

A wider role for sport : community sports hubs and urban regeneration

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A wider role for sport: Community sports hubs and urban regeneration

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Abstract

In recent years, sport has emerged as a catalyst of regeneration. However, much focus has been on event-related regeneration, with the use of smaller scale sports infrastructure for this purpose receiving less attention. This paper focuses on the contribution of community sports hubs to urban regeneration. Using evidence from a case study of Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub (OJNH) in the UK, it examines the intended sporting, economic, social environmental outcomes of the project and evaluates whether these are being achieved. The paper argues that although there is evidence to suggest that as a sustainable sports facility, OJNH is achieving its sporting objectives; the regeneration impacts of the project are more variable. The paper concludes that while community sports hubs have the potential to create wider societal benefits, there is a need for further evidence to support the case and leverage maximum benefits for the local community in the longer term.

Keywords

Sport, Urban Regeneration, Community Sports Hubs, Sports Infrastructure, Sport-related Regeneration

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Introduction

Economic and social change over the last fifty years in the UK has resulted in significant and profound changes to the urban environment, with many post-industrial towns and cities experiencing economic, social and physical decline. Urban regeneration has evolved as a central government policy response across successive administrations, with many geographical areas subsequently becoming the focus of wide ranging regeneration programmes and initiatives. Urban regeneration through leisure has emerged as a critical feature of the post-modern city of consumption, with sports events, sports infrastructure and sports programmes becoming increasingly important in facilitating this (Tallon, 2013).

The use of sport to generate wider benefits to society is not a new phenomenon and has been recognised for over twenty years (see Coalter, 2007; Gratton and Henry, 2001). Historically, sport was seen as superfluous to the process of regeneration rather than a central component of regeneration strategies (Pack and Glyptis, 1989). Furthermore, it was largely seen as part of the broader remit of culture-led regeneration (Bianchini, 1991; Jones and Evans, 2008). However, since the 1990s, sport has increasingly developed credibility as a contributor to and driver of regeneration in its own right, within the UK and in other developed nations (Davies, 2010).

Three broad approaches to sport-related regeneration have emerged, primarily driven by events, venues/infrastructure and programmes/interventions. Globally, mega event-related regeneration is probably the most widely recognised approach, with high profile examples in the UK including the London 2012 Olympic Games and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Nevertheless, there are many examples of sports infrastructure, including large-scale sports stadia such as Wembley and smaller scale community facilities in towns and cities across the UK, built for sporting and urban regeneration purposes. Additionally, there are various examples of localised programme-led sports initiatives, implemented to enhance participation and target specific social and economic outcomes in disadvantaged communities.

The development of community sports hubs

The mid 1970s and early 1980s were a boom period for public leisure provision in the UK. However, much of that stock is now aging and requiring rationalisation and new investment (Sport England, 2015; Taylor, 2011). Sport England, the non-departmental public body responsible for community sport in England, recognised the need for modern sustainable community sports facilities and favoured an approach based on the concept of ‘community hubs’ (Sport England, 2008a). This concept embraced the ideology of:

Public/private investment packages and management partnerships that link sport and active recreation with commercial activities allied with contributing to wider social policy areas such as health, childcare provision and lifelong learning (Sport England, 2014a, 2).

Community hubs are characterised by the co-location of community services with revenue streams alongside sports facilities, which form the heart of infrastructure developments. In the context of wider shifts in UK sports policy towards investment in sport for wider societal good (Houlihan and Lindsay, 2013; King, 2009), the development of community sports hubs are seen as providing regeneration potential for urban land and existing under-performing sites, particularly parks and open spaces and the replacement of existing stock in need of modernisation (Sport England, 2008b). This regeneration potential also provides opportunities for key strategic partnerships to be formed with national, regional and local agencies to leverage urban funds for the development of sport.

Contribution to literature and paper outline

With the emergence of sport as a facilitator of regeneration, there has been a growth in literature, particularly on sports events and urban regeneration (Davies, 2012; Fussey *et al*, 2012; Matheson, 2010; Paramio-Salcines, 2014; Smith, 2010). However, the contribution of sports infrastructure to the regeneration process has received less attention. Much of the literature on sports infrastructure is based upon the North American experience and focuses on the analysis of short term economic impacts of large scale stadia (Davies, 2010; Thornley, 2002). Within the international literature, there is limited analysis of the wider economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration outcomes generated by smaller scale sports venues.

This paper attempts to address the identified gap in the literature by examining the contribution of community sports hubs to regeneration. It presents a case study of Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub (OJNH) in Warrington, which opened in 2012 and is the first community sports hub to be developed in the UK. The paper firstly sets the context for the case study by discussing the synergies between sport and urban policy and the theoretical chain of relationships that leads to the creation of longer term regeneration impacts through investment in sport. The main section of the paper then examines the intended sporting and regeneration objectives of OJNH, and using primary and secondary data from key stakeholders, explores the extent to which these are being achieved. In conclusion, the paper reflects on the potential value of community sports hubs for urban regeneration and the key research considerations for leveraging maximum opportunities from community sports infrastructure in the future.

