

June/July 2012

### **Uncovered: the black market in Olympic tickets**

It is the stuff all good newspaper stories are made of: secret undercover reporters from the Sunday Times pretending to be sent from a wealthy Middle Eastern ticket tout. They offered to buy tickets for the forthcoming games from official agents. 27 official agents representing 54 different countries were, apparently, completely happy to sell Olympic tickets illegally.

Police and the Olympic Committee are now investigating this multi-million pound black market for tickets. 30 websites around the world are under investigation for the illegal sale of unauthorized tickets, and fraud - the sale of tickets which do not actually exist.

According to the police, Britain produces more ticket touts than any country in the world! Some touts see their work as similar to that of a market trader. After all, every day people sell high-priced concert tickets on e-Bay at a value set by demand. However, many touts have links to the world of organized crime.

As summer and the Olympics approach, it is hoped that the 2012 Games will lift our spirits, and help us forget government spending cuts. However, the security bill is massively higher than predicted. In fact, the original 2005 budget for the Games is now laughably low.

The arguments continue to rage: is winning the right to host a major sports event a real economic benefit or not? Some say that such events only offer a short-term boost for businesses.

One big unknown as the Games draw closer is: how many people will actually go to London? Will the transport system be robust enough? Anyone working in London this summer is being asked to consider working from home or changing their working hours to help ease the pressure.

Love the Games or resent them, this summer the eyes of the world will certainly be on... London 2012.

Areas to discuss with your students:

- a) Is it wrong to sell tickets at inflated prices?
- b) Have you ever been a victim of a website fraud connected with buying tickets?
- c) Do you feel it is an economic benefit for a country to host a major sporting event?
- d) What is your own experience of projects being under or over budget?

Some useful websites:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2012/jun/19/olympic-tickets-police-black-market?newsfeed=true>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18421211>