THE QUEEN’S COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2021

AMPLIFYING COMMONWEALTH VOICES AT COP26
LAUNCH OF THE QUEEN’S BATON RELAY
RECONNECTING IN 2021
EVERY YEAR, MORE THAN 12 MILLION TONNES OF PLASTIC WASTE POLLUTE OUR OCEANS

The majority of this spills out from our streets to our rivers, and then to the sea, polluting coastal waters before eventually drifting offshore. Here it breaks down into ever smaller pieces, eventually becoming microplastics, which can be found everywhere in the world’s ocean.

An estimated one million sea birds and an unknown number of sea turtles die each year because of plastic debris obstructing their digestive tract.

THIS CHRISTMAS, HELP US ACHIEVE OUR AIM OF PREVENTING ONE MILLION ITEMS OF PLASTIC ENTERING OUR WATERS BY 2025.

For every £1 donated we will pick up one item of plastic waste.

WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE CAN HELP RID THE OCEANS OF PLASTIC AND PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

https://www.royalcwsociety.org/Appeal/donate-rcs

ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

Registered charity in England and Wales (226748), incorporated by Royal Charter.

Photos: ‘Breath of Fresh Air’ by Ashley Wee and ‘In the Middle of Nowhere’ by Kamarulzaman Russali
As a Trustee I have enjoyed seeing first-hand the positive impact the Society’s work has had on communities across the Commonwealth. Whether this be championing literacy through The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition (pp. 8-11), promoting equality as Secretariat to the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (pages 3 & 7), protecting our forests and oceans or delivering youth-led social action programmes (pp. 22-23), the work of the Society has continued unabated despite the challenges of the last 18 months.

I am particularly pleased that the Society has introduced a new ‘Friend of the Royal Commonwealth Society’. Through monthly donations of £250 or an annual donation of £3,000, these have become a valued supporter group. I look forward to welcoming Friends to highlights of the Commonwealth calendar, including the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey, the High Commissioners’ Banquet at Guildhall (p.5.) and a few ‘Friends only’ events where we can get together, enjoy each other’s company and celebrate the impactful work of the Society. I very much hope you might consider becoming an inaugural Friend. Your support in these uncertain and financially challenging times will help us to continue our important work and improve the lives of all Commonwealth citizens. Additionally, if you are able to consider including the Society in your Will, we will ensure that your legacy is put to good use supporting citizens across the Commonwealth.

I’d also like to highlight that our Christmas appeal this year focuses on our environmental work. As Commonwealth leaders, civil society and businesses gathered to amplify the voice of the Commonwealth at COP26 (pp. 14-18), we are keen to do our part. Over the next five years, our aim is to prevent one million pieces of rubbish from entering the Commonwealth’s waters. At this time where we consider how we can give back, I hope you’ll consider supporting us. For every £1 donated we will pick up one item of plastic waste, thereby protecting our oceans for generations to come.

I look forward to connecting with many of you in the future and hope you enjoy reading this December edition of Commonwealth Voices.

Very best wishes

Doug

Doug Tweddle CBE
Trustee
Over the coming week, as we celebrate the friendship, spirit of unity and achievements of the Commonwealth, we have an opportunity to reflect on a time like no other.

Whilst experiences of the last year have been different across the Commonwealth, stirring examples of courage, commitment and selfless dedication of duty have been demonstrated in every Commonwealth nation and territory, notably by those working on the frontline who have been delivering healthcare and other public services in their communities. We have also taken encouragement from remarkable advancement in developing new vaccines and treatments. The testing times experienced by so many have led to a deeper appreciation of the mutual support and spiritual sustenance we enjoy by being connected to others.

The need to maintain greater physical distance, or to live and work largely in isolation, has, for many people across the Commonwealth, been an unusual experience. In our everyday lives, we have had to become more accustomed to connecting and communicating via innovative technology – which has been new to some of us – with conversations and communal gatherings, including Commonwealth meetings, conducted online, enabling people to stay in touch with friends, family, colleagues and counterparts, who they have not been able to meet in person. Increasingly, we have found ourselves able to enjoy such communication, as it offers an immediacy that transcends boundaries or division, helping any sense of distance to disappear.

We have all continued to appreciate the support, breadth of experiences and knowledge that working together brings, and I hope we shall maintain this renewed sense of closeness and community. Looking forward, relationships with others across the Commonwealth will remain important, as we strive to deliver a common future that is sustainable and more secure, so that the nations and neighbourhoods in which we live, wherever they are located, become healthier and happier places for us all.

Elizabeth R.

Due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey was cancelled for 2021. Instead, to mark the beginning of Commonwealth Week, Her Majesty The Queen shared her annual message in ‘A Celebration for Commonwealth Day’.

MORE INFORMATION
- Listen to Her Majesty The Queen’s Commonwealth Day Message and watch ‘A Celebration for Commonwealth Day’:
  - www.royalcwsociety.org/the-queens-commonwealth-day-message
GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

This year, International Women’s Day (IWD) and Commonwealth Day were celebrated on the same day – Monday, 8 March 2021. To celebrate the achievements of women across the globe, RCS Chair Dr Linda Yueh sat down with musician and RCS Ambassador Alexandra Burke as well as Nafesha Richardson and Olaoluwa Abagun of the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) to discuss gender equality across the Commonwealth, and the role of youth in leading this cause.

Opening the conversation Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr Linda reaffirmed that the Society is committed to ensuring that all people are treated equally within their communities and before the law, regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or other status. RCS Ambassador Alexandra Burke, in speaking about how she wants to continue promoting equality and inclusion in communities across the Commonwealth said:

“I just think it’s important to engage with the youth and also give them a safe place where they can speak openly and freely about equality issues, about anything that they feel free to speak on… we owe it to them to do that. So I just want to use my voice to help the youth, empower them and make them know that they have people like us helping them along the way.”

The RCS is the Secretariat for CYGEN which was created ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2015 in Malta. Commenting on the role that she sees young people playing alongside governments, charities and organizations like the RCS, Olaoluwa Abagun highlighted:

“It’s critical that we begin to look at young people as that renewed energy and mobilizing strength of the gender equality movement today because across the Commonwealth and across the world indeed, we have the largest youth population we have ever seen, so we are actually the voice for gender equality because we have that mobilizing power and that strength.”