Delivering regeneration through sport

Urban regeneration is a term that has become widely used in policy discourse and numerous academics have debated how it is defined and what it encompasses (for example see Jones and Evans, 2008; Roberts and Sykes, 2000; Tallon, 2013). Smith (2012) suggests that regeneration is not only a policy term, but one that is used with the discourses of place marketing and property speculation, as well as everyday language. Furthermore, he argues that ‘there is a distinction between academic definitions of the term, the way it infuses policy discourses and popular representations’ (Smith, 2012, 8), with few examples of ‘regeneration’ cited by key stakeholders matching academic definitions.

While it is not the intention of this paper to repeat these debates here, it is necessary to indicate that in the context of this paper the term urban regeneration will be used in its broadest sense, to include not just the physical redevelopment and reconstruction of an area, but to include the economic, social and environmental transformation of urban areas (Jones and Evans, 2008; Roberts and Sykes, 2000). In the context of urban policy, it is also used to refer to the long term, lasting transformation of an area that has previously suffered some sort of degeneration. It therefore follows that sport-related regeneration refers to the way that sport can be used to revitalise an area economically, socially, environmentally and physically, with sport defined from The European Sports Charter as:

...all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels (Council of Europe, 2001).

Converging sport and urban policy in the UK: A brief historical overview

Previous to the 1990s, sport and urban policy in the UK were considered to be relatively separate spheres of public policy, with the focus of sport policy being on sports participation, performance and the delivery of services to facilitate this; and the focus of urban policy on tackling issues related to urban development, regeneration and deprivation. Through the 1990s it was increasingly recognised, largely by John Major's Conservative government that sport could contribute to a variety of other mainstream agendas within society (Coaffee, 2008; Houlihan and Lindsay, 2013). The increasing recognition of the wider benefits of sport resulted in a twofold change in policy, with an emerging and increasing presence of sport within urban policy rhetoric, and a reorientation of sports policy to address broader issues of regeneration (Davies, 2010). This coincided with a growing dissatisfaction of the property-led model of regeneration and the acknowledgement that communities within areas targeted by such regeneration policy were not experiencing the benefits from the 'trickle down' effect. Moreover, that urban regeneration is a multi-faceted, rather than economic problem and that more stakeholders should be involved in its implementation (Tallon, 2013).

The emergence of sport as a serious urban regeneration policy driver was particularly seen under the New Labour government from 1997 onwards. The New Labour approach to regeneration exhibited a number of characteristics, which were reflected in subsequent policy initiatives, including sub-national intervention at the regional and neighbourhood levels; community involvement in regeneration programmes and joined-up governance with a social welfare focus and emphasis on partnership working above departmental silos (Tallon, 2013). The creation of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to address issues of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion, and the establishment of Policy Action Teams (PAT) and in particular PAT 10, which focused on the contribution of sport (and the arts) to neighbourhood renewal (DCMS, 1999), were instrumental in highlighting the potential role of sport for achieving holistic regeneration. Similar developments were observed in the

sports policy arena from 2000 onwards where there was a clear shift to reflect investment in sport for wider societal good. King (2009) outlines how sport policy from this period was re-orientated to take into account greater symbiotic links between sport and wider non-sport agendas (such as health, education and social inclusion) and encourage thematic and partnership working to establish mutual benefits across policy sectors (e.g. DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002; Sport England, 2004). This was particularly evident at the regional spatial scale, with partnership working between Sport England, the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Government Offices for the English Regions (GOR). Under the Labour administration, funds for sports initiatives were subsequently leveraged from a range of high profile urban initiatives including the Single Regeneration Budget, the New Deal for Communities; Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI).

Since the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010, there have been considerable changes to the landscape of urban regeneration in the UK. Set in the context of the global economic downturn since 2007 and the related contraction of the private sector and wider public expenditure reductions; the Public Bodies Bill and the Localism Bill in 2010 outlined a number of changes to the regional policy landscape, including the state-led restructuring of sub national economic governance and regeneration (National Archives, 2014; Purgalis, 2011). Amongst the more significant of these changes for sports investment was the abolition of the RDAs and their replacement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which are intended to be more locally owned partnerships responsible for setting the local economic agenda, driving economic growth and creating jobs. Historically the RDAs were a key funding partner of sport-related regeneration schemes but at present, there is little indication that the LEPs will take over this role. A viewpoint shared by an interviewee of this research:

...there is no real like for like direct replacement for RDA resources for sport and likewise for the GOR funds...the LEPs are not coming forward as a major substitute for any of that...there are really precious little crumbs at the LEP table for sport... (Interview participant: Chair, North West Steering Group for the 2012 Games).

