

Culture Secretary: Aquatics Centre of Birmingham Commonwealth Games will leave 'a legacy for generations'

- Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries visits Sandwell Aquatics Centre alongside Paralympic swimming champion Ellie Simmonds
- With six months to go to Birmingham 2022 this is a major milestone in the road to the Commonwealth Games
- The world-class facilities will level up access to sport in the West Midlands and will leave a lasting legacy for the region beyond the Games

Today, the Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries visited the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, a major new sports facility which is being built to host the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games this summer.

Alongside Paralympic swimming champion Ellie Simmonds, the Culture Secretary applauded a major milestone in the delivery of the state-of-the-art facility. Combined, the competition swimming pool and dive pool have now been filled with 1.2 million gallons of water.

Between 29 July and 8 August, the venue will play host to hundreds of athletes and thousands of spectators across diving, swimming and para swimming competitions. With 66 medal events in total set to be held at the facility, it will be the stage for more medal moments than any other Birmingham 2022 venue.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Nadine Dorries said:

My ambition is to make sure that every child in the UK, whether they grow up in Sunderland or Smethwick, has access to excellent sports facilities. This world-class aquatics centre will help do just that. Not only will it showcase the talents of some of the greatest swimmers and divers on the planet but its legacy will be its use by people in the West Midlands for generations after the Games.

Sandwell is a clear example of why the UK bids for major events and why we are so good at hosting them. Events like Birmingham 2022 can be a catalyst for levelling up access to sport and culture.

Birmingham 2022 will be the first ever major multi-sport event to feature more medals for women than for men and will have the biggest ever para sport programme at a Commonwealth Games.

Sandwell Aquatics Centre – which is being funded by DCMS, Sandwell Council, Sport England and other local partners – is set to be completed in spring,

and will be open to the public next year.

Located four miles west of Birmingham, the centre will be a clear example of the lasting legacy the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will leave. According to PHE data, the estimated percentage of physically active adults in the Sandwell region is lower than the England average.

With long-term community health in mind, the site will feature the West Midlands' first 10m diving platform, as well as a 50m pool, brand new exercise facilities, a football pitch and a women-only gym.

Birmingham 2022 board member and five-time Paralympic champion, Ellie Simmonds, who visited the venue on Thursday, said:

It's amazing to visit the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and to see the fantastic progress that has been made. Not only will this be an incredible venue for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games but it will also be a wonderful facility for local people to use for years to come.

Councillor Kerrie Carmichael, leader of Sandwell Council, said:

As always it is fantastic to be visiting the Sandwell Aquatics Centre to see how much further we have come to completing the venue.

It's incredible to see the swimming pools filled and you can now visualise how the venue look during the 10 days when we will be hosting the swimming and diving events for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Sandwell residents can now really get a sense of what the venue has to offer when it will be open to the public as a leisure centre for all to use. I look forward to seeing the final touches being added to the venue in the coming months in readiness for the Games this summer.

The centre will improve access to swimming and diving for local residents, schools and clubs, and there is a long-term partnership in place with the University of Wolverhampton to maximise opportunities for local staff and students.

The government continues to support the elite, grassroots and leisure sectors with an unprecedented £1 billion to ensure sport remains accessible for all throughout the pandemic. Since launching Sporting Future in 2015, Sport England has allocated over £1.5 billion to nearly 5,000 organisations within the UK.

Notes to editors

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will take place from 28 July to 8 August 2022 and will be the biggest sporting and cultural event ever held in the city featuring thousands of world-class athletes and over a million spectators. Home to more than 187 nationalities, Birmingham 2022 will be a home Games for every nation.

Birmingham and the West Midlands region is benefitting from a £778 million investment to stage the 2022 Commonwealth Games, including £594 million of funding from central government.

Through increased investment, exciting infrastructure projects and inspiring sporting and cultural programmes, the Games will be at the heart of the region's economic recovery in the aftermath of coronavirus. Projects include:

- The Birmingham 2022 Festival which will engage 2.5 million people in the UK;
- A £24m Business and Tourism Programme is promoting the region to the Commonwealth as a great place to visit and invest in,
- The Games is creating new jobs and skills opportunities with 30,000 Games-time roles and 13,000 volunteering positions.

With an estimated global television audience of 1.5 billion people, the Games will showcase Birmingham, the West Midlands and the entire country as an amazing place to live, work, study, visit and do business.