



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

Press Release: Her Majesty The Queen to lead Commonwealth Day celebrations in the United Kingdom

Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, accompanied by The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, The Duke and Duchess of Sussex and The Duke of York will attend the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey on Commonwealth Day – Monday 11th March 2019.

Organised by The Royal Commonwealth Society, the Commonwealth Service is the largest annual inter-faith gathering in the United Kingdom and provides an opportunity to focus attention on this voluntary association of 53 countries and their commitment to promoting democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equality for its 2.4 billion citizens.

The theme for this year's Service, 'A Connected Commonwealth', seeks to highlight the practical value and global engagement made possible as a result of cooperation between the culturally diverse and widely dispersed family of nations, who work together in friendship and goodwill.

Highlights of the Service will include special performances by the Grammy-winning British group, Clean Bandit, and acclaimed tenor and renowned star of the stage, Alfie Boe; with a reflection by endurance swimmer, ocean advocate and the UN's Patron of the Oceans, Lewis Pugh.

The event will also feature performances by the The Dhol Foundation, who performed at the 2012 London Olympics Closing Ceremony and The Queen's Birthday Party concert; William Barton, the internationally celebrated didgeridoo artist who's prodigious talent featured at the 2018 Invictus Games; and the B Positive Choir, featuring Lurine Cato, 2018 finalists in Britain's Got Talent.

Guests of honour among the 2,000 strong congregation will include the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, High Commissioners, Ambassadors and diplomatic representatives, senior politicians, dignitaries from across the UK and Commonwealth, faith leaders and over 800 school children and young people.

The Commonwealth Service will be broadcast live on BBC One from 14:15 GMT. It will be relayed live on the BBC World Service and streamed live on the BBC YouTube channel.

Commenting on the theme of this year's event, Chief Executive of The Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr Greg Munro said, "The Commonwealth Service celebrates a unique network of countries - all distinct and all equal. It is a day for us to recognise our similarities and celebrate our differences, and look to the future of the Commonwealth and at what we can all contribute by working in partnership."

- ENDS -

Notes for Editors:

The Commonwealth Service will be broadcast live in the UK on BBC One from 14:15-16:00 GMT. It will be relayed live on the BBC World Service and streamed live on the BBC YouTube channel.

Related videos will be made available for broadcasters free-of-charge via The Royal Commonwealth Society's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheRCSociety/featured>

Messages and photos will be shared on Twitter and Facebook using the hashtags: #OurCommonwealth; #CommonwealthDay and #connectedcommonwealth

Background:

Commonwealth Day: #CommonwealthDay

- Commonwealth Day is an opportunity to promote the Commonwealth's shared values of peace, democracy and equality and to celebrate the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's 53 member countries.
- The year 2019 marks 42 years since Commonwealth Day became a global celebration marked on the same day every year - the second Monday in March.
- Find out more: thecommonwealth.org/commonwealthday

The Commonwealth: #Commonwealth

- The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and sovereign countries. Its members have agreed to pursue shared goals such as development, democracy and peace. These values are expressed in the Commonwealth Charter.
- The Commonwealth spans the globe, including both advanced economies and developing countries, in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Its combined population is 2.4 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged under 30. Thirty members are small states, with a population under two million, of which 24 are island nations.
- Most countries have similar legal and governance systems and a shared language. Although they have much in common, every country is unique.
- A network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations help countries to put Commonwealth values and principles into action.
- Find out more: thecommonwealth.org/fastfacts

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) @TheRCSLondon

- The Royal Commonwealth Society is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.
- Founded in 1868, it is non-partisan, is independent of governments, and is supported by public generosity.
- The Society engages with youth, civil society, business, and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

A Connected Commonwealth #connectedcommonwealth

- This year's theme is based on the values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter, which aims to leave no one behind.
- Building upon previous themes, this year's theme explores how the diverse countries of the Commonwealth are connected through culture, environment and the desire to build communities fit for everyone.
- Young people, who make up 60% of the Commonwealth's population, have an important role in building sustainable, secure, fair and prosperous societies.

Media Contact:

The Royal Commonwealth Society

Susan Handley

+44 (0)20 7747 6416

susan.handley@clgf.org.uk

www.thercs.org

@TheRCSLondon