Parallel to changes in urban regeneration policy are changes occurring in the sport policy landscape, largely driven by cuts in public expenditure announced in the Comprehensive

Spending Review (CSR) of 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010). Local authorities have seen cuts to budgets for Sport and Recreation Services and in some cases this has marginalised welfare policy goals (King, 2012). In relation to broad public policy objectives though, there appears to be general continuity for sport policy in many areas under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (Houlihan and Lindsay, 2013). There continues to be funding available for the development of community sports facilities through the Places, People Play initiative (Sport England, 2014b). This has replaced the Sport England Sustainable Facilities Funding programme, which initially supported the development of community sports hubs. At the time of writing, the notion of sport contributing to wider economic and social agendas thus remains a clear one. This is illustrated by recent guidance produced by Sport England on planning for sport, which notes that proactive and positive planning for sport is important both for its own sake and to ensure the benefits that it can bring to other complementary agendas including improving the health of the nation; enhancing social and cultural well-being; improving community safety and creating and supporting economic growth (Sport England, 2013).

Conceptualising the relationship between sport and urban regeneration

There is an assumption made by policy makers that investment in sport will create regeneration impacts. However, there is limited conceptual discussion of this process in the literature.

Logic models are used widely across government, the private and third sector organisations, as a means of graphically illustrating the intended relationship between the resources available to implement a programme, policy or intervention; the activities planned and the intended changes it is expected to achieve (W.K.Kellogg Foundation, 2004). In the case of analytical logic models, theories of change are also built in to so that the reasons for desired change can be tested and evaluated (Shushu *et al*, 2014). Although the terminology may vary slightly, a logic model typically has five components:

- Inputs (resources that go into a programme);
- Activities (identifiable throughputs of a programme);
- Outputs (measurable indicators of activities);

- Outcomes (intended results from programme activities) and
- Impacts (lasting intended and unintended changes in the community which occur as a result of the programme).

Logic models have been increasingly used since the 1990s and 2000s in sport policy analysis (e.g. Coalter, 2006; Shushu *et al*, 2014) and urban policy analysis (e.g. Department for Social Development, 2013; Tyler *et al*, 2010) as a means of articulating how programmes work in these areas. However, their specific application to the area of sport and urban regeneration has been limited.

Figure 1 is a basic conceptual logic model illustrating the intended linkages between planned sport activities and intended regeneration outcomes and impacts. Its function is to outline and describe the key elements of a sport-related regeneration in a chronological order, with a view to building an understanding of the relationships between investment in sport and subsequent regeneration.

Insert Figure 1

As discussed previously, there are broadly three approaches to sport-related regeneration that have emerged in recent years; sports events, infrastructure and programmes. Investment for these represent inputs to the logic chain and depending on the intended size and scale of regeneration, may include more than one type of resource. For example, investment in sports infrastructure may occur together with investment in programmes to improve awareness of and encourage participation in sport (e.g. DCMS, 2010). The activities represent the identifiable and measurable means of implementing the inputs. The planned project inputs and activities are intended to create change. It is anticipated that the outputs from the planned activities, such as bringing brownfield land back into use, increasing visitation to an area, creating additional jobs and increased sports participation and volunteering will lead to outcomes including improved health in the community; increased tourism and employment and reduced anti-social behaviour. Ultimately it is expected that these outcomes will lead to a pathway of economic, social, physical and environmental change in the community (Davies, 2012; Paramio-Salcines, 2014).

The process of change generated by investment in sport is complex and not fully understood or represented in Figure 1. For simplicity, the logic chain outlines various examples of economic, social, physical and environmental outcomes, with no particular emphasis on hierarchical relationships. Nevertheless, in reality this is unlikely to be the case. Sport-related regeneration projects are likely to create a range of intermediate (pre-requisites) and final outcomes; some of which will be individual and others societal. For example, participation in sport may lead to increased self esteem and self efficacy for an individual (intermediate outcomes), which in turn may lead to increased pro-social behaviour and ultimately reduced crime the community (final outcome). In other cases, although not separately illustrated, final outcomes in one area (for example reduced anti-social behaviour and increased pro-social behaviour) serve as the antecedents (intermediate outcomes) to final outcomes in other areas (e.g. improved educational attainment) (Coalter, 2007; Taylor *et al*,2015).

Figure 1 provides a broad conceptual framework for understanding how investment in sport may create economic, social physical and environmental regeneration. Furthermore, it offers a potential framework that can be used to help policy makers identify the mechanisms through which change occurs. However, the extent to which sports events, infrastructure and programmes contribute to economic, social physical and environmental regeneration is largely unknown and likely to be variable and context specific. For example, it is largely assumed that top-down event-related regeneration, which includes a high profile flagship project is likely to be a powerful catalyst for image creation, tourism, inward investment and associated economic regeneration impacts; whereas a bottom-up sports programme for young people at risk of crime and delinquency is likely to be more concerned with social regeneration impacts. Nevertheless, these assumptions are largely unproven and further empirical investigation of the logic chain and the relationships between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for different types of investments is needed to understand how sport creates urban change. The following section of the paper will now examine a case study of sport-related regeneration, driven by investment in sports infrastructure, to assess the extent to which the relationships identified in the model are realised.

