmes, 2009; Olsson, Therkelson

& Mossberg, 2013). However, volunteers can play an integral role in supporting tourism in their home destination. Volunteers meet and greet tourists arriving at a destination at airports and cruise ship terminals (Smith & Holmes, 2009) and operate visitor information centres (Smith & Holmes, 2012) as well as giving guided tours of local attractions (Holmes, Smith, Lockstone-Binney, & Baum, 2010). At visitor attractions, volunteers are active at zoos and aquaria (Holmes & Smith, 2009), museums and heritage attractions (Orr, 2006). Volunteers assist tourists in emergencies, serving as surf life-savers and in mountain or wilderness rescue teams (Nichols, Goel, Nichols & Jones, 2014; Uriely, Schwartz, Cohen & Reichel, 2002). Volunteers are essential for many events and festivals, with smaller events often entirely volunteer run (Davies, 2011) while mega-events recruit enormous volunteer workforces (Lockstone-Binney & Baum, 2009), the largest of which are associated with the Olympic Games (Nichols & Ralston, 2014b; Weed, 2007).

Volunteer tourists who travel to a destination to volunteer are typically involved in projects designed to support sustainable development within that destination, for example: environmental conservation (Cousins, 2007), working with wildlife (Broad & Jenkins, 2008), building new facilities (Zahra & McGehee, 2013) or supporting organic farming (Yamamoto & Engelsted, 2014). In contrast, host volunteering within the volunteer's home destination is focused on promoting and sustaining that destination to improve the tourists' experience and support the tourism infrastructure.

Volunteers may provide services that the government or private operators are either unable or unwilling to provide. In England, recent cuts in public sector budgets means volunteers are delivering visitor services at museums, libraries and leisure facilities as an alternative to closure (Nichols, Forbes, Findlay-King & MacFadyen, 2015). Similarly, in Western Australia volunteers were deployed in visitor centres because the workload exceeded the capacity of paid staff (Smith & Holmes, 2012). However, research also shows that volunteers offer a service to tourists which is different in quality from that provided by paid staff (Jago & Deery, 2002). At Western Australian visitor centres, volunteers fostered a sense of community ownership of the visitor centres. The volunteers enhanced

the visitor experience because they enabled visitors to interact with local people and they contributed passion and enthusiasm as “ambassadors for their town” (Smith & Holmes, 2012, p. 566).

In spite of the extensive role that volunteers play in the tourism sector within their home destination few studies have examined this role. Rather the focus of research has been on the motivation of volunteers (Smith, Baum, Holmes & Lockstone-Binney, 2014). This has not examined the value of the volunteers’ contribution to the visitor experience, value to the destination, or the sustainability of this contribution. Thus the potential of local resident volunteers to provide a service to tourists visiting their home destination has been recognised but is under-researched. A paradox is that while volunteers may augment the tourists’ experience, and may allow a service to continue in the face of public funding cuts, those cuts may themselves limit the capacity to manage volunteers.

#### *Volunteers at mega-events*

The Olympic Games is the largest recurring global sports event deploying volunteers. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games deployed 70,000 volunteers, termed ‘Games Makers’ (House of Lords, 2013), although this total double-counts some people who volunteered at both the Olympics and Paralympics. Similar to other studies of tourism volunteering, research on mega-event volunteers is focused on the motivation of mega-event volunteers (e.g. Dickson, Benson & Terweil, 2014; Downward & Ralston, 2005). Volunteering at the Olympic Games is generally a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experience for the volunteers, so their motivations and expectations are extremely high, as noted at the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Green & Chalip, 2004), the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Downward & Ralston, 2005), and the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games (Dickson, Benson & Terweil, 2014).

Research into motivations of volunteers at the London 2012 Games suggested the distinctive contribution these volunteers might make to the tourism experience. A survey of volunteers' motivations (Dickson, Benson & Terweil, 2014) used a principal component analysis of 11,451 responses to produce 8 components. The component with the highest mean score was labelled 'It's all about the Games'. Of the four motivation questions included in this component, three emphasised the distinctiveness of the Games. An independent factor analysis of the same data set (Alexander, Kim, & Kim, 2015) identified a motivational function which also contained these same three components. However, a second motivational cluster, identified by both Dickson et al's (2014) and Alexander et al's (2015) analysis, included motivational statements about 'giving something back' to London and the United Kingdom, and being proud of London and the United Kingdom. In the Dickson et al (2014) analysis this was the second strongest cluster of motivations, measured by the mean score of responses.

