

Message from the Leader

I am delighted to be able to write in support of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association; its creation in March 2014 being the product of Birmingham City Council's Distinctly Birmingham International strategy for the city.

As one of the largest local authorities in Europe, we have come to realise that there must be an increased emphasis on enhancing Birmingham's profile, reputation and influence beyond Europe. The Commonwealth of 53 nation states accounting for 2 billion of the world's 7 billion people presents obvious opportunities. The Commonwealth is of particular relevance to Birmingham due to the international complexion of our city where 42% of its citizens are from ethnic groups other than white, many of whom maintain contact with their countries of origin. The importance of these links should not be underestimated. In a globalised, inter-connected world, these country connections offer the city an enormous opportunity to use its citizens as city ambassadors in support of a number of its ambitions. Of particular interest are those ambitions around education, culture, cohesion, trade and investment. Ambitions which I am happy to see are reflected in the sub-groups making up the Birmingham Commonwealth Association.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you continuing success in helping to bring the benefit of our Commonwealth engagement to the citizens of Birmingham.

**John Clancy, Leader,
Birmingham City
Council**



Who are we? Birmingham Commonwealth Association

Founded in 2014, Birmingham Commonwealth Association (BCA) is part of Birmingham City Council's **Distinctly Birmingham European and International Strategy**. The strategy aims to strengthen international partnerships, trade and investment, engaged and cohesive communities, academic partnerships and improve 'joined-up' working with city partners. In 2016, the association became a not-for-profit organisation limited by guarantee thus strengthening its ability to achieve its objectives.

The BCA's mission is to engage, partner, collaborate and network with those in the city and beyond who are outcome driven and who have an interest in promoting Birmingham, its organisations, businesses and communities while recognising the real opportunities the Commonwealth offers. Our work is further strengthened through Birmingham's sister city relationship with Johannesburg, South Africa as well as enjoying excellent connections with other Commonwealth countries through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. Recently we have become a branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society giving access to a broad range of partners across the Commonwealth.

The BCA aims to build on these connections to the benefit of Birmingham and its citizens. Our three subgroups reflect the interest of our members and comprise:

- **Trade and Business:** to build Birmingham's global competitiveness and influence and in turn, create growth and jobs, by engaging and collaborating with both the business and public sector and organisations supporting the business community.
- **Communities Group:** engaging with communities'

sporting and cultural organisations to promote Commonwealth values, celebrate the input of Birmingham society by Commonwealth citizens, increase community safety, cohesion and inclusion.

- **Education:** engaging with universities, colleges, schools and other academic establishments to promote Commonwealth values, learning, knowledge and innovation.

The Commonwealth and our connection with it, is at the heart of our work.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Association is chaired by Keith Stokes-Smith FCIS, ACMA, a Magistrate and President of the Birmingham Consular Association. Commenting, Mr Stokes-Smith said "We have now put in place some of the foundation stones for what I know will be a sustainable and successful organisation which will contribute to the outcomes of Birmingham and Greater Birmingham through its engagement and support in the areas referred to above. The Commonwealth and our Commonwealth links are a vastly undervalued resource as are the opportunities the Commonwealth offers. We will



persevere in accessing these opportunities.

Our three current areas of focus have the opportunity to deliver positive outcomes not only for the City of Birmingham and indeed its neighbouring cities, towns and villages but also for those individuals, businesses and organisations which engage with us and those we ourselves engage with. Collaboration, partnership and co-ordination are just a few simple mechanisms to more effectively and efficiently bring about added value results. Lets not close our eyes to opportunity.

Membership of any of the three Focus Groups within the Association is at no cost and is open to all; I encourage you to come and indeed stay on board for the journey.

We look forward, together with your help and some positive thinking, to delivering our mutual agendas."