Case Study: Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub (OJNH)

Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub (OJNH) is the first community sports hub to be built in the UK and is a Sport England Iconic Facility. It is a multi-sport and leisure facility co-located with health, education, libraries, adult and children's services into a single building. OJNH is located within a deprived area of Warrington. Orford Ward, together with several surrounding wards is ranked amongst the most deprived 10% in England. Moreover, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), parts of the Orford ward and community are in the bottom 2.9% (most deprived). The facility was built as a regeneration project on a former landfill (brownfield) site and at the time of writing is the largest 2012 Olympic Legacy facility to be built outside London. The project was granted outline planning permission in September 2009 and formally opened on 18th May 2012.

Methodology

The research presented in the paper was undertaken as part of a wider exploratory investigation into how sport is being used to address regional regeneration in North West (NW) England. The research was comprised of three stages: Stage 1 was a documentary review of literature and policy relating to sport-related regeneration; Stage 2 was a series of qualitative interviews with regional actors in the NW from both sporting and urban-related organisations and Stage 3 was a case study investigation of sport-related regeneration initiatives within the NW. The evaluation of OJNH was part of Stage 3 and is the primary focus of this paper.

The wider exploratory investigation on the contribution of sport to regional regeneration commenced in 2010; when the spatial scale of the region was identified as being strategically important in the context of economic governance and regeneration. Subsequent changes in the political landscape as discussed earlier in the paper have seen a shift from regionalism to sub-regional localism, with clear implications for the management and governance of both urban regeneration and sport. This historical context and the research undertaken in Stage 1 and Stage 2 has relevance for explaining the creation and funding of sport-related regeneration schemes such as OJNH and will be drawn upon to explain the development of the project as appropriate. Stage 3 and the OJNH case study were undertaken between January 2012 and December 2013.

A case study was chosen as the research method for OJNH to understand how a community sports facility could potentially contribute to urban regeneration. The specific purpose of the OJNH case study was to examine in-depth, the intended regeneration objectives of a community sports project and to explore the extent to which these are being achieved. Yin (2014) defines the scope of a case study as:

...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context may not be clearly evident.

Context was considered important to the research, as regeneration does not occur in isolation from wider society and it is relevant in understanding what works and for whom. OJNH was selected as a single case study, as it is the first community sports hub to be built in the UK. It potentially provides an opportunity to understand how such facilities could be utilised for regeneration elsewhere. Furthermore, as a Sport England Iconic Facility, it provides an opportunity for other projects to learn lessons about how to develop sustainable sports facilities in the future. Although it is unlikely that it will be possible to generalise from the findings, case study research is widely used method in sport management as a way of developing in-depth insight and analysis of a program, event or facility (e.g. Gratton *et al*, 2000; Mackellar and Reis, 2014).

The evidence for the OJNH case study was collected from a combination of primary and secondary data sources. In terms of primary data, thirteen semi structured interviews were undertaken with key organisations involved with the planning, delivery and operation of facility. The interviews lasted between 45-90 minutes and included senior personnel from the following organisations: Warrington Borough Council (Lead Partner); Livewire (Community Interest Company); Sport England; North West Development Agency (NWDA); Warrington Collegiate; Decathlon; Government Office for the North West (GONW) and the North West Steering Group for 2012 Games. Furthermore, two focus groups were carried out. The first involved local community representatives and residents; the second included organisations working within OJNH representing sport development, community safety, health and libraries. In addition to primary data, evidence from secondary sources was analysed, including relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and documentation of organisations involved in the project. Secondary data was collected from all the

organisations involved in the interviews, together with the Football Foundation, NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT), WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd) and Big Lottery.

The interviews and focus groups were analysed using thematic coding. Creswell (2014, 198) describes coding as ‘the process of organising the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins...’. For the OJNH case study research, transcripts from the focus group and interviews were coded following the traditional approach of allowing the codes to emerge during the analysis. The themes emerging from the analysis were divided into broader first tier macro categories (e.g. economic, social, environmental impacts), and second tier micro categories (e.g. specific outcomes such as employment; anti social behaviour; image change). The themes emerging from the transcripts were mapped against the outputs, outcomes and impacts outlined in the conceptual model and presented in Figure 1.

Project rationale, funding and partners

The overall aim of OJNH was to create a ‘hub’ for public services that would act as a catalyst for economic, social physical and environmental regeneration. The project sought to deliver increased participation in sport and physical activity and to address health and community inequalities in the local Orford community and wider Warrington area. Furthermore, through the education facilities supported by Warrington Collegiate, it aimed to improve the local skill base and potential for employment in the local community. It was also developed to enhance the physical environment through the remediation of a disused park/brownfield site.

The sports facility was developed to replace Fordton Leisure Centre (approximately 1 mile away), which was not meeting the sporting needs of the community and had little potential to meet the potential demands identified by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) in the future. The business model for OJNH included an innovative Community Investment Fund (CIF), which was intended to facilitate reduced reliance on the public sector overtime by creating a sum of money to pay the debt charges; the lifecycle costs of the facility and fund community sport engagement programmes in the local area. The CIF was created by selling

6 acres of land to a commercial retailer (Decathlon) for the development of a store at the front of the site.

