

Shropshire creates strongest Olympics legacy in West Midlands Region

Olympics mania is upon us but what thought is being given to beyond the games? Legacy is on many lips but landowners in Shropshire are putting action behind words with charity Fields in Trust. The landowners are leading on developing their Olympic legacy in the West Midlands region with 34 sites protected for future generations to enjoy. Warwickshire, who are currently enjoying Olympic football in the City of Coventry stadium, are equal with Worcestershire on 23 sites each whilst Staffordshire landowners have put forward 15 so far. The West Midlands county (including Birmingham City) have protected the largest amount of land as their grassroots sporting legacy.

The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, run by 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. Applications to create a legacy by protecting green space can continue until December 31, 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.'*

Alison Moore-Gwyn, Chief Executive of Fields in Trust said *'I'm delighted with the enthusiasm of landowners in Shropshire and by the size of the protected areas in the West Midlands county. 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	Av acreage
Herefordshire	4	108	27
Shropshire	34	129.771	3.817
Staffordshire	15	65.2	4.346
Warwickshire	24	123.99	5.368
West Mids	26	891.83	34.301
Worcestershire	23	279	12.13

- 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.