



London TravelWatch's involvement in the Olympic and Paralympic Games



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1. Introduction

This report aims to give a detailed overview of how the Olympic and Paralympic Games have impacted on London TravelWatch and how London TravelWatch have influenced and enhanced the passenger experience during this special period.

2. Internal preparations

Our main focus was to try and pre-empt problems that we thought might arise during the Games and look at possible solutions and different ways of working. The aim was to be as prepared and proactive as possible internally so that we could deal with any problems and queries that might arise. Due to the scale and enormity of the Olympics there was a sense of the unknown and therefore we prepared as best we could.

2.1 The Olympic handbook

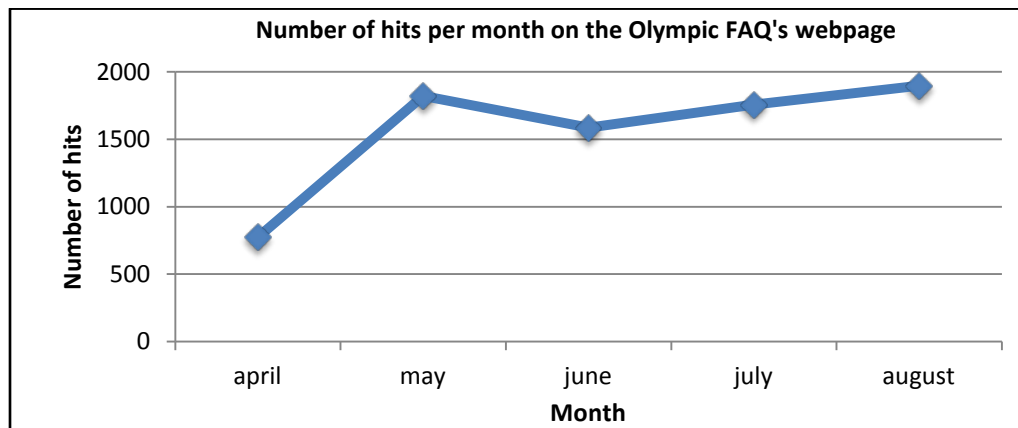
An interactive Olympic handbook for staff was created both in a hard and electronic version. The booklet covered a broad range of information from ticketing to accessibility to road changes. This provided a useful resource for staff to refer to and the electronic version had links to a number of useful websites which gave information about travelling during the games. Whilst the booklet was not extensively used during the Olympics I think it did prompt staff to visit the main websites to have a browse and get familiar with the large volume of information that was on the web.

2.2 Website frequently asked questions

Our website was updated on a regular basis before and during the Olympics. We drew special attention to our frequently asked questions page which received a fairly large number of hits from the public. Questions were compiled from casework enquiries, staff queries and other popular questions.

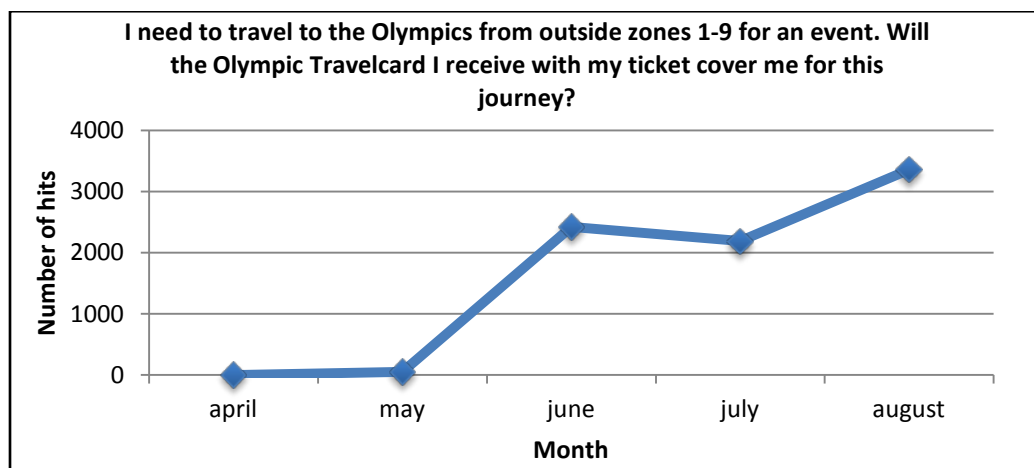
The graph below shows the number of hits on the Olympic frequently asked questions webpage. It shows that the number of hits rose sharply from April to May which was more than expected as people actually planned their journeys to the Olympic venues well

in advance. It then levelled off during the months from May to August and we would expect this to drop fairly significantly during September as the Games come to an end.



Graph 1

The second graph was of particular interest as one question outperformed the rest by a great deal receiving 3,361 hits. The question answered the popular concern about using Olympic Travel cards outside of zones 1-9. The graph also shows that this question became more apparent as the games came closer, with a large spike in hits from July to August showing the importance of the question. A lot of work was put into creating and publishing questions that would be useful for the public during the games and this graph really illustrates how useful these questions (about travelling from outside the Oyster zone) proved to be. Also effective use of keywords meant that many of our pages came up as some of the top pages relating to the Olympics on Google searches.



