

**UK Overlay - making major  
sports events happen**



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# UK Overlay – making major sports events happen

## What is overlay?

Overlay is the design, planning, installation and removal of all the temporary infrastructure and services needed to deliver major one-off sporting events, such as the Olympic Games.

Overlay is essentially about the creation of temporary venues and the installation of temporary elements and commodities that are needed to convert existing and new venues into event-ready ones. Such elements may include demountable seating, tents, canopies, cabins (including toilets and concessions), fencing, scrim, turnstiles, generators, flooring, signage, ballast and lighting. Post-event, these commodities are removed and often redeployed elsewhere and the facility returned to its original state.

Although overlay tends to be temporary in nature, certain elements such as asphalt and concrete foundations that remain in place once a superstructure has been removed can be permanent. Very often the foundations and other 'permanent' components need to be designed to be removed and in certain circumstances can be re-used.

## Who delivers overlay?

There is a wide range of companies delivering overlay services. They include:

- Architects/designers/planners
- Engineers
- Cost consultants
- Project managers
- Turnkey temporary venue suppliers
- Commodity suppliers
- Service suppliers (catering, cleaning, security)

The UK is home to world-class companies in all of these areas.



PKL, Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

Front page credit : Arena Group, Presidents Cup, South Korea, 2015



ICON, America's Cup, 2015



### Why is overlay needed?

Overlay is necessary to meet the challenging needs of hosting a major sports event. Even the biggest and best conventional venues or facilities don't generally fulfil the often unusual operational and technical requirements of big events such as the Olympics, which need to accommodate additional athlete and spectator numbers, enhanced security, huge workforce and volunteer requirements and heightened power and broadcast demands. No matter how new or up-to-date a venue may be, it will still need overlay in order to make it ready to host a successful major global sports event.

Reliance on overlay is becoming greater as a result of the increased focus on sustainability and cost. Determined to avoid the construction of 'white elephants', event organisers increasingly want to build permanent venues only when they are confident that they will leave a lasting legacy and

will continue to be used after the event is over, thus justifying the immense cost of building and maintaining them. A permanent facility should only be built if it has a viable future business plan.

The need for overlay is increasingly recognised by major international sporting bodies such as the IOC. In July 2003, the Olympic Games Study Commission under the chairmanship of Richard Pound presented a report to the 115<sup>th</sup> IOC Session in Prague which contained a number of recommendations on how to reduce the size, cost and complexity of organising the Olympics. In particular, it called to maximise temporary installations over permanent construction with the aim of making the delivery of events sustainable and affordable and thus encouraging a wider range of cities to bid for the Games.

Two highlights of the recently published IOC Olympic Agenda 2020 are:-

1. The IOC to actively promote the maximum use of existing facilities and the use of temporary and demountable venues
2. The IOC to consider as positive aspects for a bid: the maximum use of existing facilities and the use of temporary and demountable venues where no long-term venue legacy need exists or can be justified

These recommendations will drive would-be host cities and nations to look for overlay solutions before bidding for an event.

### What are the key benefits?

Overlay touches on almost every aspect of a major sports event and is therefore of pivotal importance to their successful delivery. It offers a wide range of significant advantages, including:

- **Cost savings**

Overlay is very powerful in the way that it can help event organisers to achieve strict budgetary targets. It is a highly cost-effective way of achieving what needs to be achieved, with temporary buildings generally significantly cheaper than their permanent equivalents, especially when whole-life costs are factored in. About two-thirds of the cost of a permanent venue relates to its ongoing operation and maintenance

- overheads which obviously don't apply to a temporary facility. Adopting this lower-cost solution gives a wider range of cities the opportunity to bid for a major sports event - a key objective of bodies such as the IOC.

- **Sustainability/legacy**

Overlay is an integral part of the legacy plan of a major sports event and is an excellent way of contributing to the sustainability agenda. It helps to avoid the leaving behind of costly and useless white elephants, with overlay infrastructure and products able to be reused numerous times in numerous locations, with the money that is saved invested more wisely elsewhere. After an event is over, temporary components of buildings can be dismantled and the various building structures readapted to become civic buildings that improve the standard of living for local citizens, i.e. schools, hospitals and low-income housing. This leaves a truly sustainable legacy for the whole community.

