

CASCADE 2004/5

What would be the environmental impact of a London 2012 Olympics?

Primary school children will be teenagers while those currently at secondary school or sixth form will be adults by the time the 2012 Olympics takes place. Some may even be competing. Whatever comes of the regeneration that would accompany a successful Olympic bid, young people will experience its effects for years to come. Key features of the London bid are a proposed schedule of environmental improvements and a sustainable approach to regeneration of the proposed site. The Olympic Village is to be adaptable into affordable housing for local people following the event. An infrastructure of roads and improved public transport should be left as a legacy for the area. The Olympic stadium, pools and other sports venues will remain as local facilities. Of particular interest to the Cascade project this year are the many green areas to be created out of what is currently an unusable industrial wasteland.

However even if London wins the Olympic bid, to what extent will these promises be fulfilled? Will the proposed improvements meet local needs? Will the regeneration be truly sustainable or just pay lip service to this ideal? This project has taken a creative approach to addressing some of these questions, and participants have worked to express their ideas on the issues in visual form. Students from Newham College of Further Education and the University of East London have benefited from access to the work of top researchers at the London East Research Institute. They have made site visits, and facilitated workshops where children have thought through what they would like for the environment in which they will become adults.

Most key sites for the proposed games fall within the Lee Valley Park Authority. This is a vast area of reclaimed land stretching northwards from the River Thames to Hertfordshire that has created open green space and wildlife areas out of disused industrial and landfill sites. Lee Valley have offered the benefit of their experience to students, who have seen at first hand landscaping that has already taken place and viewed visual responses to this by professional artists. Lee Valley's new centre for Arts and Sports, Gunpowder Park, is this year hosting the Cascade exhibition, documenting the work of participants from the three institutions. Some of the young people will also present their ideas to London 2012, the body responsible for the London bid. Even if London is not successful however, participants work will not be wasted. This area is due for regeneration whether or not the Olympics comes to the UK, and ideas and visions for the future are required in order to achieve this. The Cascade exhibition will help to ensure that the views of these young people do not go unheeded.

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