

## **Lancashire leads on Fields in Trust's Olympic Legacy benefit in the North West**

Seven years after the announcement of London as the successful host city the start of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is now just a day away. But how will this fantastic opportunity be realised as a legacy that will benefit the whole country for generations to come?

The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, run by national charity Fields in Trust, aims to safeguard outdoor recreational spaces in perpetuity to ensure that communities will always have access to places for sport and play to mark the great events of 2012. Parks, playing fields and playgrounds continue to be threatened by development and, without these spaces, participation levels in all kinds of physical recreation would be severely reduced. England's Olympic women's football team have kicked off the Olympic action with a win, emphasising the importance of grassroots access to playing fields and sports pitches.

The strongest sporting legacy at the moment in the North West is across Lancashire, where landowners have nominated the most sites for protection with 47 – the same number as there are athletics events in the Games. Cheshire landowners have worked to create a fairly strong legacy with 29 sites. Greater Manchester, home to iconic site and Olympic venue Old Trafford, has put forward just 6 sites but each one is equal to nearly 40 football pitches. However it is Merseyside who trail behind in the region with landowners in the area showing little enthusiasm for their sporting legacy, protecting just three sites.

The Duke of Cambridge is Patron of the Challenge and is committed to the importance of outdoor spaces: *'We take it for granted that children like to run and to play games and most people agree that leaving children to be cooped up inside all day is bad for them. If we are serious about that, then we must be serious about preserving the fields and parks on which children can play. If parks and fields continue to disappear at the rate at which they have done for the past few decades, many communities will have nowhere for their young people to enjoy. Some of my happiest memories as a child were those times I spent outside playing games, and I think that is true for most people.'*

Alison Moore-Gwyn, Chief Executive of Fields in Trust said *'I'm delighted by the enthusiasm with which landowners across Lancashire are embracing the Challenge. Merseyside's sites are huge, but very few in number. I do hope councils put forward many more. They don't always have to be big! Parks and playing fields are often the place where our elite sports people first identify their talent. Without access to local facilities we face the possibility of a decline in the diversity of home grown athletes and sports people.'*

This is echoed by The Duke of Cambridge who is also an Ambassador to the London 2012 Games *'As we cheer on athletes at the Olympic Games, we should remember how so many of them started their career on local green spaces.'*

Delivery of this wide ranging legacy programme was made possible by the support of Asda and the Asda Foundation. Paul Kelly, External Affairs Director at Asda said *'Asda shares Fields in Trust's commitment to ensuring 2012 brings lasting benefit to communities across the UK and so we are proud to have worked in partnership to deliver a programme that will give opportunities for participation in sports and activities well beyond the Olympic Games.'*

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**Notes to editors:**

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	Number	Acreage	Average acreage
Cheshire	29	162.963	5.6
Cumbria	22	241.9	10.995
Greater Manchester	6	250.45	41.74
Lancashire	47	480.05	10.21
Merseyside	3	381.57	127.19

- The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge aims to protect 2,012 outdoor recreational spaces by the end of 2012 to build a legacy from the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games.
- The Duke of Cambridge is Patron of the Challenge. Queen Elizabeth II Field status protects green sites for perpetuity, ensuring communities and future generations will always have access to them. The Challenge builds on the work that Fields in Trust has done so far. Established in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association, Fields in Trust works to improve the protection, provision and quality of outdoor recreational spaces for all communities in the UK. They currently protect 1362 fields totalling 8586 acres.
- Further details on The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge can be found at [www.qe2fields.com](http://www.qe2fields.com) The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge’s principal partner is Asda and the Asda Foundation. SITA Trust UK are also supporting the Challenge, creating an exclusive £1 million fund available for designated QEII sites in England and Wales to apply to. The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge is also kindly supported by LV= who have been enthusiastic about the Challenge.