- **Speed and flexibility**

Overlay offers event organisers a great opportunity to do things quickly. Temporary venues can be created in far less time than a permanent building, thus reducing the disruptive impact on a city of hosting a major event. Overlay also offers adaptability and flexibility, allowing the incorporation of 'just-in-time' features. As the start of





**London 2012 utilised three times more temporary construction, primarily from UK companies, than the previous Olympic Games in Beijing, Athens and Sydney put together.**





an event gets closer, demands and priorities can change; overlay gives organisers the ability to meet these changing requirements and resolve last-minute issues.

#### • Visitor experience

Overlay can significantly improve a visitor's experience and enjoyment of a major sports event. Used effectively, it can create much better use of space, improve a venue's accessibility and navigability, contribute to safety and enhance the general atmosphere of a host city during an event.

#### • Showcasing

Overlay is unique in the way that it can help to create powerful and lasting images to showcase a city or location. Using temporary facilities enables organisers to stage events in more unusual locations, using the city's landmarks and most attractive features as a backdrop. This would generally not be possible if they were limited to building brand new permanent structures.

To ensure that they get maximum benefit from overlay, it is important that organisers make it an integral part of their thinking right from the bid stage of an event. Careful thought should be given to the products and services that are going to be needed and used from the outset, and every aspect of the master plan looked at in the context of overlay provision. Having a strong overlay policy at

bid stage could be the difference between winning and losing the right to stage the event.

### What can the UK offer?

The UK has a highly successful overlay industry, both at home and abroad. With a proud history of hosting Blue Riband sports events such as Wimbledon and the Grand National, the UK has long been home to reputable and highly professional overlay companies with tried-and-tested knowledge, prowess and expertise. In recent years, these companies have gained an international reputation through their successful involvement in global sports events such as Olympic and Commonwealth Games and World Cups.

Today, the UK excels across all aspects of the overlay sector, with world-class architects, designers, engineers, project managers, cost managers, consultants and commodity and service suppliers undertaking projects across the globe. UK overlay companies lead the world in the development of many kinds of event-supply equipment, are increasingly investing in innovative and high-quality products and services, and have an excellent reputation for their professional approach and the way they provide discipline and certainty in the key area of project management.

Crucially, UK companies also excel at collaboration – something which is essential to the successful delivery of overlay. Staging a big and complicated sporting event requires

a massive team effort, with constant communication, cooperation and collaboration between all of the stakeholders. The UK has a strong reputation for this, recognising that success depends on different companies and organisations coming together at every stage of the project. UK companies are particularly well versed in collaborating and partnering with the local supply chain and sourcing and procuring local resources when needed.

### London 2012

Nothing better epitomises the capability of the UK overlay industry than the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Taking on board all of the recommendations of the Pound report, the organisers focused on sustainability and legacy right from the bid stage and carried out by far the biggest overlay programme ever delivered for a major world event, with UK companies at its heart. The result: a highly successful, unique Games.

London 2012 created a new blueprint for major event venues. Only six of the 37 competition venues were new, permanent facilities, a wide range of overlay facilities were added to new and existing venues and even permanent venues were designed for conversion after the Games to reduce their capacities to sustainable levels. Thanks to the use of predominantly temporary venues, the opportunity was created for London 2012 to deliver events in sites in the heart of the city, helping to promote a wonderful atmosphere.