Youth Transitions in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship is one of CYGEN’s five thematic areas. Commenting on Youth Transitions in the context of how COVID-19 has impacted employment opportunities for women and for youth, Nafesha Richardson emphasised that:

“We’ve seen an increase in the occurrence of early marriage due to poverty as impoverished girls in families, they may be inclined to reduce the burden of taking care of their young girls… There has also been a significant increase in instances of gender-based violence, specifically in households where women are financially dependent, and they no longer have access to the resources that they need to become entrepreneurs or access education.”

This discussion affirmed the idea that young people are the key to creating a future that is sustainable. By meaningfully including youth, current and future leaders can create the framework for a more equal and inclusive society.

MORE INFORMATION
Watch the conversation: https://www.royalcw society.org/blog/in-conversation-with-rcs-ambassador-alexandra-burke
In Commonwealth Week, the Society hosted a webinar, ‘The Road to CHOGM’ which brought together the UK’s Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, and Rwanda’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, The Hon. Dr Vincent Biruta.

Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr Linda Yueh moderated the discussion which explored the UK’s priorities as Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, Rwanda (due to be held at the time in June 2021 but later postponed because of the pandemic (a date is yet to be confirmed)), as well as the agenda for the Rwanda CHOGM and Rwanda’s priorities as Chair. Speaking of the UK’s time as Chair-in-Office, Lord Ahmad highlighted how the UK had sought to strengthen and renew the Commonwealth through its three pillars – the Commonwealth Secretariat, the member states and the many Commonwealth organisations and networks. He highlighted how through the themes of fairness, prosperity, sustainability, and security the UK had:

• supported 17 Commonwealth Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop sustainable and climate resilient marine economies

• worked closely with Vanuatu on the Clean Oceans Alliance (34 countries are part of this and all have committed to taking steps to reduce marine plastics – an important step to advance the voice of the Commonwealth at COP 26).

• funded prosperity programmes such as SheTrades Commonwealth to help increase opportunities for women and youth across the Commonwealth. SheTrades has supported over 3,000 women-owned businesses to become more competitive, promoting economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries.

Lord Ahmad also stressed the need to strengthen the voice of the Commonwealth in international fora adding that every international meeting should not be seen as a standalone but as a continuity of agreements to ensure agreements translate into action.

Dr Biruta built on this by saying that the Commonwealth was an important platform to build consensus for future agreements and that at the next CHOGM Rwanda would focus on action and impact to take forward the implementation of agreements from previous CHOGMs as well as future agreements. Speaking of Rwanda’s term as Chair-in-Office Dr Biruta identified health, security, gender equality, climate change and economic recovery from COVID-19 as priorities.

 Asked about addressing future challenges Dr Biruta said that governments could not deal with current challenges alone and that action would be needed from stakeholders, particularly from young people across the Commonwealth. Lord Ahmad added that the pandemic had taught the UK and the Commonwealth that we “are stronger together and the inter-dependency of humanity is demonstrated through the unity and diversity of the Commonwealth 54.”

MORE INFORMATION

Watch the conversation in full: https://www.royalcwsociety.org/Blog/the-road-to-chogm-2021
On Monday, 13 September 2021, we were once again delighted to host the High Commissioners’ Banquet in partnership with the City of London Corporation and in association with the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council at Guildhall.

First held by the Society in 1874 the High Commissioners’ Banquet provides an annual opportunity to bring together the Commonwealth’s London-based representatives and Commonwealth thought and business leaders. It further provides a seminal moment to raise the profile of the Commonwealth and to address the challenges facing its 54 member states and 2.4 billion people. For 2021 the Banquet was the first time the Commonwealth diplomatic community gathered since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Held in advance of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), this year’s Banquet served as an opportunity for the Commonwealth family to discuss shared global challenges such as climate change, to consider the Commonwealth’s priorities for the environment and to explore where green finance can offer solutions.

Speakers at this year’s event included the Lord Mayor of the City of London Alderman William Russell (692nd Lord Mayor, November 2019 – November 2021), Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) Dr Linda Yueh, Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council Lord Marland, Chair of Prudential Plc Baroness Vadera and Minister for Africa (until September 2021) Mr James Duddridge MP.

Speaking during the reception RCS Chair Dr Linda Yueh said:

“Climate change is of particular concern to our Commonwealth family of 54 member states. With communities around the Commonwealth experiencing record heatwaves, devastating fires, and calamitous floods, there is no more pressing and common endeavour than arresting climate change. With 32 of these countries being small states and especially vulnerable, we can - and must - play a key role in addressing the climate emergency that is affecting us all.”

↑ Chair of Prudential Plc Baroness Shriti Vadera addresses guests during the Banquet

↑ The Melodians Steel Orchestra perform at the reception

↑ The Lord Mayor of the City of the London Corporation welcomes guests

↑ Dr Linda Yueh delivers a speech during the Banquet reception

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.royalcwsociety.org/Event/high-commissioners-banquet
Ten years ago, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) issued a bold and forward-looking report that called for a radical rethink of the Commonwealth: not just its structure and identity, but also its purpose and place in the world. Dr Anne T. Gallagher AO, Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation, writes about a new online series that is once again taking up the challenge of Commonwealth reform.

In introducing the report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2011, the EPG explained that their chosen title: ‘A Commonwealth of the People: Time for Urgent Reform’ reflected an unshakeable belief in the idea of the Commonwealth: that it exists to unite diverse nationalities, religions and ethnicities under a broad set of common principles and values.

The Report was also frank in its assessment that the very idea of the Commonwealth was under threat. It warned of a ‘growing perception’ that the Commonwealth had ‘become indifferent because it fails to stand up for the values that it has declared as fundamental to its existence’.

It called for the development of a Charter that would clearly spell out those values – and it recommended a new approach to how the Commonwealth deals with Member States that engage in serious and persistent violations of these standards.

Member States took forward the proposal for a Commonwealth Charter and that document – effectively the Constitution of this organisation – was adopted in 2012. The Charter places the People at the centre of the Commonwealth: it affirms, loudly and clearly, that human rights, democracy – and free and vibrant civil societies – are core to the Commonwealth identity.

