

**NOTES ON MEETING OF THE BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION COMMUNITIES
GROUP ON 2 APRIL 2015**

The meeting was held on 2 April 2015 at 4.30 in HMS Daring Room, Council House, Birmingham.

Attendants

Keith Stokes-Smith	Chair, Birmingham Commonwealth Association
Wade Lyn	Chair of Focus Group and Honorary Consul, Jamaica
Satinder Kaur Taunque DL	Punjab Culture Centre and Deputy Lord Liet
Dr Jaggit Singh Taunque MBE DL	Punjab Culture Centre
Marcia Lewinson	WAITS
Ajit Singh Ubhi	Nishkam Centre
Daniel Riley	The Phoenix Newspaper
Bosco Ngabonzima	West Midlands Rwandese Community Association (WM-RCA)
Garry Peal	Birmingham City Council
Davinder Prasad	BOPA
Dial Masih	IACF Founder
Bentley Cunningham	
Chike F. Oduoza	
Karolina Medwecka	Birmingham City Council
Sarah Pagan	Birmingham City Council

Welcome and introductions

Chair Wade Lyn (WL) welcomed Satinder Kaur Taunque DL, Dr Jaggit Singh Taunque MBE DL, Bosco Ngabonzima, Chike F. Oduoza, to the group. A brief introduction of the BCA's activities, cooperation with the Birmingham City Council and the Distinctly Birmingham website followed.

Contact to Distinctly Birmingham for the future announcement of events in relation to the BCA can be made via the contact function on website (www.distinctlybirmingham.com) or via mail to distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk.

Plans and ideas for future projects

WL stressed that the BCA's output will depend on communal action and that it should serve as a network that will support communities' actions for projects promoting the Commonwealth, rather than function as an organising body on its own.

The aim is to gain credibility and reputation for the Commonwealth Association after its 14 months of existence and build a "Commonwealth brand" in order to get interest from more communities that currently represent Commonwealth countries in Birmingham to become involved.

Therefore there were ideas brought up for events that should practically be achievable for 2015 to take a step towards raising awareness to the BCA's work. It was emphasised that the BCA needs to build up a reputation and gain public recognition.

The table emerged into discussion of ideas that members and the Chair came up with or have been already discussed in previous meetings, such as:

- Item collections for communities of the Commonwealth in crisis/natural disasters
→BCA could collect lists of supplies that are needed in countries affected in short and long term by disasters and involve schools to help collect items and pack them for shipping
- Involvement of the cricket team and possibilities of the players' participation in events and for fundraising matters, cricket and netball events in general → possibilities for the formation of a Commonwealth sports group
- Planned trips for young people from Birmingham/the West Midlands to be sent to Commonwealth countries
- Idea to put the celebration of one or two communities of the Commonwealth into focus each year in addition to the reoccurring annual events
- Commonwealth Day Parade with Birmingham's Commonwealth communities → planning would need to start ASAP, since the next Commonwealth Day would be on Monday, 14 March 2015. The parade might need to take place on the weekend due to street closures
- Keith Stokes-Smith is working towards a membership in the Royal Commonwealth Associations for the BCA as a strategic partnership
- Bentley Cunningham spoke out the need for more intellectual events such as symposiums on aspects of the Commonwealth

Idea of holding an event for the Commemoration of HM the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, becoming England's longest reigning monarch 9 September 2015

- Has potential to create public's awareness of BCA, build credibility and gain publicity and reputation
- Could have events leading up to the day as a highlight. The celebrations should show what communities of the Commonwealth are about
- Idea for a big celebration on Victoria Square, creation of something visual, such as a Commonwealth flag
- Idea to integrate Education group and get students and pupils to produce material for the day's programme

Marketing: Putting the BCA “on the radar”

Events such as 9 September 2015 are hoped to receive wide media coverage, on TV and in newspapers.

The BCA needs to gain recognition and especially attract young people. Twitter was mentioned as a useful tool to spread the word about the BCA. Karolina Medwecka suggested the creation of a recognisable “#”-word that will create a brand and will connect tweets evolving around activities of the BCA.

Fundraising

The BCA is in need of funds to realise those projects. The BCA could submit bids to the National Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund which have successfully supported previous projects of BCA members. Other possibilities would be Jaguar/Land Rover

Reoccurring national celebration dates of Commonwealth countries

The suggestion has been made to put together a calendar holding reoccurring national holidays in the Commonwealth countries represented in the BCA. Some dates were already mentioned in the meeting, see below.

ACTION: Doodle (on-line survey) will be set up for the BCA members to fill in a calendar with their communities’ celebration dates

- 15 August 2015: India Independence Day
- 8 March 2016: Marcia Lewinson mentions next year’s International Women’s Day and ideas to link it to the Library of Birmingham and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- 14 March 2016: Commonwealth Dinner on Commonwealth Day celebration
- 7 April 2016: Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Rwanda Genocide
- Vaisakhi celebrations (alternating dates?)
- Milad celebration for Muslim communities (alternating dates)
- August: Rwanda National Harvest Day
- February: World Interfaith Harmony week

Notifications of other upcoming events and opportunities for the BCA to present itself at a stand

- 26 April 2015: Annual Vaisakhi celebrations in Handsworth Park

- **10 May** 2015: Event on Freedom of Speech in religion
- 19 June 2015: World War I event
- 1 August 2015: Yam Festival of the Igbo community association in the Midlands (ICAM)
- 15 August 2015: India Independence Day
- 24 August 2015: Cricket event

Decisions and plans have to be made in the next session regarding following issues

- BCA promotion stands at forthcoming events
- Community projects and formation of 'sub committees' to organise
 - ➔ Charity collection for Commonwealth countries
 - ➔ 9 September celebrations
 - ➔ Commonwealth Day 14 March 2016 with Commonwealth Parade and Multi faith service?
 - ➔ Commonwealth dinner on both 9 Sept/14 March
 - ➔ International Women's day March 2016 and BCA's involvement
 - ➔ Discussion on formation of a Commonwealth sports group?
- Funding
- Event calendar
- BCA's use of social media tools

Further procedures

The BCA plans to meet once a month. Next dates:

30 April 2015

29 May 2015

25 June 2015