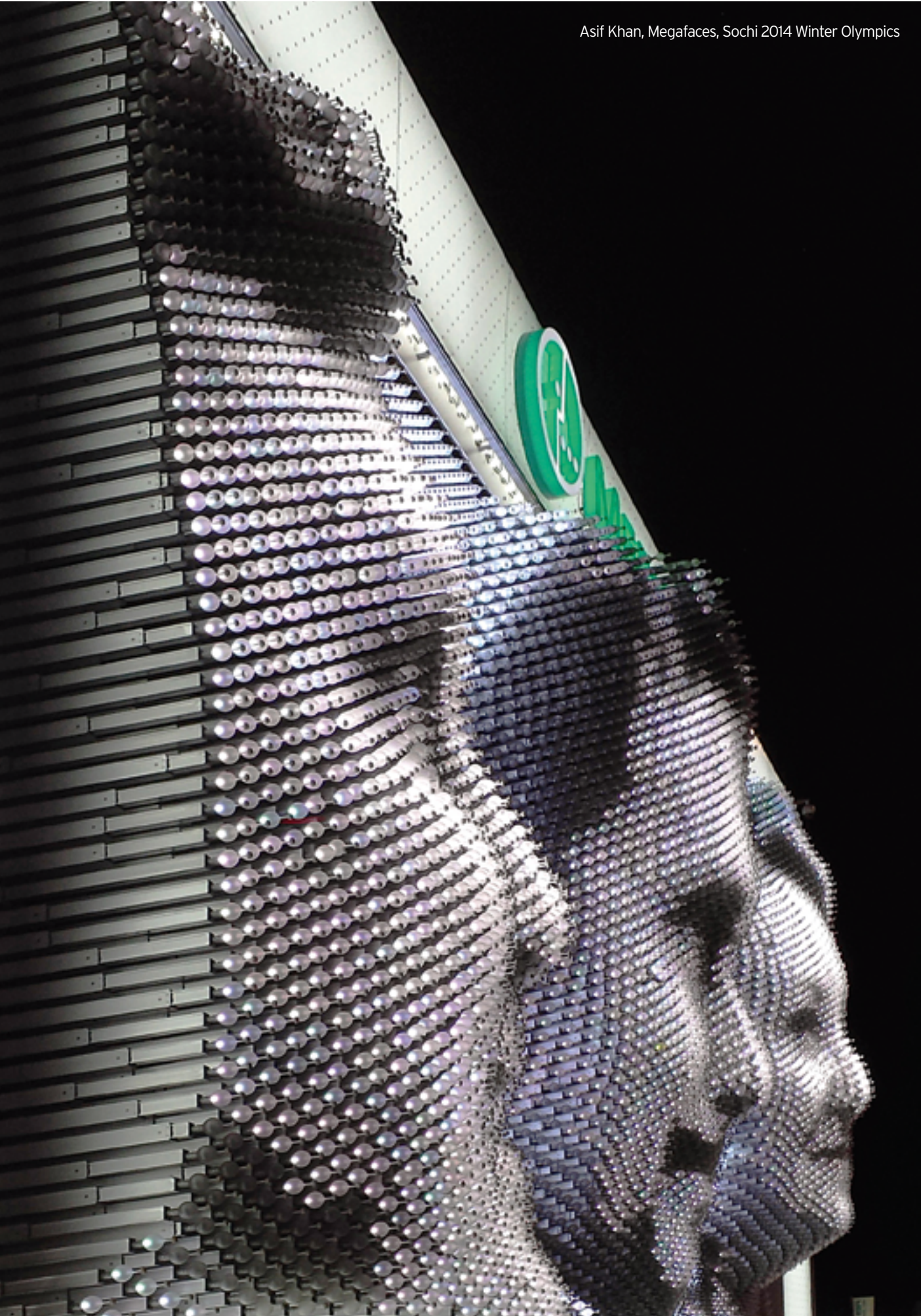


Aggreko, Hyde Park, 2015

From start to finish, London 2012 was a great example of overlay planning and delivery, demonstrating excellence without extravagance. Components of the temporary venues are now being re-used on other sporting projects and venues within the UK and across the globe, thus ensuring the event's enduring legacy.

London 2012 has proved a unique springboard for the UK overlay industry, projecting its capability onto a world stage. UK firms are now exporting the knowledge gained and products developed to many countries around the world, playing a key role in delivering major events such as Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016.





Asif Khan, Megafaces, Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics



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