The procurement model for OJNH was one of Design, Build, Operate and Maintain. WBC was responsible for the design and construction of the project, together with the long term operation and maintenance services (lifecycle costs). While WBC retains ownership of the facility and is the strategic lead of the project, they have a management agreement with LiveWire, a Community Interest Company (CIC) to operate and manage OJNH on a not-for-profit basis for a period of 30 years. As a CIC, the profits from Livewire are reinvested back into community sport. The CIC status of Livewire holds a number of advantages for the organisation from an operational and management viewpoint. Interviewees noted the ability to work flexibly and change programming and products to suit the needs of customers; flexibility to bring in experts, for example in marketing; brand identity and eligibility for wider funding.

OJNH features an innovative set of partnerships between public, private and voluntary sports organisations. The total cost of the build was £27.3 million and the contribution from key funding partners is listed in Table 1. The original budget for facility was £32 million. However, some funding streams were either unsecured or did not fully materialise into the intended contribution for various reasons. The most notable of these were the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding and Free Swimming capital funding, both of which were withdrawn due to the change of national government in 2010. WBC was just two weeks away from signing the BSF contract when it was withdrawn. This presented a key challenge for the project as the contractors were already on site. The facility had to be modified and WBC had to borrow an extra £3.7 million to cover the shortfall. In addition to the funding partners, there are a range of non-funding partners including sporting organisations (e.g. NGBs; voluntary sports clubs) and non-sport community organisations (e.g. health; community safety; education; social services) that deliver services from OJNH.

Insert TABLE 1

Evaluating the evidence: objectives vs. outcomes

In the application made by Warrington Borough Council to the Sport England Project Committee in 2008 to create a community sports hub, it was stated that:

The project will make a significant impact in Warrington, particularly in terms of sports participation, and regeneration. It will transform the Orford Park area, provide jobs and create a sustainable quality facility for the development of local clubs, coaches, volunteers, school/FE links and player pathways (p 4).

Evidence relating to the impact of OJNH has been collected by a range of stakeholders during the project planning and delivery stages and in the first year of operation, driven largely by the intended outcomes and KPIs of the various partners. This section of the paper will now review the data, in conjunction with the primary data collected from stakeholders, to evaluate whether the sporting and regeneration objectives of the OJNH project are being achieved.

Sporting objectives

A clear objective of OJNH was to develop a sustainable sports facility to replace an aging facility that was no longer fit for purpose, expensive to operate and unable to cope with future predicted demand. Furthermore, to ensure that the facility mix at the hub as well as programming and pricing policies were such that services provided are viewed as offering a high quality and value for money and result in participation opportunities for the local catchment area.

The construction of the facility was delivered on time and within budget, and after 18 months of operation, early indications suggest that the commercial model of funding the facility through the CIF is proving to be a sustainable way of paying the debt charges and lifecycle costs of the facility. Although the facility could be considered a relative success on the basis that a new high quality sports facility has been delivered, which has reduced the longer term financial burden to the local authority, the sale of land to fund the CIF only produced half the predicted annual revenue, largely as a result of the economic recession and reduced land values. Consequently, most of the CIF is being spent on debt charges and lifestyle costs of the facility with little remaining for community engagement activities in sport. Despite this, facility usage and monitoring data collected by LiveWire and measured against the KPIs set by Sport England around sports participation levels is very positive.

Evidence from the first year of operation demonstrates that OJNH exceeded targets relating to throughput and active memberships. Throughput data for sports participation in aquatics, health and fitness activities, sports hall/rooms and pitch hire from 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013 was 822,786. The target for 2012-13 was 375,843 meaning that the facility has more than doubled the anticipated number of sports participants. Furthermore, comparisons with final usage statistics from Fordton Leisure Centre in the final year of operation of 233,000 (all site usage not just sport) suggests that OJNH has had a significant net positive impact on sports participation in the local area, although specific data relating to postcode was unavailable to confirm this.

Similarly, membership data suggests that OJNH has increased active participation in sport and exercise. Leisure membership numbers in October 2013 were 4320 (compared with 1465 for Fordton Leisure prior to closure). Most significantly, 53% of those memberships were concessionary. The average concessionary membership across Warrington is 37% (Livewire, 2013). Concessionary memberships are those for people on various social benefits, including universal credit, income support, working tax credit, job seekers allowance, disability allowance, 60+ and students 16+in full time education. They are targeted at groups in the community that generally have low participation rates and for whom price may act as a significant barrier to participation. The data from OJNH indicates that Livewire has been successful in increasing the proportion of members in this demographic. This reflects strategic planning by facility managers to increase participation amongst specific groups:

We revamped as an organisation our charges and our charging policies in line with the strategic aims of this project...the concessions were targeted to get people in... (Interview participant: LiveWire).

Nevertheless, it is unclear from the data which groups have shown membership increases; whether the members are from the local wards or more widely across Warrington, how active the members are, how long concessionary membership has been held for and whether increases in memberships represent displacement from other facilities or genuine new members. In summary, while the data provides a snapshot picture indicating a positive impact on sports participation, it lacks the detail to fully evaluate how successful OJNH has

been at engaging and sustaining participation in specific groups within the local communities and neighbourhoods.