Keith Stokes-Smith

Benefits of working with us Our Networks

Our networks include:

- Royal Commonwealth Society with its Commonwealth Branches in Europe, Asia, Pacific, Africa and the Americas
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Commonwealth High Commissions in London and beyond
- Commonwealth Local Government Forum
- Commonwealth Business Women's Network

- UKTI
- Birmingham and Solihull Chambers of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Birmingham Asian Chamber
- Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs
- Community Groups in Birmingham and Greater Birmingham
- Academic Institutions in Birmingham
- Birmingham Consular Association
- Local Commonwealth Diplomats

Why the Commonwealth? A trade and business perspective

Illustrious economist, Ruth Lea CBE, sets out a clear case for why we shouldn't underestimate the power of our Commonwealth relationship from an **Economists for Britain** perspective:



Commonwealth countries considered together as an economic entity are rarely discussed in Britain. Yet they account for over 16% of world GDP and contain over 2 billion of the world's 7 billion people. The modern 53-member Commonwealth spans five continents and contains developed, emerging and developing economies. It also comprises some of the world's largest economies and several of the smallest. The 12 largest Commonwealth countries account for 95% of total GDP. In its diversity it captures the character of the 21st century globalised economy as no other economic grouping can. The Commonwealth's membership includes two of the world's largest ten economies (the UK and India), two members of the G7 (Canada and the UK) and five members of the G20 (the UK, India, Canada, Australia and South Africa). The Commonwealth has global significance and huge potential.

Apart from its sheer size there are three factors which are relevant to trade:

- They have favourable demographics and growth prospects. Their working populations are projected to increase between 2010 and 2100 and, insofar as economic growth is positively correlated with growth in the working population, they are set to be the growth markets of the future, alongside the US, China and other buoyant economies. Specifically, the Commonwealth's demographics compare very favourably with several major European countries, where working populations will age and shrink.
- Secondly, because of shared history and commonalities of language, law and business practice, it has been estimated that Commonwealth countries trading with one another experience business costs 10-15% lower than similar dealings with non-Commonwealth countries of comparable size and GDP. This has been called the "Commonwealth advantage".

- Thirdly, the Commonwealth also has the advantage of being a group of friendly (non-threatening and non-adversarial) countries which includes many with deep reserves of key natural resources.

Other advantages include:

- According to the International Monetary Fund's October forecast, the Commonwealth's GDP could be comfortably ahead of the EU28's GDP (Purchasing Power Parity terms) in 2019. The IMF suggested that the Commonwealth could have a 17.7% share of global output compared with the EU28's 15.3%. Given the faster average growth rates the Commonwealth can then be expected to pull further ahead of the EU28.
- In GDP terms (Market Exchange Rates), the EU28 is still expected to be significantly larger than the Commonwealth in 2019. But as the 21st century proceeds, and the emerging and developing Commonwealth countries get richer, their currencies should appreciate and the nominal GDP estimates should tend to converge with the GDP estimates.
- The incomes per capita and, hence, disposable incomes, in emerging and developing countries are still well down on those in developed countries. But a recent Ernst and Young report on emerging markets concluded that "...large populations and rapid economic growth mean China and India will become the powerhouses of middle class consumerism over the next two decades." Such a development is crucially important for trade.
- The share of UK exports to the EU28 (44½%) was still significantly higher in 2013 than the share to the Commonwealth (8%). But the EU share is falling, whilst the Commonwealth share is rising, albeit rather slowly. Moreover, the UK ran surpluses with several Commonwealth countries in 2013 whereas the UK ran a deficit of over £56bn with the EU.

We work with a number of agencies including:

Business Developer

Commonwealth Business Women's Association	UKTi (United Kingdom Trade and Investment)	Marketing Birmingham	Asian Business Chamber of Commerce	MDTI (Medical Devices Technology International)	Aidem Digital
Federation of Small Business (FSB)	Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council	Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce		International Synergies Ltd	

Life Science/Technology/Digital

Travel

Diamond Travel	Birmingham Airport	Air India	Irwin Mitchell Solicitors	City Law Immigration Ltd	Mills & Reeve
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Legal

Bank

ICICI Bank UK PLC	HSBC Bank	State Bank of India	Institute of Social Entrepreneurs	Ernst and Young	HWSA (Haines Watt Chartered Accountant)
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Accountancy/Finance

Government Representative

Honorary Consul for South Africa	India Consul General	Birmingham City Council	Institute of Social Entrepreneurs
Pakistan Consul General	Bangladesh Assistant High Commission	Cyprus Consul General	

Social Enterprise

Birmingham Commonwealth Association: Trade and Business Group

The BCA Trade and Business Group has been clear from the outset that the mark of its success lies in its ability to achieve outcomes. In order to assist in this aim, it arranged for the association to become a not-for-profit organisation limited by guarantee. This status has the added advantage of improving the group's access to funding. The vision driving the group forward identifies its role as being:

...a key Commonwealth Trading House for its funders, partners, businesses and the community. It aims to accelerate significant trading in the Commonwealth in the relentless pursuit of wealth generation; recognising that profits are essential in order to create capital for growth, prosperity, opportunity, and employment.

