



Marina Ahmad AM
Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

8 May 2025

Dear Sir Sadiq,

Major sports events in London

I am writing to you as Chair of the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee during 2024-25, following the Committee's recent meeting on major sports events¹ in London.

It is clear from evidence heard by the Committee that major sports events have a positive impact on London's local economy, with retail and hospitality businesses benefitting from spectators spending time and money in the areas surrounding sports venues, such as Stratford and Wembley. We also heard that major sports events can enrich London's social and cultural fabric by creating volunteering opportunities, generating civic pride and boosting grassroots sports.

However, it is important to note that not all major sports events are alike. We heard that the GLA does not currently evaluate the contributions of different types of sports events in London on an annual basis. Resulting from this is a lack of a strong strategic direction determining which events London should bid for and stage in the coming years. We also heard that there currently exists no overarching framework for collaboration between local authorities, which can make staging large-scale events more challenging for organisers. Additionally, there is a risk that by hosting an ever-growing number of major sports events, London's transport system is unable to keep up with the increased demand.

¹ For the purpose of this letter, the Committee is adopting the definition set out by London & Partners in 2021, which defines "major events" as those events which attract more than 10,000 visitors and/or have "significant visitor appeal". For more information, see: London & Partners, [The impact of major events on London's economy](#), July 2021 (p.7)

Developing a clear strategic vision about the benefits London wants to see from major sports events

London gains significant benefits from hosting major sports events, with local economies in surrounding areas seeing a considerable boost in economic activity. Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of Brent Council (where Wembley Stadium is located), highlighted how venues like Wembley Stadium drive footfall to local high streets, the London Designer Outlet and Boxpark.² Similarly, Mark Camley, Executive Director, Park Operations and Venues at London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) pointed out the positive impact on sectors like hospitality and retail in the area, noting a tenfold increase in hotels around Stratford since 2012.³ Additionally, Nick Bitel, Chief Executive Officer of the London Marathon Group shared a 2023 report showing that the London Marathon alone contributed £51 million to the city's economy in 2022, with 77 per cent of businesses surveyed reporting positive effects.⁴

We heard that major sports events can also enrich London's social life, such as by providing volunteering opportunities and encouraging people to become active. Nick Bitel and Howard Dawber, Deputy Mayor for Business and Growth, both emphasised the role major sports events, such as RideLondon and the Wimbledon Tennis Tournament have on people taking up cycling and tennis respectively.^{5 6} They also highlighted that the London Marathon Group has a children's race, which will see 18,000 participants this year,⁷ whilst the National Football League (NFL) events in London are accompanied by a flag football programme to get more young people engaged in the sport.⁸

In addition to major sports events' economic and social contributions, our guests also stressed the importance of such events to enhancing London's global appeal.⁹ Esther Britten MBE, Head of Events and External Affairs at UK Sport, stressed the importance of "soft power" and mentioned that one of UK Sport's guiding considerations for staging and supporting events was whether the event presents an opportunity to enhance relations with other nations.¹⁰

² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.3)

³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.3)

⁴ Sheffield Hallam University Sport Industry Research Centre, TCS London Marathon Summary Report, March 2023 (provided to Scrutiny via e-mail)

⁵ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.3)

⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 2\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.12)

⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.12)

⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 2\)](#), 10 February 2025 (pp.8-9)

⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (pp.2,8)

¹⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.8)

Notwithstanding these positive contributions, we heard that the GLA should develop a clearer strategic direction on the benefits it wants to prioritise and which type of events bring about these benefits. Nick Bitel told us that enhancing London's soft power was a by-product of staging certain events but that event organisers themselves do not view this as a strategic objective. He added that this strategic direction would have to be provided by the Mayor and London & Partners, rather than leaving it to individual organisations.¹¹

Similarly, Esther Britten highlighted that an overall strategic direction was important as different events bring with them different benefits.¹² She told the Committee that big events can play an important role attracting international tourism and support local hotels at times when visitor numbers are traditionally lower. However, she stressed that a city may also choose to host smaller events, adding that this can add value in a different way, such as by engaging more with local communities.¹³

We heard from the GLA that the economic impact of major sports events taking place in London has not always been measured consistently, but that the Major Sports Events Team is considering producing annual evaluations. James Fitzgerald, Host City Programmes Director at the GLA told us that "the Major Sports Events Team are looking at an economic report each year, which [they] can now measure against, see the improvements and showcase what the major sports events bring to the city."¹⁴ We are aware that the GLA has recently published a report on the impact of sporting events in London in 2024.¹⁵ It is important that similar evaluations are produced in future years.