The collective sense of euphoria and camaraderie amongst volunteers at this scale of event can lead to a sense of emptiness once it is over. These emotions were reported at the Sydney Olympic Games (Cashman, 2006; Fairley et al., 2007) and the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games (Lumsdon, Ralston, & Downward, 2003; Ralston, Lumsdon & Downward, 2005). The number of volunteers and the strength of their emotional involvement suggest the potential for developing a legacy of continued volunteering is considerable. The Sydney Olympics did not have a formal mechanism for channelling this emotional energy into further volunteering, although it was apparent in those who subsequently volunteered for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Shipway & Smith, 2016; Fairley et al., 2007). To date the only successful mega-event volunteer legacy followed the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games, where a formal organization, Manchester Event Volunteers, facilitated a broker service between event managers and event volunteers (Nichols & Ralston, 2012).

### *Mega-event volunteering legacies*

The cost involved in hosting mega events has stimulated an emphasis on legacies or leveraging broader social outcomes (Chalip, 2006). Initially, mega-event organisers focused on hard legacies such as new venues and infrastructure (Preuss, 2007). However, recently attention has been given to intangible elements legacies, including feelings of pride among residents of the host city and community benefits such as an increase in post-event volunteering (Minnaert, 2012). The International Olympic Committee considers possible legacies of hosting the Olympic Games to include long term sporting, social, environmental, urban and economic benefits (IOC, 2013). There remain limited academic studies of these softer legacies, particularly those involving volunteering (Doherty, 2009; Nichols & Ralston, 2015).

One critical observation of legacies from the 2012 Olympics was that a genuine legacy must be shown to be the consequence of a strategy to achieve it (Weed, 2014). While a volunteer legacy was prominently claimed to be an aim of the London 2012 Olympics (DCMS, 2012, p. 51) prior to the 2012 Games a volunteering legacy strategy was not in place. A detailed potential strategy, drawing on the 2002 Commonwealth Games experience, was presented to LOCOG in 2006, but not adopted (Nichols, 2012), because LOCOG's remit was just to deliver the event, not a legacy (Girginov, 2012; Nichols & Ralston, 2014a).

Nevertheless, an unplanned legacy might have lessons for future events (Preuss, 2007; Dickson, Benson, & Blackman, 2011) as illustrated by the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester where the establishment of an event / volunteer broker organization was unanticipated and opportunistic. This established a pool of experienced event volunteers who could be deployed at further events in Manchester over the following ten years (Nichols & Ralston, 2012) which helped attract new events to Manchester; contributing to Manchester being 'crowned' the World's Best Sports City 2008 (UK



Sport, 2008). Although local government in Manchester had general aspirations for 'event themed' regeneration (Smith & Fox, 2007), it had not planned this legacy, which was referenced in the un-adopted volunteer legacy strategy for the 2012 Games and in plans for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games (Scottish Government, 2012).

Critical factors in establishing the volunteering legacy following the 2002 Commonwealth Games were that Manchester City Council staff were in place both before and after the event to develop a legacy; there was a separate budget for legacy programmes; a data-base of all volunteers was available immediately after the Games to contact volunteers; and additional funding was generated through favourably received bids following the post-Games euphoria (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). In contrast, at the Olympic Games, 'when the circus leaves town, the organising committee shuts up shop, the budget for staging the games has been used up, and all too often ... no public bodies are prepared to shoulder the responsibilities, and ... the costs, of ensuring that legacy promises can be fulfilled' (Horne & Whannel, 2016, p. 38).

Publicly stated legacy aspirations for the 2012 Games were magnified because the 2005 Olympic bidding round was the first that included legacy aspirations as a formal criterion for selecting host cities and there was domestic political pressure to justify Games expenditure both before and after the event. Political pressure led to a 'legacy inflation' in government documents (Horne & Whannel, 2016, p. 40) as claiming a 'legacy' became a political project. An analysis of references to sports participation legacies in government documents prior to the Games showed consistently high legacy aspirations, although "few, if any, organizations were willing to take accountability for any specific legacy outcomes" (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012, p. 361). An inflated legacy discourse; termed 'legacyspeak' (Cohen, 2013); has been noted in previous Olympic Games (MacAloon, 2008).

### **The 2012 Olympic Ambassador Programmes**

The official volunteer programme for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; termed 'Games Makers'; provided support roles at the event venues. However, several other volunteer programmes were established during the Games, in London and at the ten other regional locations that hosted Olympic events (Harris, 2012). The largest was the Team London Ambassadors. These 8000 volunteers were located at airports, railway station concourses and other tourist centres to support visitors to London. The other regional locations hosted football, water sports, cycling and mountain biking events. Both in London and at the regional venues the role of Ambassadors was not in the Olympic venues but in the surrounding areas. Their high profile, ensured by their distinctive purple uniform (similar but distinct from the Games Makers), made their identity clear and indicated they could offer advice to visitors finding their way around the city. Their roles varied in the different cities, depending on the Olympic events. For example, in Cardiff there were 11 football games over eight days but Ambassadors were also deployed to support pre-games training camps in this area. Table 1 shows the number of Ambassadors in each host location.

