

Gloucestershire works hardest to create Olympic legacy benefit for local communities

With Olympics fever upon us, how can this fantastic opportunity be realised as a legacy that will benefit the whole country for generations to come? The South West will be hosting the Olympic sailing – but what happens when those events are finished? 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.

Gloucestershire are leading in the South west with landowners creating a strong legacy of 44 sites, each one the size of around 13 football fields. Dorset landowners are putting in a strong showing with 38 sites protected so far; whilst neighbouring Somerset landowners have so far only protected 13 sites. But a grassroots sporting legacy for Bristolians is looking less secure with only 1 site protected by landowners in the city region, of just 3 acres. Applications to protect sites under the Challenge can be made until the end of December, 2012.

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 Gloucestershire are embracing the Challenge. Parks and playing fields are often the place where our elite sports people first identify their talent. It is particularly important in urban area, with the pressure of housing and population, to safeguard access to local facilities. Without this 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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	Numbers	Acreage	Av acreage
Bristol	1	3	3
Cornwall	21	64.56	3.074
Devon	22	130.26	5.921
Dorset	38	1738.208	45.742
Glouceste	44	573.53	13.035
Somerset	13	134	10.3
Wiltshire	31	253.84	8.18

- 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 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.