



Press Note: Commonwealth Day Observance, Monday 11th March 2013

## **Stars and emerging entrepreneurs to join Her Majesty in celebrating Commonwealth Day in Westminster Abbey**

On Monday 11th March, Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh will mark Commonwealth Day in Westminster Abbey. The Observance will launch this year's Commonwealth theme 'Opportunity through Enterprise'.

Entrepreneur and philanthropist **Sir Richard Branson**, award-winning soul singer **Beverley Knight**, indie-rock favourites **The Noisettes**, and acclaimed 'Young Global Leader' **Ricken Patel** will lead celebrations in the Abbey. Children's poet, **John Agard**, will read a poem specially commissioned for the Observance.

Britain's largest annual inter-faith gathering, the Observance will also be attended by more than 1,000 children from schools and youth groups. Each student present in the Abbey – including the young person presenting the posy to The Queen – has gained a place because of their involvement in enterprise, whether that is through this year's Commonwealth Essay Competition which focuses on enterprise or through projects such as Young Enterprise or the 'Ladder for London' apprenticeship campaign.

Commonwealth Day will also mark the official launch of the Commonwealth Charter; a single document outlining the sixteen core values of the association, which the leaders of the Commonwealth have committed to upholding.

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Commonwealth Day**

In 2013, Commonwealth organisations are focusing on the theme 'Opportunity through Enterprise', celebrating talent and creativity and encouraging the 2.1 billion people of the Commonwealth to maximise innovative opportunities.

The theme is being celebrated on Commonwealth Day, Monday 11th March 2013. This annual event is an opportunity to promote understanding on global issues, international cooperation and the work of the Commonwealth's organisations which aim to improve the lives of its citizens. It also celebrates the Commonwealth through a thrilling mix of music, dance and personal testimonies.

To mark Commonwealth Day, the Royal Commonwealth Society (on behalf of the Council of Commonwealth Societies) organises an Observance at Westminster Abbey. [www.commonwealththeme.org](http://www.commonwealththeme.org)

**The Commonwealth Essay Competition** is the world's oldest and largest schools' international writing competition. Run by the Royal Commonwealth Society, it celebrates

and nurtures the creative talents of young people, providing a platform for students to compete with their peers in the Commonwealth's 54 nations.

**The Royal Commonwealth Society** is the oldest and largest civil society organisation devoted to the Commonwealth. Founded in 1868, it conducts a range of events and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. Its educational, youth and cultural programmes include one of the world's oldest and largest schools essay competitions, and an innovative international youth leadership programme. The RCS has some 4,000 members in the UK and a presence in over 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England and Wales. (226748). [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

**The modern Commonwealth** was established with 8 members in 1949. In 2013, it has 54 members with a total population of 2.1 billion. It is a voluntary association of governments and peoples, built around shared language, institutions, challenges, aspirations and values. Commonwealth countries work together to promote common values: democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all.

The Queen is Head of the Commonwealth. For further information, see <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchAndCommonwealth/Overview.aspx>

## **Contacts**

**For all media enquiries about attending the Commonwealth Day Observance on 11th March**, please contact Eleanor Lovegrove, Press and Communications Officer at Westminster Abbey by midday, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March. T: +44 (0) 207 654 4926 / E: [eleanor.lovegrove@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:eleanor.lovegrove@westminster-abbey.org)

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