

News Release

For immediate release

Britain's Olympic legacy in tatters as Chancellor flouts another opportunity to repay communities

For the eighth time in his position as Chancellor, George Osborne has failed to produce a national budget which honours the government's long-outstanding debt to Britain's communities.

In 2007 the Labour government diverted £425 million from the Big Lottery Fund to help finance the ballooning Olympics budget. Following outrage from charities and many MPs, the government pledged to repay the debt after the Olympics from the sale of Olympics assets – a pledge subsequently reaffirmed by the Coalition.

Government ministers have given piecemeal statements suggesting the Big Lottery Fund might see money returned to it sometime after 2020. However four years after the event, with Rio 2016 just around the corner, this is looking ever more unlikely. Last year, the government leased an Olympic asset to West Ham United Football Club in a highly obscure deal which will see the club enjoy the use of a £700m football stadium for a fraction of the rent paid by other clubs, with many of the running costs paid for by the taxpayer.

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) has led the Big Lottery Refund campaign, supported by over 3800 charities, which aims for an immediate return of the lottery cash.

Jay Kennedy, Director of Policy and Research at DSC said 'The Big Lottery Fund gets its money from people who buy lottery tickets on the understanding that the small amount of money they are likely to lose will be spent doing good in the community. In 2007 the money was used to pay private contractors to build the Olympic village and now the assets are being given away to private interests as well.'

He went on to say that 'in the meantime, thousands of charities are losing funding at a time when demand on their services is rapidly increasing and when government funding cuts are leaving people with great uncertainty for the future. An immediate repayment of that money would enable the Big Lottery Fund to make grants to an additional 10,000 charities, improving the lives of approximately eight million people across the UK'.

Kennedy concluded with a call to the Government: 'George Osborne missed another massive opportunity to redress this wrong, to support vulnerable people and vital causes across the UK, and it need not impact the government balance sheet. In the past his ministers have said they are confident that the money will be eventually paid back, but since the General Election they have said nothing. They should pay back the Big Lottery Fund immediately, and take on the role of creditor for repayment from assets sales. This could help tens of thousands of charities and millions of people during very difficult times.'

For more information please contact Ciaran Price, Directory of Social Change by email (cprice@dsc.org.uk) or phone (020 7697 4295, 0795 155 3292).

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Notes to editors:

- Founded in 1974, the Directory of Social Change (DSC) is a national charity which supports an independent voluntary sector through campaigning, training and publications. DSC is the largest supplier of information and training to the voluntary sector, and its work helps tens of thousands of organisations every year achieve their aims. Learn more at www.dsc.org.uk
- DSC runs the Big Lottery Refund campaign, supported by over 3800 charities and individuals. More information, including political and technical background, sign-up page, campaign actions for supporters, and other resources can be found at www.biglotteryrefund.org.uk