



Media Release

Strictly Confidential until 11am, Tuesday 3 September 2019

Birmingham rewards netball's success with move to larger venue

- **Netball moves from Coventry to the NEC**
- **Rugby sevens moves from Villa Park to Coventry Stadium, home of Wasps**
- **Announcement follows recent addition of Birmingham's iconic Edgbaston Stadium as a Games venue**

Birmingham 2022 today (Tuesday 3 September) announces a change in venue for netball, following the recent growth in popularity of the sport.

After a massive increase in its profile since Team England's gold medal winning heroics on the Gold Coast in 2018 and England's hosting of the Netball World Cup in July, the sport moves from the Coventry Indoor Arena to the NEC, increasing capacity and allowing more netball fans the opportunity to enjoy the sport in the summer of 2022.

This news comes after a routine review of venues, nearly two years on from Birmingham's bid, which will also see rugby sevens relocating to the Coventry Stadium, the home of Wasps and the emerging home of Midlands elite rugby. Judo and wrestling will now be held on the same site in Coventry.

The changes mean that Villa Park no longer features as a host venue at the Games. Due to the anticipated early start of the football season in 2022, with the FIFA World Cup kicking off in November that year, Aston Villa has unfortunately been unable to commit to the dates required for the Commonwealth Games in July and August 2022. Detailed assessments of venues included in the bid also revealed a number of challenges in operating Villa Park at Games time.

The venue refresh follows on from the recent announcement that Birmingham's iconic Edgbaston Stadium is now an official venue for Birmingham 2022, after women's cricket was added to the sports programme. With beach volleyball added too, there are now even more sports taking place in and around the city.

Liz Nicholl CBE, President of the International Netball Federation welcomed news of the venue change for netball: "We are delighted by Birmingham 2022's decision to relocate netball for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and fully support this decision. While the Coventry Arena is an excellent venue, this move to the NEC will increase the capacity significantly. This will be welcomed by the netball family and the significant fan base that our sport now attracts, as seen at the recent Netball World Cup in July 2019 when over 110,000 tickets were sold."

Ian Reid, Chief Executive Officer for Birmingham 2022, explained the venue changes announced today: "As is common practice for all major multi-sport events, we have been considering how best to optimise the mix of venues available to us, making sure we're being as efficient as possible in terms of usage and cost, and ensuring that we are developing a fantastic experience and showcase for the sport, the athletes, the spectators and the host city and region.

"We are delighted to be able to relocate netball into a larger venue as this sport's profile has massively increased since the 2017 bid. We're disappointed that Villa Park will unfortunately no longer be part of our venue portfolio, however we hope to continue working closely with Aston Villa in the run up to the Games."

Nicola Ibbetson, Chief Commercial Officer of Aston Villa said: "Although Villa Park will unfortunately no longer be a Games venue, we are continuing to discuss ways Aston Villa can help support Birmingham 2022 in hosting this prestigious event."

Stuart Cain, Chief Executive (Venue) at Wasps said: "We've built a great reputation for staging top-level rugby union at the Coventry Stadium having hosted Six Nations games, European semi-final matches, as well as obviously all Wasps home games. This is a great extension and gives us the chance to work with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games to deliver another successful rugby tournament in the region. We're also excited to host the wrestling and judo within the Coventry Indoor Arena, adding to the diversity of sports we've already accommodated at the stadium."

The latest venue update has now been approved by the Commonwealth Games Federation's Executive Board, ahead of its General Assembly in Rwanda, which will see a team from Birmingham 2022 presenting an update on preparations for the event to representatives from the 71 Commonwealth nations and territories from across the globe.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will be held in venues across Birmingham and the West Midlands from 27 July until 7 August 2022 and will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to put the city on the map and to showcase the fantastic venues and facilities available in the region.

For more information about all of the sports and venues that will feature at Birmingham 2022, take a look at the new-look website at www.birmingham2022.com where you can also sign-up to receive the latest Games news and updates on jobs and volunteering.

-Ends-

Note to Editors:

- Sports that will be held at the NEC site in 2022 include netball, badminton, boxing, table tennis (including para table tennis), weightlifting and para powerlifting
- Sports that will be held at the Coventry Indoor Arena and Coventry Stadium in 2022 include rugby sevens, judo and wrestling. Coventry Indoor Arena and Coventry Stadium are the Games time names for the Ricoh Arena.
- Other venues for Birmingham 2022 remain unchanged and details are available at www.birmingham2022.com
- Today's announcement follows another last month which confirmed the addition of three new sports to the Birmingham 2022 sports programme; women's cricket, para table tennis and beach volleyball. The venue for the latter will be confirmed in the coming months.
- The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will feature a total of 19 sports, with 8 para sports being fully integrated into the sports programme
- Birmingham 2022 will have the largest ever Commonwealth Games para sports programme following the addition of para table tennis, which was confirmed on 13 August

For more information please contact:

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