The group is facilitating and coordinating engagement between BCA members and international business partners with the support of UKTI, Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Asian Chamber of Trade, the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, Central Government Departments and Birmingham City Council to enable members to:

- Support enterprise and business development
- Attract inward investment and foreign direct investment
- Enhance trade links with Birmingham businesses
- Exploit new markets particularly but not exclusively in Birmingham's key growth sectors including advanced engineering, financial services and life sciences
- Develop the city's trade and research connections to support competitiveness and growth
- Draw on local government networks and connections to add value to the initiative chosen
- Draw on the support of the Royal Commonwealth Society's international network of partners

The current activity of the group comprises:

- Trade mission to Jamaica in April 2016. Jamaica's Millennium goals include the following key targets of development: healthcare, green technology, agro-technologies and the strengthening of export links to the EU. Birmingham and Greater Birmingham offer a unique position to assist Jamaica in meeting its Millennium goals through its world class cluster in healthcare, innovation and research; business support and advanced manufacturing
- Planning a trade and business symposium in September/October 2016 to promote Birmingham as an ideal logistics hub
- Jamaica, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and India comprise the key geographical areas of focus for 2016
- Initiatives undertaken in collaboration with UKTI have included two country specific seminars focusing upon export opportunities to/trade with India and South Africa.



Tamil pickers collecting tea leaves on plantation in southern India

In addition to the current work programme, the group is making progress towards ensuring the linkages and facilitation to:

- ¹ **Commonwealth Green Finance Facility** – to help fund sustainable infrastructure projects across the Commonwealth with a focus on island countries.
- **Commonwealth First** – to encourage SMEs to leverage the Commonwealth network when starting their international journey.
- **The Commonwealth Trade Initiative** – to connect businesses across the Commonwealth and facilitate greater intra-Commonwealth trade and investment.
- **Commonwealth Healthcare Business Group** – bringing together complementary public, private and third sector expertise to help facilitate Commonwealth Governments in improving health provision and outcomes.
- **The Global Goals Commonwealth Sustainable Business Challenge** – to encourage all organisations across the Commonwealth to consider how they can engage with sustainable development goals and how they build them into their strategy and the way they do business.

Two of the many organisations which fully endorse the activities of the BCA include the Commonwealth Business Women's network and LHP Consultants:

The Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBW) works with women in business by connecting governments and the private sector to encourage and enable women's economic empowerment. The objectives are to encourage more women onto boards and into senior decision-making roles, plus develop gender-based procurement programmes and access to supply chains, finance and skills. This is delivered through trade, talent and training, including the work with BCA to encourage women to develop and be prepared for the business world. The Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network provides a platform in development by working with United Nations (UN) to promote international co-operation in the fields of business, government, technology companies and venture capital/private equity to enable women entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate and do commerce.



¹ As outlined by Lord Marland of Odstock, Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council in his statement during a meeting of Foreign Ministers on 26th November 2015.

LHP Consultants

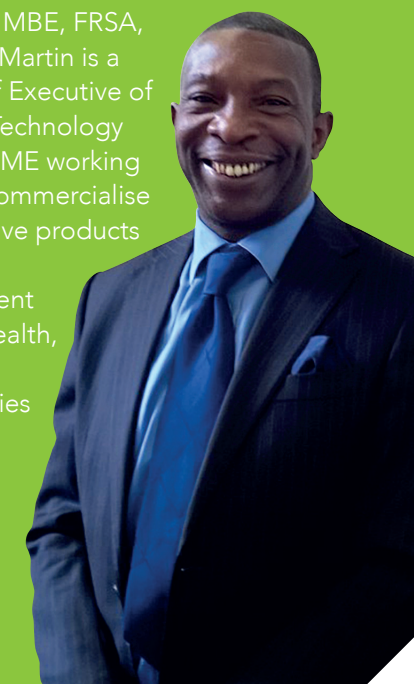
Darren Lister, Vice Chair of the Trade and Business Group, Senior Business Consultant at LHP Consultants and former employee of NutraHealth Plc was awarded The Queen's Award for Enterprise 2015 for its outstanding achievement in the International Trade category.

