

Interview Series for Tokyo 2020:

Promotion of Sustainability in Big Events

– through Development of ISO20121 and Supply Chain Management

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■ Overview

In this interview series, professionals who are involved in the promotion of sustainability in Olympics/Paralympics are featured. This time we deliver our interview to Ms. Fiona Pelham, who contributed as a Chair to the development of ISO20121.

■ Development of ISO20121, the Event Sustainability Standard

Motohashi: I heard you have been involved in promotion of event sustainability. Could you briefly tell us what you are currently working on?

Pelham: I have two lines of work related to event sustainability: The first one is a consulting firm called Sustainable Events Ltd. At the firm, we offer consultancy on sustainability in the event industry and provide staff training. We are also



involved in the development and dissemination of the ISO 20121 standard for event sustainability, for which I currently serve as Chair.

The second one is an NPO called Positive Impact, where we provide workshops, guidance, and online courses to enhance the understanding and knowledge of sustainability among people in the event industry.

Motohashi: How did you become interested in this type of work?

Pelham: I have loved events with large crowds. Likewise, I have been interested in environmental issues, especially recycling, which may be developed through my experience as a Girl Guide. A combination of these made me think a lot about the relationship between events and waste management, and further, about the relationship among the event, environment, and community. In addition, I also have had a strong interest in business. All these factors have led me to what I do now.

■ Promoting Sustainability in the Big Event from the Supply Chain Side

Motohashi: What was your involvement in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London?

Pelham: At the time, I was serving as Chair of ISO 20121. Besides, as a Sustainability Friend Partner, we provided from a different standpoint from LOCOG workshops and training to improve sustainability mainly in the supply chain. Regarding the sustainability issues during the games, LOCOG mainly focused on the operation side of the Olympics and Paralympics, while we supported the supply chain side of the event. I worked with people in certification agencies and the event-related industry, consisting of over 30 nationalities.

Meanwhile, Positive Impact played an important role in connecting various stakeholders, including sustainability professionals, waste management experts, as well as members of the event-related industry. As a result of these activities, though public had little interest in event sustainability in 2008, now we have many sponsors supporting us.

Motohashi: In terms of implementation of sustainability policies, what are the differences between Olympics/Paralympics and other events?

Pelham: There is not much difference. Every event has issues such as waste and noise pollution. However, the sheer size of the Olympics/Paralympics definitely has potential to create difference, or feasibility to change something. You should definitely avoid doing nothing at such a huge opportunity.

Motohashi: What are essential in carrying out these efforts?

Pelham: You should begin with learning, then figure out what your goal is. You cannot make anything happen if just copying what has been done before. You need to draw up a plan considering all aspects – social, economic, and environmental, getting relevant

people involved by hosting public workshops, etc. It is also effective to raise people's awareness for sustainability using short video clips. Above all, what is important is to show your leadership with "let's-do-it!" type messages, rather than "must-do" type messages, to get people inspired, and to show your creativity to the world.

■ Keys to Success: Early Involvement and Strong Leadership

Motohashi: What should Tokyo do for 2020?

Pelham: Though sustainability has been identified as one of the important issues at the time of London 2012 from the beginning, it took quite long to create a framework to realise the agenda. In the case of Tokyo, however, they can use the ISO 20121 framework and guidelines already established in London 2012. These have already been applied to the preparation of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. With respect to sustainability things don't backtrack once they have moved forward. Luckily, Tokyo still has some time before 2020. They should come up with what they want to accomplish through such a big event in consultation with experts, and start working on detail preparations right away.

Motohashi: Lastly, could you send a message for Tokyo?

Pelham: What is important is to inspire people with a strong leadership of the person in charge, and to start preparation immediately. I'm looking forward to the great games in Tokyo in 2020.

Interview date: 24/Sep/2014

Fiona Pelham

Fiona launched not for profit Positive Impact in 2005 to provide education for a sustainable event industry. Fiona is also managing director of Sustainable Events Ltd and voluntary chair of ISO 20121 a management system for event sustainability inspired by London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Fiona has recently received an honorary doctorate from The Leeds Metropolitan University for services to the event industry in sustainability. In July 2015 she will become international chair for Meeting Professionals International, a global association of over 20,000 members. Fiona is passionate about sustainability and her background in event logistics and strategic implementation of sustainability gives her a unique perspective.

