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Written evidence submitted by the University of York Management School

Written evidence for The DCMS Committee on Major cultural and sporting events

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This short report was prepared in response to the The DCMS Committee on Major cultural and sporting events call for evidence (https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/447/major-cultural-and-sporting-events/). The authors have an established track record of historically informed longitudinal research on the topics of sport, finance, and public management., This includes books and articles about England's successful history of hosting the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, including finance, operations, marketing, legacy and 'populism'. We are active members of the British Academy of Management and are both employed full-time by University of York, part of the Russell Group of research-intensive UK universities.

1.2 This report answers in distinct sections the four questions asked by the DCMS in its call for evidence. Firstly, we assess in detail what the public wants from major cultural and sporting events and the extent to which this is reflected in the events scheduled for 2022. With reference to past sporting mega-events we show that events which capture a sense of occasion and communality without being too ostentatious, forge a place in collective popular memory (see also section 5). A substantial idea of what this legacy entails should be planned for, although such legacy and 'feel good factor' will to some extent be emergent, and it is not simply a case of being able to fully control a collective programming of the mind. Based on this, we then outline an idea for bringing people from all four nations of the UK together, before briefly explaining our thoughts about measurement of outcomes and what the legacies of such events should be. From this we conclude to address the challenges facing the delivery of major cultural and sporting events in 2022, and the bid to host the World Cup 2030. Finally, we provide a list of sources and evidence used in this report.

2.0 What does the UK public want from major cultural and sporting events, and how effectively is this being reflected in the planning and programming for events in 2022?

2.1
Our work has encompassed the impact and legacy of major sporting events - such as the 1908, 1948 and 2012 Olympics, the 1966 FIFA World Cup, and UEFA Euro'96. The most important element of these events have been the senses of communality and legacy that comes from them and that has entered the popular memory.

2.2
Culturally, the 1966 FIFA World Cup may be the most important because England's victory was so iconic - as well as being one of the most watched World Cup tournaments. This World Cup gained widespread TV and media coverage which helped to build a sense of common interest, though it started on a relatively small scale.

2.3
The 1966 final has been compared to the assasination of President Kennedy in 1963 in terms of being a ‘memory jogger’ moment, and overall overage of the tournament created a greater appetite for TV coverage of football, setting up the FA Cup finals as a moment of English national focus throughout the 1970s (Tennent and Gillett, 2016, p. 139). Indeed, Robinson *et al.* (2006) claimed that the resonance of 1966 had increased over time, an example of this perhaps being the 1990s BBC panel game show *‘They think it's all over’*, whose title was directly inspired by the BBC television commentary of Kenneth Wolstenholme on the 1966 final.

2.4
The tournament was also politically useful for the Labour government then in power, smoothing over the national mood during the 1966-67 sterling crisis which saw a humiliating devaluation of the pound - indeed, an emergency prices and incomes bill, freezing prices and wages in some sectors of the economy, had been brought in the Thursday before the final, while Prime Minister Harold Wilson flew back directly from crisis talks in Washington and Ottowa for the final (Gillett and Tennent, 2021, p. 170).

2.5
The tournament was also an important staging post in establishing soccer as the UK’s most popular sport, a popularity that has also endured around the more high-profile England games. Euro ‘96 saw some resonance of this popularity, the then Prime Minister John Major noting that *“football brings the country together in a way only sport can. The performance of the side lifted the spirits of the nation”* (Allison and Monnington, 2005, p. 17).

2.6
In the short term, Euro ‘96 reportedly created political capital for Tony Blair and the ‘New Labour’ movement who used the feel-good factor as part of an approach to stimulating a collective British pride between the four nations in relation to broader British culture of the late 20th Century, including pop music, modern art and designer clothing. This initiative was promoted significantly through the media and labelled ‘Cool Britannia’ (e.g. Rees, 2016).

2.7
Longer term, England’s notable run in the 2018 FIFA World Cup proved highly engaging, when noting that a UK wide audience reported to be 26.5 million people tuned into the semi-final (Radio Times, 2018). This is even more significant when considering that projection did not include people who watched the match in public places.