Darren states the advantages of being part of the BCA as:

- Being a not-for-profit organisation which will allow all its members to engage in an unrivalled Commonwealth networking organisation for Greater Birmingham
- Having key objectives to strengthen and maximise Birmingham's engagement with Commonwealth countries
- Supporting enterprises and businesses that wish to trade and in particular export to Commonwealth countries
- Facilitating a more cohesive strategic approach for all stakeholders to yield added value, with defined and prioritised achievable outcomes
- Encouraging inward investment into Birmingham and Greater Birmingham from Commonwealth nations
- Assisting and guiding SME and FTE exporters to export successfully

Chair of Trade and Business Group Martin Levermore

Martin Levermore MBE, FRSA, Chartered MCISI. Martin is a founder and Chief Executive of Medical Devices Technology International, an SME working with the NHS to commercialise and bring innovative products to market. He is a passionate exponent of the Commonwealth, looking to exploit arising opportunities for the benefit of Birmingham.



We work with a number of agencies including:

Business/Company

First National Bakery

The Phoenix newspaper

Walter James Photography

Recognize

Cultural Heritage

Association of Jamaican Nationals

Jamaican Cultural Association

British Organisation for People of Asia (BOPA)

West Midlands Rwandese Community Association (WM-RCA)

Ghana Union West Midlands

Second Generation Barbadians and Friends

Federation of Indian Muslims

Banatul Muslameen

Sampad

Sports

Jamaica Legacy (Cricket and Football)

Public Sector

Birmingham City Council

Government Representatives

Honorary Consul, Jamaica

Voluntary Sector

W.A.I.T.S. Action

Faith-based organisations

ALLIES Network

Nishkam

Birmingham Commonwealth Association: **Communities Group**

The BCA Communities Group draws on the enthusiasm of a number of individuals from a broad variety of organisations with a passion to celebrate their Commonwealth connections for the benefit of Birmingham citizens. The overarching vision of the group encompasses four main ambitions which aspire to:

...celebrate the input to Birmingham society made by Commonwealth communities; develop mutually beneficial community initiatives; bring about community social inclusion by breaking down barriers for cohesion and provide the opportunity for community joined up thinking with key partners and stakeholder relationship development.

This vision is coming to fruition through a number of activities the group has organised including:

- Commonwealth Day celebrated on 9.03.15, where a number of non UK citizens from Commonwealth countries who were about to be given UK citizenship were welcomed by the Lord Mayor and the chairman of the BCA and awarded a Commonwealth citizen certificate by the BCA incorporating some of the key Commonwealth values as well as becoming citizens of the United Kingdom;



Gariuna Settlement Day Celebration

- a networking dinner attended by 50 community/business/third sector/education BCA supporters at University College Birmingham
- Celebration of HRH The Queen as longest serving Monarch on 9.09.2015 at a networking function at the University of Aston and attended by 140 participants from community; business; high commissions; education providers and public sector representatives
- Letters sent out to 53 High Commissions to promote the activity of the group
- Successful application to join the Royal Commonwealth Society
- Jamaica Legacy Cricket Tour supported by Birmingham City Council, Warwickshire County Cricket Club and the University of Birmingham

The BCA Communities Group has big ideas for 2016 and plans to:

- Share in the celebration of Commonwealth Day on March 14th
- Deliver a number of awards including one to celebrate the contribution of a young person to a community/sporting initiative which has a Commonwealth link.
- Potential sports event – football league in a day



Above: Jamaica Legacy Cricket Tour

- Supporting and engaging with W.A.I.T.S Action and ALLIES Network both Greater Birmingham registered charities
- Supporting the Lord Mayor's show in Cannon Hill Park in June 2016

Two of the many organisations which fully endorse the activities of the BCA include the Royal Commonwealth Society and Nishkam:

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and the prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.

It engages with youth, civil society, business and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The RCS's reach is extensive, having over 70 self-governing RCS branches and affiliated societies throughout and beyond the Commonwealth. As one of the branches, Birmingham Commonwealth Association enables relationships to develop at local and international levels, by having a valuable source of contacts, information, mutual support and fellowship, connecting the supporters of RCS.

The Nishkam Civic Association (NCA) is one of five Centres for Excellence that forms the vision for local regeneration encompassing: spiritual, economic, personal physical and social.

The NCA approach is essentially "acting locally whilst thinking globally". The greatest challenge that the NCA faces is to imagine and build a future where each

community recognises and practices its heritage, and makes sacrifices for other communities to achieve an even greater degree of self-awareness.