Graph 2

3. London TravelWatch's involvement during the Olympics

3.1 Casework

Our direct involvement during the Olympic period in terms of casework was fairly limited as all complaints about the service during the Olympics would be firstly dealt with by the relevant transport company. The real extent of the passenger experience during this period is yet to be determined as appeals will not be received by London TravelWatch until at least a month after.

3.2 Daily updates

Daily updates by phone from TfL Gold Command were very useful in keeping us at the forefront of what was happening on the network and making us aware of any problems that they were having. This also gave us the chance to relay any feedback on to TfL regarding our experiences on the network and any improvements we thought could be made to improve the passenger experience. Daily bulletins from both TfL and Network rail were also emailed out and these were very useful in updating the team and gave LTW helpful knowledge that we used when answering phone calls from the public. The Network Rail bulletin was especially beneficial with clear headings and layout with content that was detailed and concise.

3.3 Temporary changes

Temporary changes which included the side gate at Euston and the use of accessibility ramps supported and campaigned for by London TravelWatch were great success stories. The ramps enabled those with disabilities the chance to travel to games much more easily and without the normal barriers. It has also been confirmed by TfL that the ramps will be staying which is great news for the London transport network and those with disabilities. The side gate at Euston station was also a triumph as it was and still is being used a great number by passengers walking from Euston to Kings Cross. We hope that the side gate will remain open as it gives passengers a much better and safer way of walking to and from Kings cross station.



Figure 2- The Brazilian Paralympic Volleyball team on the RV1 bus and the Ramps in use on the Underground.

3.4 Mystery shopping

Throughout the period of the Olympics, London TravelWatch also carried out a number of mystery shopping exercises which involved members of staff visiting different venues across London. The aim of this was to examine how the transport network was coping with the significant increase in passengers. This included scrutiny of areas such as; information provisions, signage and accessibility at key stations such as Stratford, St Pancras, Paddington, London Bridge, Euston and Clapham Junction. The feedback was mostly very positive showing that the London transport network performed beyond expectation.

3.5 Public and press interest

Before the Olympics started, London TravelWatch had a number of foreign visitors to our offices. These included visits from China, Romania, Sweden, Singapore and a visit from the shadow transport MP for New South Wales, Australia. It was fantastic to see such an increased level of interest in what we do and how we go about doing it and this was undoubtedly down to Games. While we may often have one or two visits a year from overseas organisations, it was unusual to receive so many visitors in such a short space of time and this gave us a chance to increase our international profile and to help promote transport use engagement more widely.

We also had 13 requests for TV or radio interviews before and during the Olympics and Paralympics. Eight of these took place; we were unable to take part in one because of

the short notice and four were cancelled. Interviews were given to various BBC channels, French TV and radio, Dutch TV and Swiss radio. One of the interviews for the BBC ahead of the Paralympics really did bolster our public profile with Sharon Grant giving an interview for BBC news which was shown at lunchtime, at 6pm and on the news at 10pm.

London TravelWatch also fielded nine other press queries before and during the Games, including from the Wall Street Journal and Time Magazine and was mentioned in 10 press articles. We were also mentioned in a number of tweets and our tweets were 'retweeted' several times. London TravelWatch's details were also passed to the London Media Centre who made them available to the accredited and unaccredited media before the Games and a meeting was held with the Evening Standard's Olympics Editor, Matthew Beard prior to the Games.

Finally in June 2012, London TravelWatch staff attended an event at the House of Commons organised by Southeastern to brief MPs and stakeholders on Southeastern services during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This gave us the chance to listen first hand to the concerns of the MP's.

3.6 TfL Meeting

We had a successful meeting with TfL's Director of Marketing and Communications Vernon Everett and their Head of Olympic Operations Mark Evers. The meeting took place at TfL's head office in the period between the end of the Olympics and the start of the Paralympics. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss how they thought the Olympics had gone and to explain any changes they were thinking of making. We also had an opportunity to put across our recommendations which included improved bus signage at Paddington, signage at Clapham Junction and alterations to the accessibility icons shown on the London summer 2012 transport map.

4. What LTW learnt

4.1 One Team Transport

One of the main successes London TravelWatch and the transport industry will take from the Olympics is the 'One Team Transport' approach as shown in figure 3. Thousands of clearly visible travel ambassadors were deployed in and around London and the enthusiasm and knowledge they had was impressive. This is a joined up approach for which London TravelWatch has campaigned for a long time and it was great to see this working so well and the public utilising this extra help and benefiting from their presence in and around the stations. Another great success for TfL were the walking maps that were being distributed. These helped the public to consider their travel options and it eased congestion on the transport network, whilst also giving the public the chance to explore parts of London that they would not normally see.