*Insert table 1 about here*

Thus, the largest number of Olympic Ambassadors was in London but numbers in the other ten regional locations were also significant. The London Ambassador Programme was instigated by the Mayor of London following his visit to the Beijing Games where he experienced a similar programme of host volunteers (Greater London Authority, n.d.; Harris, 2012). He commissioned Deloitte to produce a scoping plan in 2009, which Deloitte developed into more general advice (Pellegrino, & Hancock, 2010), leading to the recommendation for a Host City Volunteer Programme, which was envisaged to work closely with LOCOG. The first programme was established in 2010. That provided a role model for the other ten programmes that were established during 2011 by local government, although the London Programme was better resourced than the others. The London Ambassador

Programme is still operating as it was established by an ongoing organization – the Mayor of London’s office.

Co-ordination of all the Ambassador programmes was provided by quarterly meetings hosted by the Government Olympic Executive (GOE) (Wanogho, 2012). The GOE was a section of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport with responsibility for ensuring the Olympic Games would be “delivered on time, within budget”, represent “value for money” and benefit “the whole of the UK” (Girginov, 2012, p. 3). The GOE provided general guidance on managing local programmes, ensured consistent training material and branded uniforms. It set out a broad timetable for local authorities to follow including a ‘legacy’, which would be “ongoing from September 2012” (Wanogho, 2012, p. 2). Thus the GOE had an advisory and co-ordination role and did not impose a Central Government strategic plan.

The Ambassador programmes offered an opportunity for using a mega event to develop a longer term volunteer legacy to support tourism within the host destination because studies of Olympic volunteers suggested that the Ambassadors would feel a strong motivation to volunteer at this unique event, but possibly a greater sense of pride in their home city as — unlike the Games Makers who were recruited nationally — all Ambassadors were residents of the cities in which they were volunteering. While the enthusiasm of volunteers is an important contribution to the event experience for visitors and competitors, it was likely that Ambassadors could offer something distinctive because they were all local people.

Therefore, this study had two questions:

1. How were the Ambassador programmes able to enhance the tourist experience during the Games?

2. How was local government able to sustain a legacy of volunteers to support tourism after the London 2012 Olympic Games?

The Ambassador programmes were unique to the 2012 Olympic Games and their host locations. Each programme developed independently, reflecting the individual circumstances of the city or region. As little previous research had considered the role of volunteers at mega-sports events in promoting tourism and the population of Ambassador programme managers was restricted, an exploratory inductive approach was adopted. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used (Bryman, 2004; King & Horrocks, 2010). Interviews were conducted with each of the eleven Ambassador programme managers. Ten of these were conducted in the year following the 2012 Olympic Games and one (Manchester) was conducted shortly before the Games.

All Ambassador programme managers were approached directly to participate in the study (Bryman, 2004). In some cases this was difficult as they had been relocated to other work or reduced staffing levels meant they were under increasing time pressure at work. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face to gain the benefit of personal interaction and to allow the researchers to visit some of the Olympic facilities. Where that was not possible telephone interviews were conducted for three locations (Surrey, Eton Dorney and Weymouth). Complete transcripts were sent back to interviewees so they could edit details they would not want to be publicly attributed and correct any inaccuracies. The research was conducted under the ethics procedures of the researchers' universities.

While the interviews were semi-structured, interviews were guided by the following themes:

1. The aims of the local authority in running the programme
2. Descriptions of the Ambassadors' role and numbers
3. Procedures for recruitment and training

4. The relationship with LOCOG
5. Volunteering legacy aspirations and actions to achieve the legacy
6. Funding of the programme
7. Links to other Olympic related programmes
8. Problems in delivering the programme, and learning points.

Consistent with an inductive approach, considerable scope was offered for Ambassador programme managers to develop the themes in relation to their own experience (Bryman, 2004). These included the use of the Ambassadors to promote tourism and the legacy aspirations and constraints that participants experienced. Interviews ranged in duration between 60-100 minutes and were held at the time and location convenient to the interviewees (King & Horrocks, 2010). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The research team analysed the data thematically, using the approaches typically adopted in qualitative research: reading and re-reading the transcripts and identifying themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two researchers initially identified a set of codes to categorise the interview material. Codes were either derived from the literature or emerged iteratively from the interviews. Two researchers independently coded four transcripts. These were then compared and the codes refined. Both researchers then independently coded a further two transcripts to ensure consistency. The NVivo 11 package was used for this process.

