

## **Who paid for the Olympic stadium? World Athletics Championships 2017 marks shameful 10 year anniversary of the Big Lottery Fund raid**

As fans cheered on Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt and British distance legend Mo Farah at the World Championships in Athletics (WCA) 2017 in London, many won't have realised that the stadium hosting the spectacle was partly paid for with money raided from charities.

In 2007 the government diverted £425 million from the Big Lottery Fund to help finance the ballooning costs of the Olympics, including construction of venues on the Olympic Park. Following outrage from charities and many MPs, the then Labour government pledged to repay the debt after the Olympics from the sale of Olympics assets – a pledge subsequently reaffirmed by successive coalition and Conservative governments. These assets are now owned by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), which is responsible for the redevelopment of the park. So far, little has been sold off to reimburse the Lottery.

Before the money was taken, a certain Theresa May was very vocal about the raid, stating that 'the Government have carried out a [smash-and-grab raid on lottery funds](#)'. However, despite repeated letters to her and other ministers, the government is still dragging its heels on paying back the Lottery good causes, stating it may take until the 2030s.

A recent Economist article on the London Olympics ([Assessing London's Olympics, five years on](#), 29th July) concludes that the legacy of the 2012 Games is somewhat mixed. However, the article also fails to mention that any legacy owes a huge debt of gratitude to the National Lottery and tens of thousands of good causes that were sacrificed for the Olympics. Instead this money has wound up paying for a stadium now hosting the WAC 2017 as well as West Ham. This is one of the richest football clubs in the world with an annual turnover of over [£142m in 2015/16](#) and being ranked [no 14 in the world's top 50](#) most valuable football brands in 2016 - paying a mere £2.5 million a year on a 99-year lease.

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) leads the [Big Lottery Refund campaign](#), supported by over 3800 charities, which calls for an immediate return of the lottery cash. Campaigners want the government to work with the LLDC to repay this money now, which could fund around 10,000 charities serving communities not just in London, but throughout the UK – from children's hospices in Scotland, to foodbanks in Wales or activities for isolated older people in the North East.

Jay Kennedy, Director of Policy and Research at DSC said: 'Ten years without a Big Lottery Refund is a shameful milestone. How can we celebrate the 'Olympic legacy' and events like the WAC 2017 when this debt is still owed to communities across the UK? Hundreds of millions of pounds were effectively stolen from charities that depend on Big Lottery Fund grants to help vulnerable people and communities across this country, to subsidise the costs of venues on the Olympic Park. We need this money paid back now.'

Jay Kennedy concluded with a call to the government: 'The new government should pay back the Big Lottery Fund immediately, and take on the role of creditor for repayment from assets sales from the LLDC. This could help tens of thousands of charities and millions of people during very difficult times.'

**For more information please contact Rachel Cain, Directory of Social Change by email ([rcain@dsc.org.uk](mailto:rcain@dsc.org.uk)) or phone (0151 702 0154).**

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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](http://www.dsc.org.uk)
- More information on the Big Lottery Refund campaign, including supporter sign-up page, background information, supporter views and case studies can be found at [www.biglotteryrefund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryrefund.org.uk)
- Theresa May in Hansard; House of Commons Hansard Debates for 14 Jun 2005  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050614/debtext/50614-10.htm>

‘Assessing London’s Olympics, five years on’, in: The Economist, 29 July 2017  
<https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21725594-corner-east-london-has-been-rejuvenated-wider-benefits-are-hard-detect-assessing>