But not all the Eminent Persons Group’s proposed reforms were accepted. And the question of reform has certainly not gone away over the past decade. Questions continue to be asked about the Commonwealth’s role; about its relevance and its effectiveness. Those questions are taking on increased urgency in the face of questions around the Commonwealth’s responses to the big issues of our time – from COVID-19 to climate change.

In a new series, part of the Foundation’s highly successful Critical Conversations online events, Kenyan broadcast journalist Victoria Rubadiri draws together the original members of the Eminent Persons Group, including The Hon Michael Kirby, Mr Samuel Kavina, Sir Ronald Sanders and Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and places them in dialogue with civil society activists, academics, and politicians – including a new generation of Commonwealth leaders.

Over three episodes, Victoria asks her panellists to explore some of the most important questions that can be asked of our Commonwealth. What does it mean, in 2021, to be a ‘citizen’ of the Commonwealth? What role should the Commonwealth play in the big issues of the day, including distributing vaccines to the Commonwealth citizens that need them, and protecting its Small Island State Members from rising sea levels?

We urge you to join Victoria in asking these questions, to discover what has been achieved and what remains to be done in the name of Commonwealth reform. The world needs a Commonwealth that can truly rise to the challenges of the day – and we believe a few good conversations can shift the direction of change.
ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE
IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Firhaana Bulbulia, Child, Early and Forced Marriage Lead for the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) shares how the network is advocating for legal reform and social change on issues to end child marriage in the Commonwealth.

Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) continue to undermine and destroy the lives of children, particularly girls. Almost 60% of all child marriages globally occur within the Commonwealth, despite it holding only 32% of the global population. This stark figure exemplifies the need for persistent and urgent action, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic which has presented unprecedented socio-economic and health challenges, further increasing the risk of vulnerability.

As the leading youth network working on gender-related issues in the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN), as part of its #Reform53 Campaign is building the capacity of grassroots activists and youth leaders to tackle deep rooted discriminatory norms that fuel child marriage through providing the knowledge and tools necessary to not only shift social attitudes but also laws which make it possible for CEFM to continue.

In a virtual advocacy workshop held on 31 October, youth from every corner of the Commonwealth participated in an introductory workshop to better understand the issue of CEFM, the need for legal reform and social change, Commonwealth mechanisms for advancing progress and gaining practical skills in developing campaigns and policy briefs, learning from case study examples from Trinidad and Tobago and Pakistan.

In her opening remarks, CYGEN’s Coordinator Nafesha Richardson shared:

“CEFM is a key component of CYGEN’s Gender Agenda and #Reform53 Campaign which includes a focus on reforming consent laws on forced marriage and removing clauses that defer to customary laws. Despite the positive strides made through this campaign, there is still much more work to be done to drive unrelenting action towards ending child marriage. Thus, this workshop will strengthen the skills, abilities and capacities of the organizations and activists dedicated towards achieving this goal.”

Christine Alfons, Founder of Safe Engage Foundation, Kenya, indicated that strategies such as community sensitization, clear laws and policies, educational scholarships and economic empowerment programmes for women and girls have proven to be beneficial in stopping early marriage, however, a strong commitment from policy-makers and persistent advocacy from community leaders must continue to ensure that mindsets are changed and laws implemented.

In sharing the lessons learnt from Trinidad and Tobago’s success in changing the legal age of marriage to 18 in 2017, Dr. Gabrielle Hosein, Head of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago explained that legal reform around child marriage also intersects with access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive education and health services for young people and must not be left behind.

“In advocating for changes to legislation around child marriage, we must ensure we do not take steps backward in ensuring that girls and boys between the ages of 16-18 have access to sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive SRHR education.”

MORE INFORMATION
www.royalcwsociety.org/pages/category/cygen
COMMUNITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

A record-breaking 25,648 children entered The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition 2021 from every Commonwealth region on the theme ‘Community in the Commonwealth’.

Founded by the Society in 1883, The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition (QCEC) is the world’s oldest international schools’ writing contest which in the past decade alone has reached over 140,000 young people. Through the prism of a theme, young people are invited to write on a topic which explores their own connection to the Commonwealth, whilst fostering an empathetic and open-minded world view.

Earlier this year, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall, Vice-Patron of the Royal Commonwealth Society announced the 2021 competition theme as ‘Community in the Commonwealth’ via a video message with the winners of the 2020 competition. Young writers were asked to reflect on their own experiences of COVID-19, to consider the strength their communities have shown, and to share with us their hopes for the future.

The response was outstanding. Despite the significant interruption to education across the globe due to the pandemic, we received a staggering 25,648 entries – the highest level of participation since the competition began and a 99% increase on the 2020 competition!

130 volunteer judges, drawn from across the Commonwealth, assessed the entries, with the final judging decision taken by an expert panel, which included best-selling author Dame Susan Hill DBE; Commonwealth Writer’s Prize winner and poet, Sia Figiel; international award-winning theatre maker Femi Elufowoju Jr; Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry winner Dr Imtiaz Dharker; academic and former Fijian politician, Emeritus Professor Satendra Nandan; Head of Research for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Dr Paul Edmondson; and 2017 QCEC Senior Runner-up and author, Hiya Chowdhury.

In September, we were excited to finally share the news with the winners, runners-up, their parents, and teachers over Zoom before announcing them as:

Kayla Bosire, Senior Winner, aged 16, from Nairobi, Kenya. Her entry was titled ‘A Letter from the New World’, which explores what the world looks like thirty years in the future, through the eyes of the COVID-19 virus.

Ethan Charles Mufuma, Junior Winner, aged 13, from Mukono, Uganda. He was recognised for his entry, ‘Okware Our Pandemic Epic’, which explores a fictional Okware’s heroic efforts to support his community against the pandemic.

Aditi Nair, Senior Runner-up, aged 15 from New Delhi, India, wrote ‘Prithavi Mata’, which imagines an exchange with Mother Earth and explores the impact COVID-19 has on the relationship between humans and the natural world.


Congratulations to this year’s winners and to everyone who participated in the competition this year. We would also like to thank Moomin Characters, the principal sponsor of the 2021 competition, as well as the many dedicated teachers, librarians, education, and foreign ministries across the Commonwealth, without whom we would not be able to involve so many people in this unique competition.

