



# Birmingham Gets it Chance

**The potential success of the second city being the host of the Commonwealth Games in 2022, in what would appear to be a one-horse-race, has led me as a Brummie, since I moved here when I was 11, to become exceptional proud of MY city.**

However, I do have frustrating memories of games bids from the City, when in Sport Development in the City during the late eighties which saw the city make bids for two commonwealth games and the 1992 Olympics games mainly led by old friend Richard Callicott.

In Birmingham we are a pragmatic but a jealous community. Birmingham invested its own tax payers money in the NIA and NEC and then saw Manchester, Sheffield and obviously London gain significant national investment into facilities for major games so it is incredibly satisfying that government funding will be available albeit to support the games as most of the facilities exist.

What does this mean to us in Birmingham? Well loads. We can be proud that people will come and use the "Buzz", tram and cross city line via Grand Central, see the "flousey's bush", the Balti belt, take a trip by barge "on cut" (more canals than Venice), enjoy the parks (more trees than Paris) and we will be happy to call anyone

teers have not come out shouting publicly but lobbied in quietly and whereas three years ago it looked like we would not have any 50 metre pools it now looks like we will have three with a potential new pool in Coventry, the pool at the University of Birmingham and a high-quality competition pool in Sandwell. Ideally straddling the main West Midlands conur-



younger than us "bab" but most of all we will very proud to show off our City.

As Chair of Swim England - West Midlands, the building of the new pool in Sandwell is the culmination of some real hard work behind the scenes to improve the swimming facilities in the region. Swim England staff alongside our regional and club volun-

bation North, Central and South.

I also think the winning of the games shows Birmingham and the West Midlands adaptability how we can modify current venues to raise the bar for the games and the region. It will also consolidate the work of the West Midlands joint authority and stimulate more peo-

ple being active through the work of the councils and the three CSPs the games spans. There is some great work going on in Birmingham getting people from the swaths of disadvantaged areas of the City to get active and increase the number of coaches and tutors from the community through the "Birmingham Way", which my company Sport Structures are proud to contribute to. If planned correctly we could see a real boost in employment and volunteer opportunities if planned well with event volunteer programmes like London but more directly linked to employment. The Birmingham 2022 brand could be a real focus to address in-activity and employment aspiration if planned correctly.

As for the games itself I am looking forward to hearing more than a pin drop in symphony hall when weight lifting takes the stage, hockey at the University of Birmingham where Zena Wooldridge has been such a driving force for Birmingham sport, Villa Park for the Rugby, the various events out at the NEC, the Bowls out in Leamington which currently hosts the national championships which make an enormous difference to the economy of that area, but personally, as well

as the swimming, as ex-CEO of basketball I am looking forward to watching 3-3 basketball, both running and wheelchair, in Victoria square home of the council house, town hall, German Market and flousey-in-the-jacusie (now called the flouseys bush as the city council couldn't afford the cost of the fountains so planned flowers).

Brings back memories when I



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ran 3-3 events with over 120 teams in centenary square 15 or so years ago. I might even trip out to Coventry to watch the seven-a-side version of basketball! However, the upgrading of the Alexander stadium will make it an even more atmospheric venue for Athletics than it already is and I am sure that we will see some awesome track and field. Anyone who has been there for the national championships or diamond league

will be testimony to that. Furthermore, the legacy of bringing local and national governing bodies into office space will further enhance its national significance.

The huge advantage of Birmingham is that its smack bang in the middle of England so easy to get to but don't just come for the day and go home spend some days here taking in the culture which spans most of the commonwealth. Do not leave until you have had a curry either in the Michelin started restaurant or a Balti with no table cloth, knives forks and spoons. We have been waiting for such a long time to host a major championship and we will make sure you love it and will put the City up to its rightful place as a city for sport.

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Simon Kirkland