What did London Offer - 1948 and 2012?

1948
Tokyo had been scheduled to host the 1940 Olympics but the Games were postponed because of the Second world war and Tokyo was stripped of the Games. The IOC optimistically scheduled another Olympic Games for 1944 and London was to be the host city. Again these Games had to be put off until the hostilities ended. Germany and its allies were defeated in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Mediterranean. Japan was defeated in the Asia-Pacific.

In 1948 it was more a matter if London wanted the Games than which other cities were its rivals.

Focus
Consider the following extracts which touch on some of the issues which the IOC and London had to consider before the preparations for the Olympic Games were completed.

Activity
Use these sources and other research to create a two-column ‘For’ and ‘Against’ or ‘Advantages’ and ‘Disadvantages’ table.

Evaluate whether London made the right decision? Why or why not?

Review the documents Accepting the 1948 Olympic Games – political considerations and Post 1945 Britain – Brave new world?

2012
While Olympic sport will be the centre stage of the 2012 London Olympics, the city based its bid around a broader social and environmental theme of sustainability. The Olympic Games of the new millennium must provide a positive legacy for the host cities well beyond the buildings and burst of local employment and commercial sponsorship advantages.

London put sustainability at the heart of its bid for the 2012 Games and the following five themes will guide all the preparations for, and execution of, the event:
– Climate change
– Waste
– Biodiversity
– Inclusion
– Healthy living

The overall legacy of an Olympic Games became a criteria and city target at the Barcelona Olympic Games and a part of the way future Olympics would be evaluated. The quality of sporting performances have to be supported by quality venues, technology, transport, athlete facilities, security and goodwill but the environmental footprint left behind should be positive for the city and
its citizens. The economic reality of an Olympic Games means the Olympic Games have to show improvements and long-term advances for London.

It was the Sydney Games which aimed for a ‘green Games’, and collaborated with environmental Non-Governmental Organisation’s (NGOs). The Sydney Olympic Games were also audited by Greenpeace, who received a detailed and fairly positive report. London intends to redevelop the East London area.
Accepting the 1948 Olympic Games – political considerations

Focus

Using this extract and your own research investigate the importance of international politics in London hosting the Olympic Games.

There was a delicate balance of power between the once united Allies in the Post War period. Great Britain, the United States, France and the Soviet Union all had different nuances in their future planning and, in the case of the United States and the Soviet Union, opposing economic structures of capitalism and communism.

Against this backdrop Britain’s international standing was becoming increasingly important in the decision making as to whether it really should host the Games. In a secret memorandum issued on 25 March 1947, Philip Noel-Baker, Secretary of State for Air, and Harold Wilson, Secretary for Overseas Trade, wrote, ‘If the Games are to be held in this country, it is essential to our national prestige that they should be a success; and as we are committed to holding them here, the Government should give all possible assistance in assuring their success.’ Inward investment was important but, just as in London 1908, so was international standing.

Post 1945 Britain – Brave new world?

Focus
What features and issues of post 1945 Britain are mentioned in this extract?
What did the Olympic Games in London offer post-war Britain?
Where did sport fit into British culture at this time?

While the infrastructure work linked to London 2012 is creating thousands of jobs and making a meaningful contribution to the construction industry at a time of financial hardship, the use of existing venues in London 1948 did little or nothing to help a working population who were psychologically scarred, undernourished and under-utilised.

Within Britain there was an understanding that success could not have been achieved without the intervention of its most prominent ally. However, as the relationships became more frosty and the cost of the loans provided by America made deep inroads into the potential for speedy recovery, there was an underlying misgiving that too high a price had been paid already. All rights to British advances in radar, antibiotics, jet aircraft, and nuclear technology had been handed over without any prospect of compensation. Britain returned a socialist government with a resounding majority in 1945.

Initially the new UK government, without whose support the Games could not go ahead, were somewhat swept up in the general euphoria for a brave new world opening before them and therefore very enthusiastic about what the Games could do for the nation. The opportunity to regain centre stage on a world platform, ‘seeking peace through sport’ while earning much—needed foreign currency to contribute towards economic recovery was a great temptation. Cabinet Office archives record that in January 1946 Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, responded to BOA Chairman Lord Portal’s plan to stage the Games by indicating, ‘I should warmly welcome this proposal.’ This was just the beginning of the debate.

If Britain just about survived the test of war, it was certainly not clear that its society would be able to withstand the rigours of peace. One immediate solution to the challenges of the day was sport and entertainment. Sport offered the excitement of competition wrapped in the certainty of rules known and understood. While many elements of British society changed beyond measure after the Second World War, sport remained a constant.

In the post-war economy, sport and the cinema were about the only thriving elements. The British had a very varied sporting appetite but attended events in their droves. In August 1945 at White City Stadium, 40,000 were locked out as 50,000 attended an athletics meeting featuring Sydney Wooderson competing against two Swedish middle-distance runners. Meanwhile at Lord’s
the ground was full, with 10,000 locked out, ten minutes after the start of the Fourth Victory Test.

Source: Rogan, Matt and Rogan, Martin, Britain and the Olympic Games – Past, Present, Legacy, Matador, Leicester (UK), 2011, p36-37.