The volunteer Ambassadors themselves were not interviewed. This was not central to the research objectives, which focused on the aims and organization of the programme and not all programmes had the capacity to arrange focus groups. A questionnaire survey of Ambassadors' motives might have offered a comparison with motives of the 2012 Games Makers. However, in making a comparison, the timing of the survey in relation to the event is important (the 2012 survey of Games Makers was distributed 2 days after the Paralympics, so a 'rosy glow' effect would have been at its greatest); the programme managers would not have had the capacity to assist in this survey

distribution; and the Olympic survey questions were not publicly available at the time (they have subsequently been made available in a PhD thesis, Alexander 2013). Extensive efforts were made to contact the GOE manager, but she had been redeployed to a different government department soon after the Games and it was impossible to trace her through this or personal contacts. In respect to the aims of our research, this complete discontinuity of a central government officer with responsibility for a programme legacy in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) suggests a low commitment to a Games legacy.

## **Findings**

The findings are organised according to the two research questions. Sub-headings are used to present the key themes that were identified through the data analysis.

### ***How were the Ambassador programmes able to enhance the tourist experience during the Games?***

#### *Local government aspired both to enhance the tourist experience and develop volunteering capacity*

The analysis of interview transcripts revealed that the Ambassador programmes were designed to contribute to tourism and to boost volunteering within the destination. The programmes were planned to contribute to the visitor experience at the Games through providing information and an enthusiastic welcome to Ambassadors' home towns. The programmes had a general aspiration that repeat visitation could be encouraged. In Essex (a county level of local government whose area included the venue for the mountain biking event) a specialist Olympic legacy officer had been employed since January 2008 with a remit to use the Olympics to generate legacies of economic and sports development. Developing volunteers was central to this strategy:

*We felt passionate about creating a legacy infrastructure of some kind post 2012. So it wasn't just about the venue, it was about everything to do with 2012 and how we could utilise our volunteers. We saw that the Olympics could be that catalyst to create and embed a stronger infrastructure so that we could look at a legacy beyond 2012. So it really acted as a catalyst. (Essex)*

Similarly, in London, where the first programme was established, there were officers in post two and a half years before the games:

*Legacy was always key for us. We planned the legacy right from the very beginning. All the way through we didn't see the point of getting to the end of September 2012 waking up and going 'Hi what are you doing with them.' So for example this summer (2013) we had 750 Ambassadors out at 11 locations across London who were volunteering again, providing a visitor welcome service. (London)*

And Coventry, where the manager claimed:

*[We] always had legacy in our thoughts and plans from the very beginning about what would happen next. We didn't want it to be a start and finish project that ... as soon as the flame went out the project died. (Coventry)*

London and Glasgow were particular cases because of London's status as a world tourist destination and Glasgow's impending hosting of the 2014 Commonwealth Games. A priority of the Mayor of London was: "to ensure a world class welcome to London to visitors, residents and commuters during the period of the Games" and "Delivering a legacy for London of improved and integrated services and welcome to London" (Greater London Authority, undated, p. 3).

Glasgow anticipated further tourists associated with the 2014 Commonwealth Games:

Glasgow Sport also saw it as an opportunity to develop a skilled volunteer workforce that had hands-on events experience particularly as we are leading up to 2014 with the Commonwealth Games. (Glasgow)

Thus aspirations of inspiring repeat visits and developing volunteer support were apparent. But, as discussed below, five programmes that explicitly mentioned these aspirations were restricted by local government's need to adapt to significant budget cuts.

#### *Local volunteers made a distinctive contribution*

The programmes typically applied selection criteria of working, living, volunteering or being a student in the local area. A major function was to give visitors basic advice on how to get to venues and around the cities. So, because there was time for only one or two formal training sessions, it was important that Ambassadors had local knowledge – an attribute mentioned by 7 programmes: “All the people that were picked...physically lived in the area....” (Surrey)

The programmes were promoted as an opportunity for volunteers to express pride in their own city:

There was a lot of that coming through, saying it's a great opportunity to sell the city and tell people about the pride of Glasgow. [Our criteria were] just enthusiasm and knowledge about Glasgow. We set our criteria as either living, working, studying or volunteering in Glasgow so they had a connection with the city. (Glasgow)



There was also an aspiration to develop local people through the experience of volunteering: “We want to ... give local individuals an opportunity to build some skills, to experience something new and to get involved” (Newcastle).