Regeneration objectives

While data relating to the financial operation of the building and sports participation suggests that OJNH is achieving its intended financial target and sporting objectives, in relation to the wider regeneration objectives of the project, the data is more variable. WBC together with the North West Development Agency (NWDA), were the key partners responsible for setting regeneration targets for the project. The NWDA originally invested £3.66 million with the aim of achieving the direct and wider regeneration outcomes outlined in Table 2.

Insert TABLE 2

The abolition of the NWDA in 2010 meant that the intended regeneration outcomes outlined in Table 2 were never formally evaluated and there was no requirement from other funding partners to monitor and evaluate these KPIs. Consequently, there is limited quantifiable data on the economic, social and environmental outcomes and no plans to formally monitor these in the future. Some output data has been collected by education and health partners co-located in OJNH, suggesting that health referral targets and targets for numbers of pupils obtaining sporting qualifications have been exceeded by a considerable margin, and that these are concentrated in disadvantaged groups. However, this data is generally limited and does not provide the context and detail required to fully evaluate the broader regeneration outcomes related to employment, skills and training or improved health and quality of life outlined at the inception phase of the project.

Physical and environmental outcomes

The strongest evidence of regeneration was found in relation to physical and environmental outcomes. It was visibly evident from observation and historical planning documentation that the 9.48ha landfill site upon which the facility is built has been physically remediated. Flood defence mechanisms have been installed on site and the environmental assets of the surrounding 18.3ha Orford Park has been developed through landscaping and the provision

of footpaths and walking trails. Furthermore, transport infrastructure to the site has also been improved with a new access road and traffic junctions on the gateway corridor to the site. As a consequence of enhanced environmental assets and improved accessibility, the park has seen a considerable increase in usage. Livewire estimate that there were approximately 222,350 general park users in 2013, a threefold increase from the previous year, including dog walkers (45,500) skate park users (50,700), Bowling Green users (13,650) and general park users (22,880). The case study research seems to suggest that OJNH is achieving its direct project and wider environmental outcomes outlined in Table 2.

Economic outcomes

In contrast, the research found that the data relating to the economic regeneration outcomes outlined in Table 2, was particularly limited. There were no reliable quantifiable sources against which to measure the economic outcomes and the data available on the provision of new jobs, private sector investment and skills training and opportunities was either partial or incomplete.

There is some qualitative evidence emerging from stakeholders to suggest that OJNH is creating positive economic and employment outcomes in the local community. Lead partner, Warrington Borough Council, reported that net direct local employment was generated from the construction of OJNH and the Decathlon store, although specific employment figures were not available to corroborate this information. Furthermore, it was claimed that longer term employment in sport, health and libraries has been generated in OJNH, with 70% of all employees from local postcodes. However, again data was not available to analyse the quality of these job, postcodes of employees or to evaluate whether there has been an overall net gain in local employment from the closure of facilities elsewhere.

Various interview participants gave examples of skills, training and support programmes that have been created through OJNH, to develop vocational training and basic skill levels, such as arrangements with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide placement opportunities for the long term unemployed. Others commented on how the facility is impacting on the employment aspirations of local students:

I have students that everyday walk into and out of an industry they are aspiring to; as for providing real life work opportunities and experiences and a vision into where they are going and what they want to do, it is the most ideal setting you could have...it is literally providing an inspiration for the students on a day to day basis (Interview participant: Warrington Collegiate College).

Nevertheless, despite anecdotal evidence of economic outcomes emerging from the qualitative data, as the previous discussion illustrates, there is little robust evidence to suggest wider economic regeneration outcomes are being achieved.

Social outcomes

As shown in Table 2, there were no intended direct project social outcomes for OJNH and given the intangible nature of social outcomes, it is unsurprising that there was a lack of quantifiable evidence on the wider social outcomes. However, various stakeholders, including the local authority, indicated that it is in the area of social regeneration that OJNH is possibly having the greatest impact:

The community benefit has been so immense; it's hard to sum it up in one phrase. The main community benefit for this has been, for Orford in particular, we've seen a sea change in the social regeneration of this area. We have seen anti-social behaviour come down, we have seen participation go up and we have seen pride for the first time in a long time in that area (Interview participant: Warrington Borough Council).

Qualitative evidence from other stakeholders similarly suggests that OJNH is impacting on various social outcomes. In the focus groups, the local community safety officer commented that OJNH and the skate park is having a dramatic effect on anti-social behaviour, and local residents commented that as a result of less 'groups of young people hanging around' the park feels less threatening and as a consequence they feel safer walking in and using the area. In terms of building social capital, data from Livewire suggests a stepped increase in volunteering within clubs using the facility, and qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups indicates that the extensive community consultation process during the planning and delivery of the project has contributed to the creation of at least six new community groups linked with the neighbourhood hub. Furthermore, evidence from the focus group of local residents suggests that the facility has improved peoples' perceptions of the area, creating a more positive sense of place for the

local community. Although difficult to measure, the latter point was supported by the organisation managing the facility:

The building has done more to regenerate this area and make people feel good about where they live and their value than anything else around here in a long time...to put something so iconic and so big and so good looking here meant they hadn't been forgotten – that is quite important...(Interview participant: Livewire).

