

CITIES STEP UP FOR 2018

Ahead of the stadium selection next month, city bids from 16 English cities will hope to energise England 2018's technical bid, reports **Matthew Glendinning**.

THE ENGLAND 2018 WORLD CUP BID IS

hoping to gain the edge over its nine rivals when it names the winning cities from its competitive host city bid process next month.

The host city selection, put in gear earlier this year by England 2018 CEO Andy Anson and director of the technical bid Ian Riley, has attracted applicant bids from 16 cities representing 23 venues*, including London's Olympic Stadium. From these bids 12-18 stadium venues will be chosen on December 4.

"We decided on this process, firstly, because there was so much genuine interest across the cities of England that it would have been unfair to have selected them any other way," Anson told *SportBusiness International*.

"Secondly, the requirements and demands FIFA places on host cities and stadia are so exacting that you've really got to make sure the city and the stadium owners are ready to step up and deliver FIFA compliant solutions."

In this, says Anson, the cities have surpassed expectations. "The cities have told us that it has forced them to engage with all the relevant stakeholders across the city in a way that's never been done before so that all the football clubs, transport, policing, hotels, regional development authorities, county councils and city councils are all working together on this one process."

"The quality of the submissions has been absolutely fantastic both from a marketing and technical perspective. It's the kind of information that we can take out of their bid books and plug straight into our technical bid."

The response has not only engaged the major urban centres as well as smaller cities such as Hull, Plymouth and Milton Keynes, but includes 75 Football League clubs in the host city submissions, offering to supply training and practice facilities for the participating teams.

"For me, that says that every part of the country will be truly engaged if the World Cup

comes here," says Anson, who argues that the time spent evaluating the cities prior to the FIFA vote in December 2010 means that a successful England bid can focus better on legacy projects both domestically and internationally, aligned with FIFA's objectives.

Anson adds that the new builds and the efficiency of the preparations for London 2012 have also enhanced England's World Cup bid in more ways than one.

"The London United bid - the name given to their host city stable (of venues) - includes the main Olympic venue at this point, but remains subject to the final submission.

"The legacy company for London 2012 is looking seriously at the long-term usage of that stadium and they feel that the World Cup would be a great thing to have, while the Mayor [Boris Johnson] is clearly very keen it's part of it."

More broadly, he says, "The things that are going on right now with 2012 are all helpful because the entire LOCOG/ODA project is way ahead of schedule and being done in a fantastically well-controlled and organised way."

"It's a great message to send to the world that we know how to deliver something of such enormity on time and in such an efficient way." Meanwhile, London 2012 bid leaders, Lord Coe and Sir Keith Mills, now non-executive directors of England 2018, have also added to the experience-pool at the bid team's disposal.

"There is one very clear message to get across: we have a very strong technical bid and if we win in 2010, we're not going to have to go through eight years of pain in terms of hoping that various stadiums get developed. We've got the solutions and they're deliverable."

* The 16 Applicant Host Cities are:

Birmingham, Bristol, Derby, Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Newcastle Gateshead, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Sunderland.