One such project is the creation of the Nishkam Saint Puran Singh Institute in Kericho, Kenya – a college for the indigenous population. This landmark project was created by the Sikh Gurudwara through local collaboration and now supports the education of local people.

Nishkam wholly supports the work of the BCA and shares its values. Through a meaningful collaboration we hope to offer even greater potential to extend the reach of the BCA's work.

Chair of Communities Group

Wade Lyn

Wade Lyn CBE is the Honorary Consul for Jamaica and driving force behind Cleone Foods. He is recognised nationally as a leading business figure, particularly in the fields of responsible business ethics and Afro-Caribbean business community.



Below: Nishkam Saint Puran Singh Institute, Kenya

We work with a number of agencies including:

Universities

Aston University

Birmingham City University

University College Birmingham

University of Birmingham

University of Worcester

Newman University

Colleges

South & City College Birmingham

Birmingham Metropolitan College

Other

Marketing Birmingham

Two of the many organisations which fully endorse the activities of the BCA include the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Marketing Birmingham.

Association of Commonwealth Universities

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is the world's first and oldest international university network. A UK-registered charity, it has over 500 member institutions across the Commonwealth. It seeks to address issues in international higher education through a range of projects, networks, and events.

The ACU administers scholarships, provides academic research and leadership on issues in the sector, and promotes inter-university cooperation and the sharing of good practice. Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, and the University of Birmingham are members of the ACU. The ACU endorses the BCA's Education focus group's efforts to enhance the links between educational institutions and the Commonwealth.

Marketing Birmingham

Marketing Birmingham (MB) is the city's strategic marketing

partnership and the driving force behind its growing reputation as a place to visit, meet and invest. It operates the city's leisure and business tourism programmes; Visit and Meet Birmingham as well as inward investment programme Business Birmingham. MB's vision for the future is for a city which is a thriving economic hub that is proud of its story and confident of its future. Marketing Birmingham fully endorses the work of the BCA.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities



Birmingham Commonwealth Association: Education Group

The BCA Education Group is unique in that it draws support from the major universities/colleges in Birmingham and beyond to celebrate and recognise the significance of our Commonwealth connections. The vision driving the group is encapsulated in its aspiration to:

...co-ordinate the efforts of all members in developing the international dimension of collaborative engagement between Birmingham's educational institutions and their Commonwealth counterparts. Such engagement encompasses social and academic enrichment and in attracting overseas students to the city as a source of revenue and as future ambassadors to enhance the influence of Birmingham on the world stage

In recognition of the economic, social and cultural contribution that foreign students and Commonwealth students in particular make to the Birmingham economy, the group has produced a report to highlight these contributions.

In terms of the economic contribution, the report notes that in 2013/14 the city's universities and colleges played host to 10,782 international, non-EU students. This figure does not include 24 private institutions whose enrolment figures were not available, so the real figure is certainly higher than this. The report estimates that nearly 25% of all international students studying in the city are now from the Commonwealth. When the economic benefits of international students to the city are taken into consideration, and exclude any financial benefits arising from research, the Education Focus Group working with Marketing Birmingham has calculated these to be approximately £400 million. This figure is estimated to be even higher, closer to nearly half a billion pounds if the spending of friends and relatives who come to the city to visit these students or attend their graduations are included in the calculation. The group aims to build on this research and also has a number of potential project ideas for exploration in 2016/2017.



Potential ideas trialed in the past and for consideration in 2016/2017 include:

- Provision of equipment such as computers to schools and training of teachers to utilise new facilities. (Set up in the Gauteng Provincial Government and Soweto Organisation, South Africa)
- Working with Birmingham's universities to help their third year education students by offering them a placement in different bodies such as government, private organisations or supplementary schools to broaden their experience and knowledge to help them develop a more effective approach when teaching students with Commonwealth/foreign backgrounds here in the UK
- The Royal Commonwealth Society has an education agenda and the BCA will endeavour to explore how it can at a local level assist in the delivery of that agenda

Chair of Education Group

Prof. Melvyn Pryer

As Director of the International Student Centre, Professor Melvyn Pryer (University College Birmingham) is perfectly placed to drive forward the Commonwealth agenda for the Education Focus Group. He is keen to put the contribution of education's Commonwealth connections in the spotlight and build on the potential that these offer.