2.8
Positive memories of sporting events can also have beneficial effects on mental health and cognition. As well as raising mood in the short run the power of 'memory joggers' has been used in treatment for dementia, and The Sporting Memories Foundation brings older people together to discuss their memories of sporting events on a regular basis (The Sporting Memories Foundation, 2021).

2.9
Further, in 1966 the involvement of local authorities and communities was key. Local liaison committees including relevant stakeholders such as the County FAs, football clubs, the local authorities and police were set up in the six provincial cities which held matches. Local authorities and civil society organisations supported the hosting of matches by holding accessible events including art exhibitions, plays, concerts, film shows, and sporting competitions (Tennent and Gillett, 2016; Warwick, 2017). It is worth noting, though, that international football involving countries that were not England did not draw universally high crowds everywhere, and a performance of the Georgian State Dance Company at the Sunderland Empire drew greater crowds than the football matches held in Sunderland (Tennent and Gillett, 2016, pp. 188-119)! Further, attempts to use the event to promote industry and modernist building in host cities to overseas fans by providing tours of factories and new housing estates such as Sheffield's Park Hill flats were unsuccessful in terms of attracting overseas visitors, but Warwick (2017) presents evidence that local people did take up the opportunities, 13,350 people attending an exhibition of civic plate in Sheffield. Broadly there was a sense that the World Cup had been useful in presenting a sense of place and renewal for the host cities, even if many of the overseas football fans chose to stay in London. Further, there was some evidence that visitors stayed away from cities hosting the world cup, for instance attendance at the annual Liverpool Show, which coincided with the World Cup, fell by 40,000 (Tennent and Gillett, p. 119).

2.10
The organisers of FestivalUK 2022 thus need to be more explicit about wanting to foster a sense of communality and legacy from the event - it is not just what happens in 2022 that is important, but what people take from it moving forward. Further, it is critical not to exaggerate likely economic impacts from the event - the event may work to catalyze a sense of 'buzz' and to boost local confidence, and create cultural legacies, but immediate economic benefits to business are likely to be limited.

3.0 What needs to happen for major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together?

3.1

This is an interesting question that inspires big ideas. Whilst economically and in terms of population density there is much activity in London and the South-East of England when compared to other parts of the UK, much of the cultural and sporting endeavour enjoyed here and exported abroad has its roots in ‘the regions’. League football for instance emerged in the English midlands and north before spreading to the south. It seems common sense that all four nations must feel part of major events to feel any sense of inclusion or ownership, and that all nations, regions and cities should have ample opportunity to showcase their heritage and current sports and culture ‘offer’.

3.2

Cultural and sporting mega-events thus present an opportunity to highlight the wealth of culture and sport across the UK. To ensure equity of opportunity and attention this should be given sufficient time to operate. The format of the 1908 Olympic Games although London-centric were held over a period of around one year. For various reasons Olympiads are now compressed into shorter-time scales, however, we envisage that a twelve month and UK wide multi location sporting and cultural mega-event would have great traction.

3.3

The Festival UK 2022 provides a fantastic opportunity to showcase not only the tremendous wealth of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics in and around the UK, but that in-tandem, or to follow shortly after (in, say 2023) a ‘Sport UK’ festival could also be held. This could include exhibition and tournament games encompassing professional to amateur status clubs, and importantly provide opportunity for community involvement in terms of spectating and participating. Examples of sports popular around the UK include soccer, rugby (union and league codes), hockey, cycling, swimming, athletics, snooker, archery and so on. Sports popular regionally across the UK but associated with a sense of heritage and pride include cricket, curling, gaelic football, and specific ‘Highland Games’ events such as caber tossing. Many games have equivalents or variants for different genders, disabilities, age groups and so on, so adjustments could be made to ensure (and to demonstrably show) inclusivity.

3.4

Our own research has tended to focus on association football. Popular variants that we are aware of as being recognised by the sports global governing body FIFA include men’s and women’s eleven-a-side outdoor soccer; indoor variants including 5-a-side, futsal; beach soccer. A full list of these events, their age category and gender tournaments, and technical reports can be found online (FIFA, n.d.)

