

Commonwealth Games 2022 Legacy 'front and centre' of Birmingham games, insists minister

Legacy remains "front and centre" for the [Commonwealth Games in Birmingham](#), according to sports minister Nigel Huddleston.

As of today, there are 100 days to go until the 2022 Games open in the city and other venues across West Midlands venues, with the global event running from July 28 to August 8.

After the decision to strip Durban as host city, Birmingham had only a four-and-a-half-year cycle to prepare for the multi-sport showpiece event rather than the usual seven.

A public investment of £778 million is going into staging the games which were last held in the UK in Glasgow in 2014 and Manchester before that in 2002.

As well as the renovated Alexander Stadium, now with an increased capacity of 17,500, the Sandwell Aquatics Centre will provide a leisure centre to serve the Smethwick community.

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Switching the athletes' village to existing university accommodation has allowed the regeneration of Perry Barr to focus on much-needed legacy housing which will be completed in

2022 and open to the public next year.

Also, as part of the Birmingham 2022 projects, there are a number of other upgrades – including Wyndley Leisure Centre as an official training venue for hockey, triathlon and para-triathlon as well as at Birches Valley in Cannock Chase Forest for mountain biking.

A global television audience of up to 1.5 billion is expected across the 19 sports, with the games set to offer the biggest ever para-sport programme and more women's medals than men's for the first time.

With the eyes across the world set to be focused on the region over 11 days this summer, Mr Huddleston is confident lasting benefits will be delivered for years to come.

“When I got appointed Sports Minister and Commonwealth Games Minister, the legacy elements of the games was one of the first conversations I had,” he said.

“It has absolutely been front and centre of everything and not only about the physical infrastructure – it is really meaningful in an area of the country that really needs those facilities.

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“Very early on we have been talking about the business and tourism side of the legacy of the games, the skills development, the job and skills academy here as well focusing on opportunities for young people.

“We have also been working with Sport England to really focus on making sure this can be part and parcel of our overall agenda to get activity levels of participation up.”

Birmingham City Council had a long-term plan to redevelop Alexander Stadium which was no longer up to international standards.

Following construction works for the Commonwealth Games, there will be a bowl of seating around the track which will also have the flexibility to expand capacity for any future events.

Birmingham City University is set to move into additional space at the venue which will also offer extra commercial uses.

The development has renewed hope Birmingham could be in a position to bid for the IAAF World Championships and rival London as a premier athletics venue for the UK.

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