It is undeniable that major sports events benefit London's economy and its residents. However, we believe London would benefit from a strategic approach to harnessing these benefits. This should involve drawing up a strategy, setting out clearly which benefits the GLA wants to see from which type of events and use this information to decide which events to bid for and support. To evaluate the effectiveness of such a strategy, the GLA should measure the economic, as well as the social benefits of the major sports events it bids for and supports on a consistent, annual basis.

Recommendation 1: *The Mayor should work with London & Partners to develop a strategy for future major sports events, informing which events it bids for and supports. The strategy should clearly set out the Mayor's priorities with regard to which benefits are being sought from different types of events.*

Recommendation 2: *The Mayor should continue to produce an annual report evaluating the economic, social and environmental benefits of the major sports events supported by the GLA and London & Partners. This should be measured against an overall strategy for major sports events.*

¹¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.8)

¹² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.4)

¹³ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.4)

¹⁴ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 2\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.14)

¹⁵ Mayor of London, [New report reveals major sporting events delivered £230 million boost to London's economy, attracting over 200 million global viewers](#), 28 April 2025

Removing barriers to organising major sports events in London

London is made up of a patchwork of 33 local authorities. We heard that this can cause issues for organisers. We heard that large events in London, such as the London Marathon or Ride London, are frequently spread over large areas, spanning several London boroughs. Nick Bitel told us that there are six local authorities and three police forces involved in planning the London Marathon, for example.¹⁶ Comparing London to other large cities, Nick Bitel added that there was no single point of contact to reach out to for organisers. Rather, he noted that organisers currently have to approach each local authority individually if they are organising an event in London that spans several local authority areas.¹⁷

Both Nick Bitel and Mark Camley highlighted that London and the UK no longer have major event legislation,¹⁸ as was the case during the 2012 Olympic Games with the establishment of the Olympic Development Authority (ODA) and the London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Act of 2006.¹⁹ Mark Camley told the Committee that this legislation enabled the ODA and the four adjacent boroughs to work together collaboratively during and after the Olympic Games by establishing planning powers.²⁰

In the absence of legislation, our guests pointed to the power of the GLA in bringing together various stakeholders, including organisers and local authorities. Rose Wangen-Jones, Managing Director, Marketing, Destination and Commercial and London & Partners stressed that London & Partners and the GLA play an important role in supporting events by using their convening power to bring together partners at an early stage.²¹ James Fitzgerald added that the GLA successfully used this power to create a consortium that is delivering the Major League Baseball (MLB) games in London in 2023, 2024 and 2026.²²

The Mayor and London & Partners have taken steps to bring together various stakeholders to deliver large events. Whilst this work is important, in many cases organisers looking to stage events in London still lack a central point of contact and instead have to liaise separately with a multitude of local authorities and local public bodies. Given the benefits associated with hosting major sports events, we think it should be simpler for organisers to stage large scale events that span several local

¹⁶ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.5)

¹⁷ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.5)

¹⁸ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.5)

¹⁹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.5)

²⁰ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 1\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.5)

²¹ London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 2\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.3)

²² London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Major Sports Events in London \(Panel 2\)](#), 10 February 2025 (p.3)

authorities. The Mayor can make an important difference here by connecting organisers and relevant stakeholders via a single point of contact.

Recommendation 3: *The Mayor should create a single point of contact within the GLA for organisers looking to stage major sports events in London to reach out to. This point of contact should be tasked with creating an event-specific working group by liaising with the relevant local authorities and other relevant local public bodies.*

The Committee would welcome a response to this letter by Friday 27 June 2025. Please send your response to by email to the Committee's clerk, Saleha Fazal (Saleha.Fazal@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marina Ahmad', is displayed on a light gray, textured background.

Marina Ahmad AM

Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee