

While on a Parliamentary delegation to the US recently I was asked about the success of London 2012 and what impact it had in the UK. The reason being that various US states, including Massachusetts, are looking to bid for the 2024 Olympics and are considering the cost benefit value to their localities.

It is sometimes hard to quantify the legacy of the spectacular event that took place over a year ago now. Evidence shows that there was a positive economic impact and in the immediate aftermath there was a burst of enthusiasm and participation in various sports. However, if we are to fully appreciate the importance of London 2012 it will surely be from harnessing a long term increase in participation.

To do this we need to ensure that we have first class community facilities. It struck me as the parliamentary delegation was transferred around various States that we don't yet have the same level of facilities as those in the US. On a whistle stop trip to New York I was captivated by a local venue that had a running track around the outside and football pitches, baseball plates and a basketball court on the inside of the track. It was all floodlit and at 11pm at night there were still people using it.

That is why I was absolutely delighted to return to Parliament this week to learn of two Inspired Facilities awards totalling £100,000 to Snodland Community Centre and Blue Bell Hill Cricket Club to improve and develop their own venues. This will go a long way in promoting a variety of sports and diverse activities within those disciplines, such as women and disabled sports.

If we are going to harness the legacy of the Olympics we do need to invest to grow. The generosity of Sport England will certainly go a long way to do that locally.