3.5

We are also aware of ‘walking football’, a variation of the game that is encouraged for older players, or those with mental or physical challenges that make faster codes less possible. There

are reputedly benefits for physical and mental health and this version of the game could potentially be used to encourage beginners of all ages or abilities. Low-contact versions of other sports such as ‘touch rugby’ offer similar opportunities (The Football Association, 2019; York RUFC, n.d.).

3.6

We propose the idea of a UK Home Nations tournament using league format for the professional national men’s and women’s teams. This could cover different age categories too. Historically there existed a ‘British Home Championship’ (later ‘The Rous Cup’) for senior professional men’s teams representing the four nations England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (National Football Museum, n.d.). Thus, there would be a nostalgia factor to the event and also a sense of progression and inclusivity if a men’s and women’s event were held. Further inclusivity and cohesion could be fostered if the different languages of the Home Nations were used in official programmes, and on broadcast media for example commentary in Gaelic via the BBC Alba channel and in Welsh via S4C.

3.7

Returning to the idea of ‘Beach Soccer’ this could be a highly inclusive and fun way to showcase the skills of current and retired professional players as per FIFA’s own international tournaments, as well as hosting events for the general public to participate in. This could bring publicity, visitors and money into the UKs coastal towns or make-shift ‘beaches’ could be set up in urban areas, as FIFA has done with its own tournaments, or even indoors.

3.8

Beach soccer, like indoor versions, appears to be fairly simple to set-up and host when compared to other full-scale versions of the game, meaning that this could be a popular option requiring relatively low financial outlay. A possible idea for a flagship event could be to host a UK ‘home nations’ international round-robin format beach soccer tournament with the white cliffs of Dover as a backdrop. A flyover by classic and exhibition planes such as Spitfire, Hurricane, and the Red Arrows could add a touch of flair and galvanise a sense of pride and occasion.

3.9

Finally, we believe that the history and heritage of soccer is worthy of celebration. Thus key stakeholders for consultation and involvement should involve the national football associations (FAs) of each country, the National Football Museum (NFM) in Manchester and the Scottish Football Museum in Glasgow..

3.10

Following para 3.9 and to underline all points made above, it is widely understood, and increasingly acknowledged, that the codification of the rules of association football and some of its earliest tournaments and clubs exist around the UK, notably in: Cambridge, London and Yorkshire (Sheffield clubs, tournaments and rules were fundamental to the evolution of the game), and that traces of the game's early pioneering teams which enjoyed domestic success as well as spreading the sport around the world are still in existence, e.g. Corinthian-Casuals FC (based in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, England), and West Auckland Town FC (based in County Durham, England and arguably winners of 'the first world cup') and that some of the oldest surviving professional and amateur football clubs in the world survive elsewhere in various towns and cities throughout the UK. A final and major point is that the UK's 'Home Nations' of England, Scotland, Wales and (Northern) Ireland were the first national football associations in the world.

4.0 How should the success of major cultural and sporting events be measured and what should their legacies be?

4.1
It is difficult to measure the success of major sporting events - but some form of legacy for the culture or sport should be left behind. In the 1966 case, this was the built legacy of improved stadiums that survived after the tournament had finished, and even after England had lost the World title in 1970. The 1908 Olympics left the legacy of White City stadium which was used until the 1980s, including in the 1966 World Cup as a second London venue. The 2012 Olympics also left the legacy of the London stadium, now used by West Ham United as well as redevelopment in the Stratford area of London. On a smaller-scale, the 1966 World Cup and European Championships of 1996 catalysed stadium enhancements and improvements that lasted long after the event. Notable facilities with a longer term lifespan have also been built in the UK for other sporting events, for example as Meadowbank Stadium in Edinburgh, developed for the 1970 Commonwealth Games (Tennent and Gillett, 2016).

5.0 What are the challenges facing the delivery of major cultural and sporting events in 2022, and the bid to host the World Cup 2030?

