

The British businesses powering the 2024 Paris Olympics

With category-defining athletes taking to the stage, behind the scenes a raft of British innovators have proved critical in delivering the Greatest Show on Earth.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As the 2024 Paris Olympics kicked off last month, over 320 athletes from across the United Kingdom descended on the French capital. Ranging from breakdancers to gymnasts to equestrians, they likely all had the same thing on their mind—finessing their chance to win gold.

And while all eyes will be on the likes of Sky Brown, Tom Daley, and Dina Asher Smith, the UK hopes to stand out for the numerous other contributions that it is making to the Olympics and Paralympics behind the scenes.

From infrastructure preparation to arena building, from broadcasting to logistics, there is a vast tapestry of businesses all pulling in the same direction to ensure its smooth and sustainable delivery. The UK's live event prowess, and its proximity to France, has positioned it as a fundamental strategic partner for this Olympics, a chance for numerous businesses to step up to the world stage and demonstrate what they're capable of.

So what does it actually take to deliver the world's biggest sporting competition? We spoke to the British businesses doing just that.

An Olympic challenge like no other

An €8.9B project, hosting over 10,000 athletes from 184 countries, putting on 878 events across 68 sports, broadcasting to nearly half of the world's population. Pulling off the Olympics and Paralympics requires a Herculean effort that starts years ahead of time.

A particular level of anticipation awaited Paris after the delayed Tokyo 2020 Games, eventually held behind closed doors in 2021. The Games cost the Japanese city \$13B in the end, making it not only the most expensive Games ever, but also its first without spectators. Paris 2024, in more ways than one, will be looking to relight the Olympic flame.

Bristol-based SLX understands the complexity of the Olympics. They were selected as an official partner for broadcast lighting and rigging in Paris, lighting up some of the city's most iconic venues, from the Stade de France to the newly constructed Aquatics Centre at La Defense. This vast breadth of sports and activities has really stretched the capabilities and creativity of the SLX team.

“We need to have tremendous respect for what the athlete is doing. If someone's throwing up a table tennis ball, being careful not to blind them, or if Tom Daley is on the 10m board, ensuring nothing will distract him. It's a craft, and the technical theory that sits behind lighting is quite phenomenal,” explains Alistair Currie, CEO of SLX.

This is combined with the complexity of considering the Games' dual audiences—both those sitting in the stadiums, but also the billions of people watching at home. This spirit of entertainment allows Alistair to lean into the business' heritage in theatre. “We make sure the spectator isn't just sitting there, they're interacting with light and video to create the fever pitch of the occasion,” he adds.

The sheer scale of the Olympics comes with numerous challenges. Coordinating thousands of athletes and millions of spectators across 49 venues is a logistical headache.

OnePlan, a UK startup, has introduced geo-accurate mapping and digital twin technology to the Olympics for the first time, transforming the way events are planned and managed. They've life-like visualisations of every venue across a collaborative platform.

"Our goal has been to make the planning of this incredibly complex event across multiple venues as simple as possible for the organisers—a single source of truth for planning Paris 2024," explains Paul Foster, OnePlan's CEO.

We're thrilled to see OnePlan's digital twinning software featured by @BBCNews, showcasing how we're revolutionising venue planning, boosting security, and optimising crowd management.

Watch the video here <https://t.co/62N4XJZhcV>

— OnePlan (@OnePlanEvents) July 23, 2024

While the Games is a global spectacle, it's important to remember that this is also being held in one of the world's most culturally iconic cities. For the organising committee and its array of partners, this is an opportunity to sprinkle the Olympics with a certain Parisien flavour—whether that's hosting Beach Volleyball under the Eiffel Tower, or the urban sports arena in La Concorde.

ES Global, a UK company helping provide temporary and overlay infrastructure for a number of the arenas this summer. Inspired by some of the more dynamic staging at the London Olympics in 2012 (in particular the positioning of the Beach Volleyball arena in the historic Horse Guards Parade), they sought to bring the most out of the iconic architecture for which Paris is famed. One such arena is the climbing wall at Le Bourget, set to the backdrop of the Seine-Saint-Denis neighbourhood.

“It’s amazing to see what the industry as a whole can do,” says Sara Bertie, Head of Marketing at ES Global, “The innovation and creativity to see what we can do to turn these iconic places into sporting venues.”

Delivering on Paris’ sustainability ambitions

Paris 2024’s ambition stretches beyond pulling off just another Olympics: it aspires to be the most sustainable Olympics ever, setting the standard for future global sporting events. This includes its ambitious target of 95% of infrastructure being pre-existing or temporary in use, aiming to avoid some of the ‘white elephant’ architecture that has plagued the legacy of previous Olympics.

This has created exciting platforms for creativity for the architects and logistics partners providing the infrastructure.

Take the Le Bourget climbing wall, one of just two arenas built specifically for this Olympics. Its outdoor walls use ES Global’s temporary overlay, previously seen on Harry Styles’ world tour, and will be disassembled post-Games, leaving the indoor walls for community use. It’s an ingenious collaboration with London-based *WOO Architects*, whose sporting pedigree stretches across not just this Olympics, but London 2012, as well as projects at Wembley Stadium, Edgbaston Cricket Ground, and more.

Arena is another key supplier for infrastructure in Paris, in particular temporary design, interior fittings, and signage. Their commitment to Paris' ambitions is underlined by the responsible use of materials, which they commit to being 100% 'second life'—90% being reusable, and the rest recyclable.

Transforming the carbon footprint of the Olympics requires stepping back from just its immediate infrastructure. There are major implications of thousands of athletes and delegates, not to mention the millions of spectators, flying in for the Games.

OnePlan CEO Paul highlights another benefit of their digital twin technology: the opportunities it gives the 204 National Olympic Committees, not just in cost savings but in reducing their carbon impact.

“By providing life-like, centimetre-accurate visualisations of venues in 2D and 3D, it means any organiser and stakeholder can access the venues remotely to plan,” he explains. “It reduces the need for site visits, from organisers, partners and international teams, cutting international travel and the associated carbon emissions.”

Success is a word on everyone's lips across the Olympics and Paralympics. For athletes, that experience of competing with the world's best, or even of clinching a medal. For the Paris organising committee, the opportunity to build a new blueprint for a truly sustainable Games.

And for the businesses pulling the strings behind the scenes? A chance to show the ingenuity and creativity of their technology, and how they're transforming the delivery of global events like the Olympics.

The Commercial Department of the British Embassy in Paris provides support to French companies wishing to set up in the UK. Click [here](#) to find out more.



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