Thus the programmes were promoted as an opportunity to express civic pride. Five programmes reported specifically that local pride was an attribute Ambassadors brought with them. Nine of the programmes explicitly stated that the role of the Ambassadors was to provide a positive atmosphere for visitors, for example:

Very much the aim was to provide a happy welcome face of the city to visitors that were coming in and to offer help around what's on, where to go, things to do, but also directions to the ground ... That was the idea of the Ambassadors, to support the visitors that came in. (Newcastle)

The interviewees reported that this had been achieved:

I think visitors really appreciated it. It was fantastic, they were lovely, it was really great to have people around to help them and give them information. It was like a walking tourist information centre. They were really smiling and welcoming and visitors said it was really, really good. (Weymouth and Portland)

However, unlike the involvement of volunteers in the Australian visitor centres, none of the UK programmes regarded the Ambassadors as providing a service that paid staff were unavailable to do.

In all cases the volunteers were seen as an additional service to tourists which was not essential to the running of the Games:

We wanted to make it clear that if there wasn't an ambassador on the street the Games would still run but the visitor experience would be nowhere near as good. (Newcastle)

***How was local government able to sustain a legacy of volunteers to support tourism after the Games?***

*An approach to management was adopted to enhance the experience of the volunteers and to encourage repeat volunteering*

The excess of supply over demand and the strong motivation for the 'once-in-a-lifetime experience' allowed LOCOG to treat the Games Maker volunteers in an unconventional way — for example, by giving them minimal choice over roles, not paying travel expenses for interview or training, charging for refreshments at training events, communicating impersonally, allowing no flexibility over shifts, and requiring volunteers to make four trips to London for training and picking up uniforms (Nichols & Ralston, 2014b). In contrast, the local Ambassador Programmes adopted a more 'membership management' approach (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001), which took account of volunteers' needs.

Ambassadors could choose their shift times, which were normally six hours long, starting at 9.00am, with a half hour meal break. Games Makers' shifts were much longer and could start at 5.30am or finish at 1.30am. Ambassadors were also offered choices over their deployment, given that there were few options. The process of application, recruitment and training of Ambassadors was much shorter than the 18 months for Games Makers.

One interviewee reported explicitly that the more volunteer-focused management style was intended to ensure a good experience for the public:

*I had the visitor management and visitor information side of it ... from the outset they were teaching me how you look after your volunteers and that if you treat them the best you'll get the best out of them. (Eton Dorney)*

Two reported that they wanted to treat volunteers well to encourage repeat volunteering, in one case explicitly with the 2014 Commonwealth Games in mind:

We always emphasised the 'thank you' and telling them we realise you're giving your time ... *and that's really appreciated. ... Which is why with the survey that we did at the end ... all of them ... wanted to continue to volunteer, which is fantastic. (Coventry)*

We didn't want people to stop volunteering. The 2014 team from the *Commonwealth Games ... their application process [was] starting within six weeks so it was a really good opportunity to let people know. (Glasgow)*

Six programmes specifically mentioned they felt volunteers should be treated with respect, for example:

Obviously ... if you don't treat these people the right way they're not going to turn up. But from the personal aspect .... I wanted people to have a good experience. If I'm responsible for that I have a moral obligation for that.  
(Newcastle)

### *Constraints for creating a sustainable legacy*

The role of the GOE in co-ordinating programmes and facilitating sharing of experiences was noted above. Its post-Games report stated that a 'legacy' would be "Ongoing from September 2012" (Wanogho, 2012, p. 2), however, this was 'legacyspeak' (Cohen, 2013). The GOE made "no central Olympic funding available to create the volunteer schemes in venue cities" (Wanogho, 2012, p. 5), and no Ambassador programmes reported having received direct advice on generating a legacy. Neither was such advice provided by LOCOG. As noted above, the GOE lead officer was quickly redeployed to unrelated duties; a personal contact of hers reported in 2013 that she had "gone back to work in agriculture and the environment." The officer had produced a valuable post-Games report on the Ambassador programmes in October 2012 (Wanogho, 2012), but this was not available on a central government web site, only via Glasgow Life, a policy making section of Glasgow City Council who referred to it in planning for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. This report concluded with a section entitled 'legacy / next steps', stating that:

*All schemes are now looking at strategies for future volunteering. .... In the next few months schemes will be working with their local authority leaders to decide the future of their volunteer schemes. It is unlikely that local authorities will be able to provide funding, and a common theme amongst schemes is for commercial organisations putting on events to fund volunteering. The government cannot continue to provide the level of support to local authorities as during the lead up to the Games. However, the Office for Civil Society within the Cabinet Office will lead work to maintain government oversight of Games legacy including volunteering. (Wanogho, 2012, p.9)*