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.royalcwsoociety.org/qcec-2021-winners
The best thing about The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition is that one has time to think and rethink. To be sincere, Okware was not my first storyline. I thought of this storyline much later. The biggest challenge was relating my ideas to the theme and topic.

Sometimes I had interesting ideas, but my teacher would say, “Ethan, try to read the sixth verse in relation to the theme.” Only to realize, I was going off theme.

I took about a week discussing and collecting ideas for the topic I was to write about. ‘Tell a story of how you or someone you know helped others during the pandemic’.

It again took me three weeks of daily writing to produce that taste in Okware Our Pandemic Epic.

When I started building my story, I started feeling the difference and every verse I completed, just invited me to build another.

I still recall this comment from my teacher, “Ethan, I don’t want to stop reading from you, please send more verses.”

There, I gained all the confidence to think deeper and build the piece exceptionally before submitting on the last day because I kept beautifying it whenever it was at my hand.

Why did I use poetry?

When I started exploring my creative writing skills Primary Five, my teacher engaged me more in poetry for it was easier, entertaining and the message comes out easily. Poetry gives me freedom to flow and so, I chose it as a style of my piece.

On 28 September 2021, ‘in big surprise’ I received the news of my victory, a feeling I didn’t expect but had to accept.

Family, friends, and my school celebrated my success. The achievement brought legacy to my country and journalists from local media houses looked for me and had chains of media interviews from both TV and newspapers.

What about my meeting with HRH The Duchess of Cornwall?

This is what I pray for every writer to be part of. It is totally a different feeling. Not compared with any of the interviews conducted before or after. It paints the real victory in a winner’s heart.

It was a great honour speaking to you, and I shall keep writing as I promised.

To all entrants of The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition 2021, I celebrate you because together, we set a record of the highest number of entrants since the competition started. We gave the loudest voices and let’s keep doing this.
RECONNECTING IN 2021

This year’s Winners’ Week was like no other in the history of The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition! Unlike in 2020, when COVID-19 prevented Winners’ Week from occurring and resulted in the first virtual Award Ceremony, QCEC winners were once again welcomed to London for a programme of educational and cultural activities.

The continuing presence of COVID-19 necessitated extra precautions, but facemasks and regular PCR testing meant the winners were able to enjoy a safe, yet engaging week in London. This year attendees included Kayla Bosire, 2021 Senior Winner, Aditi Nair, 2021 Senior Runner-up and Raisa Gulati, 2021 Junior Runner-up. The invitation was also extended to the winners and runners-up from the 2020 competition and Cassandra Nguyen, 2020 Junior Winner from Canada was able to take up the offer.

The winners started their week with a visit to the Canadian High Commission, where they enjoyed a diplomatic writing workshop led by Ms Camille Roust, followed by a tour of the majestic Canada House, featuring exquisite views of Trafalgar Square and a glimpse at the High Commission’s rooftop beehive. Next, the winners had the privilege of joining the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, for lunch in Speaker’s House. This was followed by an exclusive tour of the Houses of Parliament and the chance to watch the Speaker’s Procession. In the afternoon, the group enjoyed the views of sunny London from aboard Uber Boat by Thames Clippers, which took them from Westminster to Greenwich for a quick tour of the Cutty Sark, a hike up the hill to the Royal Observatory, and a very relaxing star-gazing session in the Planetarium.

Tuesday began with a visit to the Kenyan High Commission where the winners had the honour of meeting Deputy High Commissioner Ambassador Kamere and discussing their writing with him over traditional Kenyan refreshments. Next, the group were treated to a wonderfully interactive tour of Westminster Abbey which paid special attention to the lives of the great writers who are memorialised and buried at the Abbey. They also had the honour of meeting Canon Stanton in the Jerusalem Chamber, a private section of the Abbey that has witnessed many historic events including the death of King Henry IV. In the afternoon the winners were invited for a tour of the bustling newsroom of the Evening Standard and a journalism workshop led by Doug Wills, Editor Emeritus.

The group woke up early on Wednesday to make their way to Cambridge to pay a visit...
to the Royal Commonwealth Society Library Collection at the University of Cambridge. Laid out for the group were pieces of specific interest for them such as gifts given to Queen Mary during her royal visit to India in 1905, a 100-year-old panorama of Bombay and other treasures from across the Commonwealth. The winners also took a trip up the library tower to the 14th floor to enjoy the book collection and experience panoramic views of Cambridge. In the afternoon the group explored King’s College grounds and took a rest in the College Chapel. Upon their return to King’s Cross, a stop to pose at Platform 9 ¾ was in order for the Harry Potter fans, before returning back to their hotel.

On Thursday morning, the group enjoyed a tour of the historic London Library, which provided the perfect backdrop for an inspiring writer’s workshop led by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former QCEC winner Mei Fong who shared her own writing journey and tips for a successful writing career.

It was now finally time for our winners to head to St James’s Palace for this year’s Award Ceremony. The incomparable Gyles Brandreth, RCS Ambassador acted as Compère for the afternoon’s ceremony inviting each young writer in turn to come on stage and receive their certificate from Vice-Patron of the Royal Commonwealth Society HRH The Duchess of Cornwall. Extracts from the winning pieces were read by RCS Ambassador and author Geri Horner, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former competition winner Mei Fong, best-selling author Dame Susan Hill DBE and award-winning theatre director Femi Elufowoju Jr. The reception also included a viewing of a short virtual ceremony in which The Duchess of Cornwall presented this year’s Junior winner, Ethan Charles Mufuma from Uganda with his certificate (Read more about this on p. 9).

During the ceremony The Duchess of Cornwall and the RCS Chair, Dr Linda Yueh, spoke about the importance of the competition to elevate the voices of young people around the Commonwealth.

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall said: “On a global scale, the young people who enter this competition bring us together with their powerful stories, essays, poetry and letters on the issues that most matter today, making the profound accessible.”

Dr Linda Yueh said: “In 2021, we asked young writers to reflect on their own experiences of COVID-19, to consider the strength their communities have shown, and to share with us their hopes. The response was outstanding. Despite the significant interruptions due to the pandemic, we received a record-breaking 25,648 entries from all Commonwealth regions, demonstrating the competition’s ability to provide a platform for young people to express their views.”

The week concluded with a trip to Cambridge Theatre to see Matilda, the Musical. The lively and entertaining show taken from the much-loved book about a book-loving young girl with special powers seemed like a fitting way to end the week and the winners and their families enjoyed it immensely.

Thank you to all those who made this year’s Winners’ Week possible and a special thank you to our Vice-Patron HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.

MORE INFORMATION
Find out more about the winners of the 2021 competition: https://www.royalcwsociety.org/qcec-2021-winners
THE QUEEN’S BATON RELAY IS MAKING TRACKS AND MEMORIES AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

The Birmingham 2022 Queen’s Baton Relay, a tradition of the Commonwealth Games, is truly underway, following its launch from Buckingham Palace in October.

As athletes from around the Commonwealth prepare for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the Queen’s Baton has embarked on its incredible journey to all 72 Commonwealth nations and territories.

The Queen’s Baton Relay builds anticipation for the forthcoming Games and shines a light on untold stories and unsung local heroes from the communities in which it visits. The Baton, containing The Queen’s Message to the Commonwealth, is travelling 140,000km (90,000 miles) over 294 days before returning to England for the Opening Ceremony of Birmingham 2022, where The Queen, or her representative, will reveal her inspiring words.

A new Baton is created for each Commonwealth Games and is designed to reflect the life and culture of the host city. The Baton for the Birmingham 2022 Queen’s Baton Relay was created in a West Midlands collaboration of art, technology, and science. Made from copper, aluminium and brass, the Baton also features a platinum strand in homage to Her Majesty The Queen in her Platinum Jubilee year. It is also equipped with cutting-edge technology; 360 degree-camera, heart rate monitor, atmospheric sensors, and LED lighting.

As is tradition, the Relay began at a special ceremony at Buckingham Palace on 7 October 2021 where The Queen and The Earl of Wessex were joined by Dame Louise Martin DBE, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, and The Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands, John Crabtree OBE.
including a visit to Nauru, the smallest island in the Commonwealth, and a four-day trip to India.

From the end of January, the Baton will explore Oceania for three months, celebrating Commonwealth Day in New Zealand, and spending four days in Australia. Then the Relay devotes two months to touring the Caribbean and Americas. From here, the Baton will spend four days in Canada, before visiting Gibraltar.

After stopping off at the Falkland Islands, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man in early June, the Relay will spend five days in Scotland, four in Northern Ireland, five in Wales and 25 days covering the length and breadth of England in July.

The final destination of the Relay is the Opening Ceremony of Birmingham 2022 where the Queen’s Message will be removed from the Baton and read aloud, signifying the start of the Games.

Birmingham 2022 will welcome 4,500 athletes for 11 days of spectacular sport from 28 July - 8 August. It will be the most inclusive Games yet with more medalled events for women than men and the largest para-sport programme in the history of the Games.

The Games venues reach every corner of the West Midlands, including Coventry, Solihull, and Royal Leamington Spa to Cannock Chase Forest, Royal Sutton Coldfield, and Wolverhampton. Birmingham 2022 will truly be a West Midlands celebration with Birmingham at its heart.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on The Queen’s Baton Relay and to follow the journey, visit: birmingham2022.com/qbr
AMPLIFYING THE COMMONWEALTH VOICE AT COP26

The UN Climate Change Conference COP26 was a pivotal moment for multilateral action on climate change, following a year-long delay because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The highly-anticipated event gathered more than 30,000 participants in Glasgow, Scotland from 31 October to 13 November 2021, including world leaders and negotiators from nearly 200 countries.

To ensure Commonwealth voices were heard and amplified, the Commonwealth Secretariat hosted its first-ever pavilion at COP26 to serve as a collaborative space for member countries and accredited organisations to gather, network and share knowledge through a range of side events.

Over two weeks, the Commonwealth Pavilion hosted 41 events, featuring more than 250 speakers, while engaging dozens of partner organisations and groups such as Sustainable Energy For All, NDC Partnership, Rotary International, Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network and various UN agencies.

Even with COVID-19 restrictions, the pavilion was a hub of activity, with over 2000 participants attending events in person and thousands more following online. It was an opportunity to strengthen solidarity among members, forge partnerships among a wide range of stakeholders and amplify critical messages on the climate crisis.

Highlights included a joint event by the Commonwealth and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) on climate prosperity, with special addresses by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, who chairs the CVF, President Irfaan Ali of Guyana, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of Maldives, Prime Minister Cleopas Dlamini of Eswatini and Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland.

The pavilion also hosted the formal launch of the Commonwealth Call to Action on Living Lands, under which a proposed ‘Living Lands Charter’ is expected to be discussed and adopted at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda in 2022. Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda, President Hage Geingob of Namibia and President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia provided statements of support.

Milestones achieved under the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, the Commonwealth Blue Charter, the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Agenda and the Commonwealth Call of Action on Living Lands were highlighted throughout the two weeks.

In addition to the pavilion, the Commonwealth Secretariat organised an official COP26 side event (hosted by UNFCCC) nature-based solutions, and participated in numerous other discussions hosted by the African, GCF, AOSIS and other pavilions. The Secretary-General held dozens of high-level bilateral meetings with governments and key partners, and delivered the Commonwealth statement to the COP26 plenary.

All events and activities were promoted on social media with the hashtag #CommonwealthForClimate, driving people to a dedicated website and livestream. More than 1,000 influencers used the hashtag on Twitter, reaching 7 million users while gleaning 33.7 million impressions.

Commonwealth activities were also covered in over 200 separate media platforms across the world, including the BBC, CNN, Sky News, CNBC and Al Jazeera, reaching millions of viewers and readers, amplifying the Commonwealth voice on a global scale.

MORE INFORMATION
https://climate.thecommonwealth.org/
At the World Leaders’ Summit in Glasgow, Commonwealth leaders came together at an event hosted by HRH The Prince of Wales and the UK Prime Minister, demonstrating the critical importance that the Commonwealth attaches to addressing the Climate Emergency.

Jo Lomas, UK Commonwealth Envoy, said: “The event was a fantastic opportunity to bring together Commonwealth leaders at COP26 to discuss the Commonwealth’s role in addressing the challenges of climate change and helping to protect those most vulnerable.”

The COP26 summit, which concluded on 13 November 2021, saw almost 200 countries agree the Glasgow Climate Pact and keep 1.5C within reach.
Instead, you will read about how Namibia is transforming its economy using its abundant, world-class renewable energy resources and making the most of the increasing demand for green hydrogen worldwide. In fact, Namibia is quickly emerging as an early entrant into the new clean energy market and has ambitions of becoming a leading exporter of Green Hydrogen in Africa.

To achieve this ambitious programme, Namibia has set up its umbrella programme for the development of a green hydrogen industry in the south of the country under the name, the Southern Corridor Development Initiative (SCDI). The SCDI aims to both revive the Namibian economy post COVID-19, and to embolden Namibia’s ability to withstand future systemic shocks from unusual and external risk factors, all while growing its skills base and attaining energy security. A preliminary analysis by the World Bank and the Port of Rotterdam of the potential green hydrogen market and levelized cost of hydrogen (LCOH) shows that Namibia could produce highly competitive green ammonia.

The seriousness with which Namibia is approaching this is best captured by the speedy launch in August this year of a Request For Proposal (RFP) that would harness the global momentum behind this green synthetic fuels revolution to maximize the opportunity at hand for Namibia. The RFP was far reaching in its requirements for the developers and challenged developers to articulate how they would develop various supporting infrastructure including
the port of Luderitz, transmission assets and related industrial hubs. The outcome of the selection process was announced at the COP26 in an event co-hosted with the Commonwealth Foundation.

Government is confident that globally, and particularly after the commitments made at the UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, our world is on the threshold of a new era of energy economics, one that will transform the Namibian economy. While our population is only at 2.6 million, the country is the size of France and Germany combined. In the south of our country, where the SCDI is kicking off, Namibia’s solar and wind resources are world class, reliable and provide a long-term and competitive edge relative to global peers.

The SCDI includes a portfolio of complimentary projects and infrastructure that optimizes the opportunity presented by the envisioned synthetic fuels industry in the country, and includes a green hydrogen and ammonia synthesis plant, wind & solar farms, desalination assets, a new deep-water port in Luderitz, and rail infrastructure, among others.

In order to promote and develop international partnerships and strategic collaborations with global public and private stakeholders for competitive and sustainable green hydrogen value chains in Namibia, potential partners and investors have been successfully approached. Government has inked an MOI with neighbour Botswana and the USA outlining their intention to collaborate to develop large scale solar plants in the region. Germany was the first country to sign a partnership for green hydrogen with Namibia through a Joint Communiqué of Intent in October this year. The German Federal Ministry of Research and Education intends to provide up to 40 million Euros in funding to assist Namibia to develop green hydrogen assets. Partnerships with the Port of Rotterdam, Belgium and Netherlands followed quickly.

We can expect that green hydrogen will play an instrumental role in helping the world to de-carbonise industries and transition to clean and circular economies. Dr Hage G. Geingob, President of Namibia, announced at the COP26 that Namibia intended to reduce its own carbon footprint by 91 percent. The production of green hydrogen and its derivative fuels, and the development of the SCDI will allow Namibia to not only reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions but will also position it to assist other countries to achieve carbon neutrality by participating in international green hydrogen import chains.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Scott is the current High Commissioner of Namibia to the Court of St. James’s. One of her passions is putting Namibia on the map and connecting people. Having opened the High Commission in London after independence in 1990, she has returned as head of mission. She has lived in 11 countries and served as Deputy Permanent Representative in New York prior to coming to London.
With climate change significantly impacting the 25 small island developing states in the Commonwealth, COP26 was an opportunity to drive home the urgency of the need to reduce carbon emissions globally and highlight best practice across the private sector and Commonwealth governments.

CWEIC attended COP26 virtually, as a key partner in two important projects led by the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

CWEIC Chairman Lord Marland joined the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, HE Sheikh Hasina to launch the inaugural Commonwealth Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Green Business Award. The award will identify businesses that use technology and innovation to progress sustainable behaviour, encouraging Commonwealth businesses, especially start-ups and tech SMEs, to become more sustainable. The first award will be presented at the Commonwealth Business Forum in Rwanda in 2022. Bangladesh is driving forward plans for carbon budgeting, decarbonation of manufacturing pathways and low carbon industrialisation. The private sector in Bangladesh has already felt the pressure to transition to greener technologies as the global trade regime demands greater compliance.

Many Bangladeshi readymade garments factories have already implemented green technologies, however, for smaller factories, this is an additional financial burden, and they may need the government’s support. Bangladesh is leading by example and is committed to a green growth strategy with more sustainable policies for manufacturing, construction and power generation.

I was delighted to attend a special event at the Commonwealth Pavilion to present Antigua and Barbuda’s plans to develop a Centre of Oceanography and the Blue Economy.

As the co-champion for the Commonwealth Blue Charter’s Sustainable Blue Economy Action Group, Antigua and Barbuda has committed to transitioning to a Blue Economy – reducing overreliance on tourism and supporting sustainable and resilient economic development. Antigua & Barbuda plans to achieve this by:

- strengthening marine science and blue economy education and research by establishing a Centre of Excellence in Oceanography and the Blue Economy at the University of the West Indies’ Five Islands Campus in collaboration with academics across the Commonwealth.

- using science and social policy to build a sustainable Blue Economy and working with the private and higher education sectors to attract foreign direct investment.

The Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) will be a flagship partnership, drawing on commerce and academic expertise and demonstrating the strengths of collaboration across the Commonwealth. CWEIC and partners the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Commonwealth Secretariat have spent the last year creating a roadmap to deliver this five-year plan.

This project is an excellent example of Commonwealth collaboration and the sharing of assets, resources and expertise to design a more sustainable future. Antigua and Barbuda, while a small island state, has a large ocean area, which can be utilised for emerging industries including aquaculture and marine renewable energy through the sustainable diversification of the economy.

The challenge now across the Commonwealth is to continue to drive change, at pace, sharing technological innovation and coordinating efforts across regions to transition economies for the benefit of all.
"Like many people, I never took much notice of environmental issues beyond being annoyed by people throwing rubbish out of their car windows rather than taking it home," commented Board Director John Duffy.

"As the vast majority of greenhouse gases produced by Antigua and Barbuda come from vehicle engines and electricity production, the decrease in the use of diesel generators and the introduction of electric vehicles could massively reduce the carbon footprint on this island," Duffy added.

Joanne Newell, Board Director said: "As members of the Royal Commonwealth Society Antigua and Barbuda, we are dedicated to spreading the message and raising awareness of helping to keep our beautiful islands clean and litter free – maintaining pristine and serene surroundings, but at the same time reducing the impact of what so much unwanted littering can do to the environment, to our beaches and oceans and their inhabitants."

According to Board Director Patrice Skeritt: "The environment is one of the key focus points for RCS Antigua and Barbuda. We will be exploring meaningful ways in which we can contribute towards a cleaner, greener space."

President of the RCS Antigua-Barbuda Branch, H.E. Lady Williams emphasized that the Royal Commonwealth Society campaign theme (in conjunction with the Halo Foundation) ‘Lend a hand to clean our land’, is meant to remind us all that the protection and preservation of our environment is a collective effort.

"It’s not a matter of wholly expecting some other entity to bear total responsibility for the protection of our planet. While policies set by nations heavily affect the path of environmental preservation, there are simple steps that we can each take in the right direction – such as recycling, tree planting, and the conservation of energy. Switching off lights when not in use and utilizing LED bulbs is a reasonable start. These actions may sound simple – but in the long run, what we are aiming for is a protected world that will still exist for future generations to enjoy," said Lady Williams.

The Antigua and Barbuda Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) recently expressed support of the need for global impact reduction as a result of damaging climate change.

"Installation of bins by Halo Gen Y along the island’s north course (17 RCS branded bins to be installed in the next 4 weeks)"
ENVIRONMENT

FIRST ONLINE COMMONWEALTH FORESTRY CONFERENCE POINTS THE WAY TO THE FUTURE

The Commonwealth is home to 2.4 billion people and contains 813 million hectares of forests and 394 million hectares of other wooded land. From 16 to 18 August 2021 420 delegates from 54 countries attended the 20th Commonwealth Forestry Conference hosted on-line from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

The innovative online format, hailed by many participants as the way for the meeting to be held in the future, enabled delegates (34% of them students) covering 17 time zones to participate in sessions without the usual challenges and limitations. The inclusive environment was further enabled by the only cost being a very low registration fee – in stark contrast to the usual costs of attending international conferences which include travel, accommodation and a high registration fee.

All of the sessions were recorded (another CFC first) and will be available on the CFC website at cfc2021.ubc.ca until 31 January 2022.

Highlights of the CFC included:

- 10 Keynote Speakers, 5 distinguished speakers for opening and closing ceremonies
- 2 Special Sessions with 11 invited speakers
- 180 Presenters (oral and poster presentations)
- 3 Minute Talk Challenge for students: 1 slide, 3 minutes each, 13 contestants from around the world
Conference topics included: Bioeconomy and Ecosystem services, Education and Careers, Communicating forestry to outside audiences, Climate change, Technology and Innovation, Indigenous and Community forestry, Conservation valuation, Old-growth management, and Urban Forestry, plus meetings of IUFRO Divisions 6 and 9: Social aspects, forest policy and economics.

Holding the meeting online meant that the CFC’s carbon emission savings amounted to more than 200 passenger vehicles driving for one year, or one passenger vehicle driving for 3.5 million kilometers!

Conference participants produced a final communique which included the following major points:

1. Forestry initiatives are playing an increasing role in efforts to mitigate and adapt to global climate change. The CFC strongly encourages forest institutions to ensure that initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon should be undertaken in ways that are consistent with the broader goals of sustainable forest management.

2. Forests are a key element in the transition towards circular, bio-based economies. The CFC welcomes this growing role of forests in meeting global energy and material needs and sees this as providing greater impetus for sustainable forest management.

3. Fires are increasingly threatening forests and their dependent communities globally, due to a combination of global climate change, historical forest management, and fire exclusion and suppression. The CFC highlights the need for governments and citizens to prioritize proactive fire management over reactive fire response. The CFC urges governments to embrace the leadership and knowledge of Indigenous and local communities. The CFC also encourages proactive management to help reduce fuel loads, diversify forest structure and composition at the stand and landscape scale, and reintroduce cultural and prescribed fire management, where appropriate, to maintain fire-dependent forest ecosystems.

4. Many countries are actively engaging in managing forests in partnership with Indigenous peoples and local communities for tangible and intangible benefits. The CFC strongly encourages Commonwealth countries to pursue these initiatives and to develop inclusive forest governance arrangements that are adapted to local contexts and draw on traditional and local knowledge.

5. Forests are home to 80% of the World’s terrestrial biodiversity and we continue to lose biodiversity at an alarming rate. The CFC encourages an increased consideration of biodiversity conservation as a major objective of sustainable forest management.

6. The CFC applauds major global initiatives to restore degraded and deforested landscapes but recommends that increasing attention is given to ensuring that restoration efforts are adapted to local contexts and are planned with adequate inputs from local communities.

7. The CFC applauds the increased attention given to urban forestry and notes the physical and mental health benefits that are provided by urban trees and forests. Delegates note the importance of involving urban communities as important stakeholders in all initiatives related to sustainable forest management.

8. The CFC notes with concern that “learning poverty” remains unacceptably high in many Commonwealth countries and that it is expected to increase as a result of the pandemic. The CFC recognizes the importance of both formal and informal education in forestry, particularly for younger generations, and this will be hindered if learning poverty is not reduced. These are our future forest managers, and it is crucial that they are well-equipped intellectually to address the many environmental and social challenges that they will face.

MORE INFORMATION
Visit the CFC website at cfc2021.ubc.ca to see the range of outputs from the conference.
In September, together with our partner Clarion Futures we were delighted to finally convene and meet our inspiring Commonwealth Youth Exchange participants from the UK and Cyprus in person in London for a two-day residential programme.

The programme started at Clarion’s Head Office in London Bridge. Participants were joined by senior managers from Clarion Futures and Clarion Housing as well as the Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and representatives from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the #iWill Fund and the National Lottery, for a morning of interactive activities including an icebreaker which asked everyone to consider what they are passionate about and to create their self-portrait in LEGO form! This was followed by a discussion about the programme so far and an introduction to some of the projects which focused on various issues including mental health, LGBT rights, intergenerational dialogue and culture and heritage.