5.1
The broadest challenge around the hosting of major cultural and sporting events is the overall successful management of the project, which happens over many levels, involving many different organisations and stakeholders. The 1966 case involved at least fourteen major actors from inside and outside of football - from national and local government, to FIFA and the FA, but also ancillary bodies such as the broadcasters and utility suppliers who played an important technological role in making the championship happen. The UK government contributed £500,000 to hosting the tournament, but the decisions around spending this money were largely taken by the FA and Football Clubs (Tennent and Gillett, 2016).

5.2

Gillett and Tennent (2017) apply Flyvbjerg's (2014) 'four sublimes' model to demonstrate that the UK government were driven by the political and economic reasons for hosting the 1966 FIFA World Cup, wanting to derive 'soft power' diplomatically while placing Britain, then reliant on manufacturing exports, in the shop window. Local government, looking at the potential of the tournament for regeneration, offered similar support. The importance of Flyvbjerg's other two sublimes, the technological and aesthetic was relatively low in 1966, as existing technology played a mostly facilitative role and existing football stadiums were enhanced with plexiglass roofs and cantilever stands, rather than new ones being built. These factors would become more important in future FIFA World Cups and Olympic Games, including London 2012.

5.3

Fett (2020) shows that the scope of major sporting events as projects has increased dramatically over time, with stadium costs having dramatically expanded since the 1994 World Cup in the USA, when existing stadiums were re-used. Since the construction of the Stade d' France for the 1998 tournament there has been an expectation that new stadiums will be built, with Brazil 2014 and Russia 2018 both spending around $5bn US on construction (p. 460). Further, pressure also exists to expand the project to include off the pitch infrastructure improvements, a tendency also seen in Brazil and Russia where as much as $14bn and $11bn respectively were spent by government on infrastructure enhancements loosly related to the tournaments, often with low transparency as to the ultimate destination of the funding. In the case of London 2012, the UK government and Mayor of London identified that a total £6.5bn had been spent on transport improvements alone for the games, including improvements to the London Underground and Overground, and DLR networks (HM Government and Mayor of London, 2013, p. 37). It is unclear, however, how far these improvements contributed to the successful delivery of and public impact of the sporting event in itself.

5.4

Thus, to ensure best value planning for the 2030 FIFA World Cup the UK should seek to avoid the aesthetic and technological sublimes - all four UK Football Associations have access to national stadiums renovated to modern standards, while the English Premier League and Championship clubs have modern all seater stadiums as standard, some themselves very recently re-built. Some of these club grounds, such as Old Trafford (Manchester United FC) and Anfield (Liverpool FC), have global recognition due to the fame of the clubs, and the opportunity for international teams to play in these stadiums would of itself be a major attraction for the tournaments. Supporting infrastructure plans should be devised for long term economic development and growth and could be incorporated into existing government 'build back better' and 'levelling up' strategies, rather than driven around the short term needs of the sporting competition. This would reduce overall project delivery coordination costs by reducing the size

of the project and very clearly de-limiting it to sport, reducing any political controversy relating to project creep and overspending.

6.0 Concluding remarks

6.1
Cultural and sporting events can broadly foster a 'feel-good' factor in society if designed to be inclusive in terms of involvement - sporting events are exciting to participate in and watch, but they also create common experiences that draw people together. These experiences can be beneficial in improving physical and mental health and for creating memories that last a long time. In terms of bringing the four nations of the UK together, the friendly rivalry and independent sporting traditions of the nations can be used to create a sense of community. These benefits could be encouraged alongside FestivalUK2022, and also the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

6.2
In terms of the 2030 FIFA World Cup itself, it is important to overall avoid project creep as this is unnecessary in terms of creating positive domestic and international impacts - the UK's competitive advantage is that it already possesses an excellent soccer infrastructure, and the benefits of hosting are more social than economic - while other government development projects such as Build Back Better could be used to enhance supporting infrastructure to host the tournament Almost no permanent non-footballing infrastructure was built for either the 1966 or 1996 tournaments held in England and yet both of these tournaments were impactful and memorable across the country.

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