However, other than Coventry, where the City Council had provided a grant to enable the Ambassador programme to continue until 2015 as a social enterprise, none of our interviewees reported receiving either funding from commercial organizations or support from central government to develop a volunteering legacy from the Ambassador programme. Although legacy was discussed at the Ambassador managers' coordination meetings, it was informal and ad hoc:

*Yes we did talk legacy. I don't remember that there was much advice coming from them [LOCOG and GOE] but around the table we were all sharing our experiences and what our future plans were and we exchanged contact details ... (Eton Dorney)*

Although Central government did provide funds for other post-games volunteering initiatives —for example, the Big Lottery Fund gave £1.5m to develop the Join In programme and £40m to the Spirit of 2012 Trust (2014), which also promotes volunteering — none of this funding was available to the Ambassador managers. This indicates a lack of strategic planning for volunteer legacies as there were funds for new initiatives but none for continuing programmes, which had already demonstrated value.

The only resources provided by the GOE were the basic uniforms of Ambassadors, but through its policy of 'brand protection' of the rights of the official Olympic sponsors (James & Osborn, 2012), it prevented local government generating income from local sponsorship deals with caterers or clothing manufacturers. For example, Newcastle had been offered sponsorship in kind by a local bakery, to provide sandwiches and snacks, but were told by the GOE that "you'll have to get [the bakery] ... to put them in plain bags" (Newcastle).

Thus local government was left to develop any volunteering legacy by itself, with no practical support from central government. This reflected the lack of a volunteer legacy strategy for the Games as a whole (Nichols & Ralston, 2015).

### *Local government legacy planning*

The most common way in which local government could manage a volunteering legacy was to maintain a database of the Ambassadors and offer them further opportunities, in a similar manner to the legacy organization after the 2002 Commonwealth Games. This depended on having staff in position with responsibility for this task before and after the Games. There were a number of different scenarios, each reflecting the resources available.

In Essex a specific officer — and in London a group of officers — had been appointed before the Games to develop a volunteering programme; these were also in post after the Games with responsibility for a volunteering legacy. In London the officers managing the programme were employed specifically for this role in January 2010. London was the most extensive and successful programme. A web-based brokerage service called Team London was established in October 2012 and re-launched in April 2013. About 8,000 volunteers registered with it, representing 7,000 who had been Ambassadors in 2012 and 1,000 who had been Games Makers. This number grew to 14,500 by September 2013 when 500 volunteering opportunities were being promoted. This was by far the most extensive volunteering legacy programme, reflecting the London programme's resources, the number of Ambassadors, and the large number of events in London.

More specifically, to promote tourism, London ran a visitor welcome programme from 27th July to 9th September 2013 at 11 key tourist locations involving 750 volunteers. This replicated the model from the 2012 Games, using portable stands at which volunteers distributed maps and gave out

information that answered questions such as: “what time is the Changing of the Guards; what time does the British Museum open and close; what to do today”. According to the London interviewee, “It was hugely successful, volunteers loved it, and Londoners loved it.” This filled a significant gap in the service to visitors in one of the world’s leading tourist destinations:

*The only official tourist centre [in London] closed down in June 2012 because the lease closed and because of ... budget cuts. The main two centres of information that we have left now are opposite St Paul’s Cathedral ... run by ... the Corporation of London.*

(London)

Similarly, but on a much smaller scale, Essex developed a database of volunteers, recruiting 270 from the 300 Ambassadors in 2012, and used a web site to link them with local events.

In other cases, responsibility for the Ambassador programme was added to the role of an existing local government officer because of the synergy with present work and because the officer would be in place following the Games, providing a continuity of relationship between the officer and volunteers. For example, in Glasgow the three officers responsible for the Ambassador programme had this added to their roles as sports development officers. These officers already managed a small database of volunteers who had volunteered in previous sports events in the city. The Ambassador programme was seen as an opportunity to expand this service:

*We’ve got a huge family of organisations ... We have sport, museums, libraries, music and art. The Ambassador programme simply lent itself to a variety of volunteers with a different make up that didn't have to be sports specific. What we were looking for was a passion for Glasgow. That includes a lot of people [for whom] sport wasn't necessarily their first priority. (Glasgow)*

Another location where local tourism was important was Eton Dorney, where the Ambassador Programme supported the rowing events on the river Thames. Responsibility for continuing the post-event programme was added to those of the Windsor volunteer centre manager. The Royal Borough of Windsor has 7.3 million visitors a year, mainly visiting Windsor Castle, a royal residence. The manager had a database of the Ambassadors from 2012 and used this to recruit volunteers for further sporting events and formal events at the castle and throughout the Royal Borough. For example, some had become volunteers at Ascot races and Lord's Cricket; others were Ceremonial Wardens for the guard change ceremonies at Windsor Castle and some had "become Street Angels. This is where they go out with the community support teams at night looking after people who may be in trouble through drink or whatever" (Eton Dorney). However, it had not been possible to establish a formal programme because:

*My workload has just gone through the roof this year so it's difficult because I don't have strong backing from any other part of the authority at the moment because local authority pressures on budgets and delivering services is so acute. (Eton Dorney)*

In Weymouth and Portland the Ambassador manager had aspired to develop a Dorset Event Volunteers programme similar to Manchester Event Volunteers, but had been unable to gain funding to do so. She had unsuccessfully bid to the National Lottery:

*We have got a paper with 10 key areas for a legacy of which volunteering is one of them ... it's written down in black and white but what's going to happen with that without any support is pointless. (Weymouth and Portland)*



In other cases the officer managing the Ambassador programme was redeployed to another role after the Games and was unable to continue work with volunteers or manage a data base. An example was Newcastle, where the officer responsible for the Ambassador programme had been seconded from volunteer support services, so had expertise and experience in volunteer management, but after the games was redeployed as a night-time noise abatement officer – a completely unrelated role. Another similar example was Surrey (cycling), where the Ambassador team was disbanded in August 2012 and the manager redeployed to an unrelated shared service centre within the local authority. Nevertheless, the Ride London organization continued to deploy Ambassadors for their cycling events. In Eton Dorney the intention to develop Ambassadors to continue to support the 7.3 million tourists a year was abandoned following a 74% departmental budget cut immediately after the Olympics.

While a continued role for Ambassador managers may have been directly constrained by local government expenditure cuts, this also applied to organizations local government might have wished to partner with. For example, some programmes recruited through local volunteer centres could have offered a viable organization for managing a data base of Ambassadors and linking them to volunteering opportunities: as is the case in Essex. However, local volunteer centres also experienced cuts in funding from central government — almost a quarter received income from central government sources in 2010/11, compared to 7% in 2011/12; and 63% experienced a reduction in income in the year to 2013 (Weakley, 2013).

A theme reoccurring throughout the interviews was how the management of the programmes had been influenced by considerable cuts to local government expenditure imposed by central government from October 2011. Cuts to public expenditure aimed to contribute 77% of a plan to reduce the national deficit over four years, and the largest share of this came from local government budgets which were cut by an average of £130.06 per person over the period 2010–2015 (SPERI,

2014). This financial constraint affected all aspects of management of the Ambassador programmes and their ability to deliver a legacy.

## **Discussion**

The Ambassador programmes were designed to enhance the tourist experience with an intention of promoting the destination and possible repeat visitation. They made a distinctive contribution during the 2012 Olympic Games because of Ambassadors' enthusiasm for their host city, local knowledge and enabling visitors to interact with local people. These findings are similar to the few previous studies of host volunteers (Jago & Deery, 2002; Smith & Holmes, 2012). The volunteers' enthusiasm derived from pride in their home city was similar to that of volunteers at the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Ralston et al., 2005) and in Australian visitor centres (Smith & Holmes, 2012). However, unlike the study of volunteers in Australian visitor centres, the Ambassadors offered an addition to the tourist experience as they were not replacing paid employees. These findings contribute to understanding the distinctive contribution made by volunteers as hosts in their home destination, rather than as volunteer tourists or guests in another destination (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

The Ambassador programme adopted a more 'membership management approach' (Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001) than the Games Maker programme (Nichols & Ralston 2012; Nichols & Ralston, 2014b), involving a different balance between meeting the volunteers' needs and those of the organization. This approach is more appropriate to building a longer term relationship with the individual volunteer beyond the event (Auld, et al., 2009) and promoting further volunteering. This potential for post-event volunteering was also a means to counteract the sense of emptiness often experienced after a mega-event (Fairley et al, 2007; Lumsdon, Ralston & Downward, 2005).

There were a number of key success factors for the Ambassador programme. The allocation of responsibility for the programme to existing staff ensured some continuity with tourism planning within the host destination from before the event. Making use of the volunteer Ambassador database for recruiting volunteers for subsequent events and activities replicated the Manchester Event Volunteers programme (Nichols & Ralston, 2012): an ongoing issue with volunteer legacy planning for official Olympic volunteer programme legacies has been a failure to re-use the volunteer database from the event (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2016). The largest of the programmes, the London Ambassador programme, was particularly successful in organising ongoing staffing and funding to ensure a continued service to visitors as well as a legacy. The Team London brokerage service replicated the Manchester Event Volunteers model and led to subsequent tourism volunteering as part of London's visitor welcome programme. Indeed, London was awarded the European City of Volunteering largely on the basis of the London Ambassadors programme (Lockstone-Binney et al., 2016).