Figure 3- 'One team transport'

4.2 Planning for big events/more services/cutting red tape

These three areas will be a key learning point for both the transport operators and London TravelWatch. To move forward in a positive manner from the Olympics these areas really need to be built upon. Planning for major events such as the Notting Hill Carnival and large international sports fixtures by introducing more services that are flexible, run later and are more frequent at the weekends is something that will most definitely benefit passengers. Also, cutting the red tape between train operating companies and TfL will encourage more joined up thinking and communication. This will undoubtedly help when problems occur and decisions need to be made in a speedy and efficient manner.

5. Legacy Aspirations

5.1 Relationships

The relationship between transport operators was key to the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. London TravelWatch is keen for TfL and other operators to continue the one team transport approach, with public facing staff who were highly visible, proactive and informed. Whilst it is understood that the sheer number of travel ambassadors will never be replicated, it is hoped that a small number will remain. London TravelWatch's suggestion is that the major stations should have a permanent team of travel ambassadors representing the TOCs, TfL and the station and they should all be branded under 'One Team Travel' or 'One Team Paddington'. This will not only help the thousands of passengers who visit from outside of the capital every day but will also provide a visible and knowledgeable presence that can direct and deal with problems that might arise.

5.2 Infrastructure

As previously mentioned, the ramps on the rail network and the side gate at Euston are issues London TravelWatch feels strongly about and would want to see remain as part of the legacy. In addition to the side gate at Euston we would like to see a clearly marked walking route from Euston to St Pancras. This would involve clear and visible signage, street lighting and enhancements to the walking environment.

London TravelWatch would also like to see the continued emphasis on walking within London. The excellent and highly praised walking maps should continue to be handed out and promoted. Not only does this help the public evaluate and change their travel plans, it gives people a different option when the network is experiencing delays.

5.3 Flexibility

We would like to see a more flexible approach to train operating times. During the Olympics the train operators exercised a flexible approach to their services when they were needed the most. For example, Southeastern and many of the other TOCs ran trains much later and were prepared to run extra services if needed. Having this flexibility really does make a difference to passengers trying to get home after large

scale events and we would like this flexibility to continue for future large scale sporting and musical events.

5.4 Business

London TravelWatch would also like to see the support shown for flexible working to continue. Allowing flexible working hours not only gives employees a better lifestyle it also allows them to travel at different times on the network. If 5-10% of the commuting public changed their working times and travelled at less busy times this would undoubtedly decrease congestion and overcrowding on the transport network.

Another success of the Olympics and Paralympics was changing the time at which freight was transported on London's road network. Many companies altered their delivery times so freight was despatched during the night instead of during the day. This worked tremendously well alongside the change in motorist behaviour, as central London's road network saw a decrease of 10-15%. This is a fairly significant decrease and actually showed businesses that transporting freight at night is a viable option that could actually save money.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion the Olympics and Paralympics were not only a great sporting success, they also defied expectations and showed Britain and the rest of the world how resilient London's transport system actually is. Whilst recognition and applause must be given to both TfL and the TOCs for the effort they put into making the transport system run as smoothly as it did, we at London TravelWatch can also be pleased about the role we played during the Games. London TravelWatch was instrumental in the preparation leading up to and during the Olympics and the valuable input from our organisation really did help to improve the passenger experience.

7. Appendix

Olympic/Paralympic WebPages – hits by page (as at 10/8/12)

Question/Topic	April	May	June	July	August	Sept-
Olympics Useful Information	1542	1752	1597	1718	1793	1068
The Olympics- frequently asked questions	776	1822	1586	1757	1897	712
The Olympics- getting to work or an event	43	77	57	144	29	7
The Olympics- I want to avoid the crowds.....	38	28	29	100	28	7
Where can I find a list of public toilets?	27	18	33	47	70	26
What should I do if my journey is delayed?	20	11	2	7	5	-
What has LTW done for the Olympics?	25	26	23	-	14	6
What will LTW be doing during the Olympics?	21	-	10	13	5	-
Meeting or travelling with friends	14	-	3	-	3	-
General guidance on the weather	10	8	-	-	-	-
The Olympics and Paralympics Fares & Tickets	-	15	113	241	274	125
Help other travellers to enjoy the Olympics and Paralympics	5	-	2	4	-	-
The Olympics- traveling with children	5	6	2	-	5	-
Can I use my Olympic travelcard when I am not travelling to an event?			-	244	271	56
Losing an Olympic Travelcard			-	180	574	258
Will there be changes to the tube			-	40	48	26

timetable?						
What is happening to bus services <u>near the Olympic and Paralympic venues during the Games?</u>			-	10	3	-
Will there be more frequent river services during the Games?			-	7	8	-
I need to travel to the Olympics from outside zones 1-9. Will my Olympic travelcard cover me?			51	2423	3361	1365
Getting around by bike	-	-	-	-	22	3