While many of the reported social regeneration impacts are again based on anecdotal evidence, collectively there is growing consensus across a range of stakeholders including residents, to indicate that OJNH is having a positive social impact on the local area. Nevertheless, as an interviewee from the local authority cautioned:

Orford Park is not a panacea for everything. It is not going to solve health and other social issues in the next 5 years. However, it may have an impact in the next 20 years. It is the people growing up now who get opportunities to use these facilities and get the good start in life...(Interview participant: Warrington Borough Council)

Whether OJNH will create an environment in which health inequalities in Orford can be tackled through sport and physical activity, or where social capital can be nurtured through volunteering is uncertain, as these social outcomes are neither direct, easy to measure or as the case of economic outcomes, attribute causality.

Summary of evidence

The specific purpose of the case study presented in this paper was to examine the intended sporting and regeneration objectives of OJNH and explore the extent to which these are being achieved. In financial and sporting terms, the evidence suggests that as a sustainable sports facility, OJNH is achieving its intended outcomes and is a blueprint for other facility development. It is delivering increased and above anticipated participation in sport and physical activity, especially amongst disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, the DBOM procurement and operational model has enabled the OJNH to be financially viable, reduced longer term reliance on the public sector and more resilient to the changing economic and political landscape. Nevertheless, as a regeneration project, the evidence is more variable. From an environmental perspective, there is clear evidence to suggest that OJNH has physically regenerated a brownfield site in a deprived area of Warrington. Furthermore, there is a strong consensus, albeit qualitative, from a wide range of different stakeholders

including some community representatives, to suggest that OJNH is acting as a catalyst for social regeneration in the surrounding neighbourhood. This is corroborated by increased local engagement with the facility in terms of participation in sporting and non sporting activities, volunteering, employment and wider community consultations. However, due to a lack of formal monitoring and evaluation of regeneration outcomes by WBC and other partner organisations, there is limited tangible and quantitative evidence to support the notion that OJNH is achieving its intended economic outcomes.

While the quality of evidence in relation to the intended regeneration outcomes of OJNH is not strong, the findings do add weight to a growing body of research which suggests that sports facilities have the potential to contribute to regeneration in the surrounding area. This indicates that there is some legitimacy to the notion that sport can be used to generate wider benefits to society. However, the case study of OJNH reinforces the need for more robust quantitative data and evidence going forward if claims of sport-related regeneration are to be validated.

Community sports hubs: A future model of sustainable urban regeneration?

It is increasingly assumed within policy discourse that the development of sports infrastructure in urban areas that have suffered from decline will lead to varying degrees of subsequent regeneration. Although much interest has focused on large scale sports infrastructure, there is still an implicit assumption that smaller sports facilities will create lasting regeneration legacies for the communities they are located within. The descriptive logic model presented earlier in the paper suggests that in principle, community sports hubs have the potential to create economic, social physical and environmental regeneration. However, as the study of OJNH has demonstrated, despite growing anecdotal evidence, the case remains largely unproven. This makes it difficult for local authorities and LEP's to make a strong case for future public investment in community sports facilities based on the wider benefits that sport will bring. King (2012, 7) argues that 'with some urgency, Sport and Recreation Services need to acquire evidence-based data to 'make the case' both in economic and social terms'. This is particularly significant for sport policy makers and managers of sports facilities in the current economic and political climate, as there are no

longer RDAs and other regional bodies to champion sport-related regeneration projects and programmes, as was the case for OJNH.

The lack of robust evidence relating to sport infrastructure and urban regeneration also makes it difficult to fully evaluate why and how community sports hubs create regeneration and to identify the mechanisms which create the pathway of change. The qualitative research presented in this paper suggests it is in the area of social regeneration that potentially community hubs hold their greatest value. The case study of OJNH found that critical to the generation of wider social impacts was the sense of being owned by and deeply rooted in the local community, largely brought about by extensive community consultation during the planning process and continuing into the operational phase of the facility. It was suggested this was a key factor for the increasing participation in sport and physical activity in the local community and the emerging social regeneration outcomes including reduced anti-social behaviour, enhanced social capital through volunteering and engagement with clubs and community groups. However, there is a need to more fully understand and investigate these processes and mechanisms that bring about lasting regeneration from sports infrastructure.

Basic descriptive logic models help multi-level stakeholders build up a shared understanding of a programme and can be used to inform programme design and planning. Nevertheless, their effectiveness as a tool to help policy makers understand the casual relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts is somewhat limited (Shushu *et al*, 2014). To more fully understand the processes and mechanisms that leverage regeneration benefits from community sports hubs, there is a need to move towards more advanced forms of conceptual modelling, seen in other areas of sport policy (e.g. Coalter, 2013). In this regard, analytical logic models, which make explicit the assumptions or theories of change upon which the components of the model are premised, are potentially more valuable. As Shushu *et al* (2014, 38) explain:

...the assumptions are laid bare in the process of articulating the model, and the potential for developing measures against which reporting and evaluation might take place is clearly evident

Only by understanding the processes that lead to economic, social physical and environmental regeneration will policy makers and managers of facilities then able to leverage specific and targeted benefits for the local community.