On the second day of the programme participants were welcomed to the Cyprus High Commission in the UK where they had the privilege of meeting with His Excellency Mr Andreas Kakouris. During the visit participants learnt more about Cyprus and its role in the Commonwealth, and Anastasia and Christina had the opportunity to present their project Tsemberi (read more on the next page) before connecting over traditional Cypriot pastries.

During the two days, participants also had the opportunity to visit Westminster Abbey where they learnt about the history of the building and its links with the Commonwealth before walking over to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to meet with the Commonwealth Team, have a tour of the building and learn about the UK’s priorities whilst Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. Before going our separate ways, participants also had the opportunity to visit the Houses of Parliament for a tour with co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Commonwealth, Lord Chidgey.

The Society would like to express its sincere thanks to our partners at Clarion Futures as well as to the #iwill Fund, the National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for making this programme possible and for supporting outstanding young people to access high quality social action opportunities.

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.royalcwsociety.org/cwyouthexchange
TSEMBERI FASHION PROJECT

We are Anastasia Phillipou and Christina Dymiotis; the founders of the Tsemberi Fashion Project, a sustainable fashion project inspired by Cypriot heritage. Our project was created through our participation in the Commonwealth Youth Exchange organised by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Clarion Futures.

Tsemberi Fashion Project is the first sustainable fashion project that brings together young Cypriot fashion designers from across the island and invites them to create new sustainable and zero-waste designs inspired by Cypriot cultural heritage. Their creations will be presented in exhibitions in Nicosia, Cyprus and London in 2022. We envision transferring this exhibition to different countries of the world, to promote Cypriot culture and the young designers of Cyprus.

Climate change has been a primary concern for citizens and governments across the globe. Notably, the fashion industry is one of the main contributors to this issue, as it is the second most polluting industry in the world (when it comes to ocean pollution). Therefore, our project aims to raise awareness on the various fashion sustainability practices everyone can adopt in their everyday life to minimise their clothing waste. We draw inspiration from the sustainability practices utilised by our ancestors, as we like to remind our community that sustainability has always been a key aspect of our culture.

Sustainability and teamwork are two of the main priorities for Tsemberi. Our team utilises a ground-up approach in identifying strategic priorities, and repeated sustainability assessments allow us to minimise our environmental impact and maximise sustainability advocacy. Our goal is to achieve a working culture that is inclusive, diverse and fair. Moreover, our fashion designers are using only second-hand fabrics alongside zero-waste techniques to minimise their fashion waste. We are also collaborating with Fashion Revolution (Cyprus Branch) which is an NGO that fights for a more sustainable and ethical fashion industry. They are helping us to develop our project and raise awareness of these significant issues.

We greatly enjoyed participating in the Commonwealth Youth Exchange in both virtual and physical sessions in addition to meeting fellow young activists doing extraordinary work for their communities. Some of our main highlights was having the honour of presenting our project at the High Commission of Cyprus in London as well as attending the High Commissioner’s Banquet.

We would like to give a massive thank you to the Royal Commonwealth Society for this amazing opportunity as well as the Commonwealth Fashion Council for supporting our project. We look forward to our upcoming fashion exhibitions.

MORE INFORMATION
Follow our journey on social media:
http://instagram.com/tsemberi
## COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH

### JANUARY
- **26** Australia Day  
  Indian Republic Day  
- **31** Nauru Independence Day

### FEBRUARY
- **4** Sri Lanka Independence Day  
- **6** Waitangi Day  
- **7** Grenada Independence Day  
- **18** The Gambia Independence Day  
- **22** St Lucia Independence Day  
- **23** Brunei National Day  
  Guyana Republic Day

### MARCH
- **6** Ghana Independence Day  
- **8** International Women's Day  
- **12** Mauritius National Day  
- **14** Commonwealth Day  
  Commonwealth Service, Westminster Abbey  
- **21** International Day of Forests  
  International Poetry Day  
  Namibia Independence Day  
- **23** Pakistan National Day  
- **26** Bangladesh Independence Day

### APRIL
- **26** Tanzania Union Day  
- **27** Sierra Leone National Day  
  South Africa Freedom Day

### MAY
- **20** Cameroon National Day

### JUNE
- **1** Samoa Independence Day  
- **2** The Queen’s Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour)  
  Platinum Jubilee Beacons  
- **3** Service of Thanksgiving, St Paul’s Cathedral  
- **4** Platinum Party at the Palace  
- **5** Big Jubilee Lunch  
  The Platinum Jubilee Pageant  
- **8** World Ocean’s Day  
- **25** Mozambique Independence Day

### JULY
- **1** Canada Day  
  Rwanda Independence Day  
- **6** Malawi Independence Day  
- **7** Solomon Islands Independence Day  
- **10** The Bahamas Independence Day  
- **12** Kiribati Independence Day  
- **26** Maldives National Day  
- **30** Vanuatu Independence Day  
  **26 - 8 August**  
  Birmingham Commonwealth Games

### KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION
- www.royalcwsociety.org  
- @RoyalCWSociety  
- /RoyalCWSociety  
- @RoyalCWSociety

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24 VOICES DECEMBER 2021
Leaving a legacy is an impactful way to help ensure the valuable work of the Royal Commonwealth Society continues well into the future.

Remembering us in your will is a way of ensuring that we can continue to improve the lives and prospects of all Commonwealth citizens across the world by championing literacy, equality and inclusion, the environment and connected communities across the Commonwealth’s 54 nations.

Including a legacy to the Royal Commonwealth Society in your will is straightforward. You can make a gift of a specific sum of money or a proportion of your residual estate. If you have already made a will, you can add a codicil which we would be happy to supply.

**LETTER OF WISHES**

If you have a Charities Aid Foundation Charity Account, you may want to adjust your Letter of Wishes to include the Royal Commonwealth Society. A Letter of Wishes is a legal document which you use to provide instructions on how the balance of funds should be distributed on the closure of your CAF Charity Account. That way, you can rest assured that the remaining money will go to the causes you care about the most.

By completing a Letter of Wishes now, it can make the distribution of funds a very straightforward process.

For more information please visit
https://www.royalcwsociety.org/leave-a-legacy

or contact our Head of Public Affairs,
Elizabeth van der Valk by telephone 020 3727 4300

or email Elizabeth.vandervalk@royalcwsociety.org