However, the delivery of a sustainable tourism legacy was substantially constrained by: little advice on how to establish such a legacy; responsible staff being redeployed in other areas, thus losing their knowledge and experience; and the lack of ongoing funding, which was exacerbated by local government expenditure cuts. The over-riding factor was imposed cuts in local government expenditure making it difficult to leverage the event for wider and longer-term volunteering benefits (Chalip, 2006; Dickson et al., 2011).

The findings support the view that a genuine legacy strategy for the 2012 London Olympic Games was missing (Weed, 2014). Broad legacy aspirations on behalf of central Government (DCMS, 2012), were neither explicitly articulated, nor actioned with respect to the Ambassador programmes and could be characterised as 'legacyspeak' (Cohen, 2013), probably more so than in previous Olympic Games (MacAloon, 2008). It was also not clear who had responsibility for legacy planning and

delivery. It was not LOCOG (2014) and there was no other organisation with a national remit (Nichols & Ralston, 2014), so it was left up to individual councils to act as they could within resource constraints. This contrasts with action taken by Manchester City Council following the 2002 Commonwealth Games, where a budget, dedicated staff and continuity of staff were all put in place to establish Manchester Event Volunteers (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). GEO's vague suggestions that commercial organisations would provide funding were not followed through.

## **Conclusion**

This paper contributes to the literature on the involvement of volunteers in tourism provision and mega-event volunteer legacy planning and delivery. Within the tourism volunteering literature the role of volunteers as hosts in their home destination has received limited attention. The findings show how valuable volunteers can be in welcoming tourists to their home town and enabling tourists to interact positively with local people. The key conclusion from this study is that the Ambassador volunteer programmes made a distinctive contribution to the tourist experience at the 2012 Olympic Games host cities and venues; suggesting that the enthusiasm, local knowledge and pride of local volunteers is a valuable resource to be nurtured; in the same way as volunteering has been regarded as a collective natural resource (Brudney & Meijs, 2009). The 2012 London Olympic Games were a catalyst for developing this; which was not a replacement for paid staff, but an enhancement.

The paper has also noted the lack of a London 2012 volunteering legacy strategy; however, it has also indicated a lack of a strategy to develop long-term tourism as part of the same event. A link between a volunteering and tourism strategy, if either had existed, would have recognised the potential role of the volunteer Ambassadors.

A strength of this research was the qualitative approach in exploring the unique circumstances of the 2012 Olympic Games and the Ambassador programmes. The small number of programmes enabled all 11 managers to be interviewed. A limitation was the inability to interview the GEO manager; whose unavailability was itself a significant finding. Further, the study was not able to include interviews with volunteer Ambassadors. Given the scale of the programmes it might have been possible to survey a sample of Ambassadors to compare their motivations to those of Games Makers, although the relevant survey instrument only became available after this study (Alexander, 2013). It would have been valuable to gather data on the contribution of the Ambassadors to the experience of the tourists who they interacted with, to gain a broader understanding of their contribution to tourism in the host destination; and compare this with other tourist destinations where volunteers play similar roles.

Further research could explore if it was possible to generate a sustainable legacy of volunteers to support tourism from the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. This event used 15,000 'Clydesiders', as the Games volunteers were termed, who were recruited and managed using the same model as the London Games Makers. However, a comparable programme to the Ambassadors, called the Host City Volunteers, was run by Glasgow City council, with aims of promoting volunteering in a way representative of the population of Glasgow and developing volunteers through the process. Further research could explore if this programme has generated further volunteering.

In examining the Ambassadors programmes associated with the London 2012 Olympic Games, this paper has demonstrated the potential for local government to lead mega-event legacies, rather than relying on central government or indeed the event organisers. This paper shows that a volunteer legacy need not be limited to the official volunteer programme, not limited to the main host city.

The paper also reinforces the need for ongoing resources to support any legacy efforts and illustrates that legacy planning in practice is still in its infancy.

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**Table 1.** Location and Scale of Ambassador Programmes

<b>Programme Host Location</b>	<b>Olympic Venue</b>	<b>No. Ambassadors</b>
Cardiff	Football stadium	400
Coventry	Football stadium	690
Essex	Mountain bike course	400
Eton Dorney	Rowing	500
Glasgow	Football stadium	240
Kent	Paralympic cycling course	300
Newcastle	Football stadium	400
Old Trafford and Manchester	Football stadium	700
Surrey	Cycling course	450
Weymouth and Portland	Sailing	800
London	Main Olympic venues	8,000

Source: Adapted from Wanogho, M. (2012) *Volunteering (UK-wide Ambassador schemes)*