Key research considerations for leveraging regeneration benefits from community sports hubs

An interviewee from an earlier stage of this research argued that:

Sport can be used [for regeneration] but it has got to be very strategically planned. You can't just plonk it there and expect it to regenerate (Interview participant: Regional Director, GONW).

It is clear from the findings presented in this paper that if community sports hubs and other forms of sports infrastructure are to be used as a tool for wider urban regeneration in society, there is a need to create a more robust evidence base to firstly make the case for investment and secondly, to plan interventions to leverage maximum benefits for regeneration in the future.

While critics would argue that it is a utopian prospect to think that research can be designed to holistically capture all dimensions of regeneration in a tangible way, there is a need to devise measurement frameworks to monitor and evaluate regeneration across the spectrum of intended environmental, physical, economic and social outcomes, rather than focusing on the outputs as is mainly the case in OJNH. Future research needs to be designed to include quantitative indicators, for example relating to employment, skills and training; inward investment; land contamination; anti-social behaviour; health; volunteering; in addition to structured qualitative indicators to measure outcomes such as residents perceptions and quality of life. Only by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data will it be possible to defend investment in sport-related projects and begin to understand how and why investment in sports infrastructure regenerates urban areas.

Future research on the regeneration impacts of sports infrastructure needs to involve the local community more extensively. While infrastructure can create physical and aesthetic improvements to the environment, the interaction of the community with the facility is necessary to create social and economic regeneration, and hence the reason why

community sports hubs arguably offer greater opportunities for regeneration than larger scale infrastructure developments such as stadia, designed primarily for hosting major events. Future research therefore needs to investigate how communities engage with sports hubs; users and non-users perceptions of the facility; its impact on the local area and changes in residents' behaviour both in terms of sport and physical activity and engagement in the local community more widely.

Finally, there is a need to create more consistent evaluations of sport-related regeneration projects over a longitudinal period. The majority of data relating to sport-related regeneration projects, even those built for mega events such as the Olympic Games tend to be a snapshot of a project at a particular point in time. As the OJNH project has demonstrated, key performance indicators change over time as stakeholders and organisational priorities change and policies evolve, therefore rarely are consistent variables measured. However, there is a need for local authorities or other public bodies to regularly benchmark indicators, including at bench line, to establish whether community sports hubs are being utilised effectively to improve local communities. Furthermore, as regeneration impacts are often not realised for many years, evidencing these requires research to measure change over a longer and sustained period of time.

Ultimately, causality and attribution are always going to be difficult to establish when trying to measure the contribution of sports infrastructure to urban regeneration, because of the multiple macro and micro factors that influence urban change. Community sports hubs and other forms of sports infrastructure are not the panacea for reversing urban decline and policy makers, local authorities and facility managers must be careful not to over claim the benefits, especially in relation to economic outcomes. However, strategically planned, integrated into the local community and evidenced, they provide potential for creating positive and lasting economic, social and environmental change to urban areas that have suffered decline.

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Table 1: Funding partners - Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub

Funding partner	Contribution (£m)
Warrington Borough Council (WBC)	12.14
DFES	3.86
North West Development Agency (NWDA)	3.66
Sport England	3.00
LIFT (PCT)	2.32
Big Lottery	1.30
Football Foundation	1.00
Warrington Collegiate	0.20
WREN	0.05
Project Capital Cost	27.27

Source: Warrington Borough Council

Table 2: Intended regeneration outcomes: Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub

Regeneration outcomes	Direct project outcomes (OJNH)	Wider outcomes
<i>Environmental & Physical Outcomes</i> (Physical Environment & Sustainable Environment)	-Remediation of 9.48 ha brownfield land	-Improvements to 18.3 ha of present Orford Park to enhance environmental assets, improve accessibility and promote healthier lifestyles -Engaging with local community in the design and development of the Project
<i>Economic Outcomes</i> (Employment & Skills)	-Provision of 35 new FTE jobs in commercial unit (sports retailer) -Leverage of some £5 million of private sector investment -Creation of 2,500 m ² of commercial building -Provision of skills training and support programmes, working with local partners such as Warrington Collegiate, Job Centre Plus and the LSC to develop vocational training and raise basic skill levels which will assist up to 20 jobseeker per year into employment	-Provision of a further 127.5 long-term safeguarding jobs (including 23.5 FTE at the present Fordton LC, 3 at the library, 10 at the Orford day Centre and 91 in PCT services) and 40.6 new jobs in sport & leisure (22.5) and health services (18.1) -Creation of 1 Social Enterprise
<i>Social Outcomes</i> (Improved Health & Quality of Life)		-Delivering funding of £1.5m pa for an on-going delivery of services through the Project to disadvantaged groups (CIF) -Creating an environment in which health inequalities in Orford can be tackled through raising the rate of active participation in sport and recreation -Creating a local sense of place and community for people to meet and provision of enhanced facilities for building capacity in the voluntary sector

Source: Warrington Borough Council

Figure 1: Basic logic model for sport-related regeneration

