

Promise of a golden Olympics gets London racing to the starting line

The capital expects an influx of cash at the world's biggest party, reports **Deidre Hipwell**



Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, has long promised that, while the 2012 Games will not be as dramatic or as supersized as Beijing's, they will make the capital the "epicentre of fun in the Universe".

It was fighting talk and, with only 12 months before the Games begin, the city's entertainment, leisure and hotel sector is at full throttle readying itself.

The challenge is enormous. It is estimated that there could be an extra 450,000 to 980,000 visitors in London during the seven weeks from the Olympic opening ceremony until the close of the Paralympics.

Visa, one of the sponsors, estimates that the influx of foreign visitors will spend £709 million, increasing spending in the capital by 18 per cent.

Outside London, Visa expects a £41 million increase in spending as the country supports the Games. It said: "British residents are likely to switch from traditional patterns of summer spending to getting into the Olympic spirit by stocking up on supplies and entertaining at home. Supermarkets will be particular beneficiaries of this."

Britain's hotel industry will be at the forefront, and Ufi Ibrahim, chief executive of the British Hospitality Association (BHA), said that the sector had been investing time and money to ensure that the capital could cope.

Hoteliers have set aside 40,000 Central London hotel rooms at below market rate, out of a total of about 100,000, for use by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the 2012 London Organising Committee (Loocog); the most an Olympic host city



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has provided. Ms Ibrahim said: "Hotels are investing a lot in training staff to ensure we have the right resources to meet the requirements of the Games and we are also making sure our facilities are accessible for the Paralympians."

She added that the hotel industry was also preparing for the biennial Farnborough Air Show, the week before the Olympics, and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

"There will be a significant volume of people passing through London and this is a hugely important time for hoteliers to be absolutely prepared."

The British Beer and Pub Association told *The Times* that it had already written to the Home Office asking for licensing hours to be extended for the Diamond Jubilee in June and for the opening and closing weekends of the Olympics.

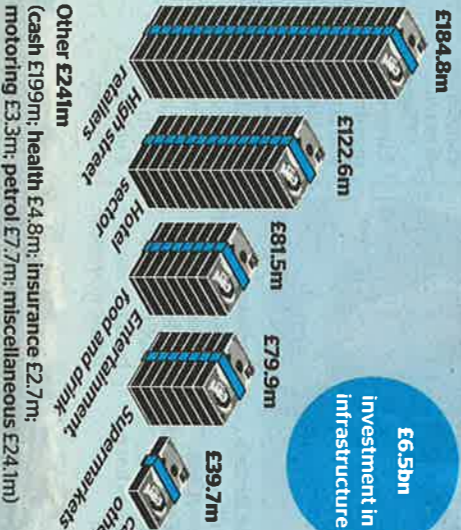
David Wilson, director of

The nation is expected to rally round Team GB, including Jessica Ennis



The 2012 effect

£1.14bn increase in economic output during games
£750m increase in consumer spending, of which...



Sources: Visa, TfL



Cut your commute for a smooth-running Games

Phillip Pank Transport Correspondent

Monday, July 30, 2012, is already proving to be a challenge for Games planners, with millions of commuters poised to descend on the capital for the first Olympics rush hour.

Day 3 of the London Games will set the stage for six weeks of "severe" disruption predicted by organisers.

Just how the transport network copes will, according to some, be a dominant factor in deciding whether London is remembered as a rip-roaring success or another Atlanta, where sporting achievement was at times eclipsed by organisational chaos.

The Games will run from July 27 to August 12, and although it has not been confirmed, the Premier League football season is likely to start on the weekend of August 18-19, with the Community Shield the weekend before likely

public affairs at the association, said that during last year's football World Cup, beer sales were boosted by £100 million, with England's games adding 30 million pints to total beer consumption.

He said: "When you add in the additional dimension of inbound tourism for the Olympics, many of whom see the British pub as a must-do attraction, and that all the home nations rally round Team GB we can expect a significant 'liquid gold' effect."

HVS Consultancy, said the hotel sector was making sure to attract those without tickets, as the Games would be shown on big screens.

Even visitors uninterested in sport are catered for by the Cultural Olympiad, the London 2012 Festival, from June 21 to September 9.

to be staged in the North rather than Wembley Stadium, northwest London. The Paralympics will be held from August 29 to September 9.

Olympics organisers are appealing to businesses and their employees to cancel one in three trips during the Games. The 24 million journeys on a typical London workday must be cut by seven million to ensure a smooth-running spectacle, they say. Up to 800,000 visitors are likely to make an extra three million journeys on the busiest days.

With the big infrastructure projects complete or approaching the finish line, the next challenge is "the need to get businesses to start planning", according to Mark Evers, director of Games Transport at Transport for London. "We will need some Londoners to change the way they travel," he said.

Paralympian hopefuls, times2, pages 6, 7