



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

14/03/2017

VIDEO NEWS RELEASE: The Queen's Baton continues on its journey to the 2018 Commonwealth Games at the High Commissioners' Banquet

The Queen's Baton was at the annual High Commissioner's Banquet at the Guildhall in the City of London tonight as Commonwealth Week celebrations continued.

The 2018 Queen's Baton Relay was launched yesterday on Commonwealth Day at Buckingham Palace before travelling to Westminster Abbey for the Commonwealth Service.

The Baton will now travel through all Commonwealth member countries over 388 days to its final destination: the opening ceremony of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Speaking at a reception before the Banquet, **the Premier of Queensland, the Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP** said: "The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games are undoubtedly a great moment for sport. It is also an unparalleled opportunity to showcase Queensland's appeal as a unique trade, investment and tourism destination...Our investment in the Commonwealth Games is an investment in the future."

"While I'm focused on the opportunities Queensland can pursue, I also want to highlight the broader opportunities the Games provide to all Commonwealth Nations. To enable that to occur, we'll provide a dedicated Commonwealth House, on the Gold Coast, to provide a space for all nations to promote trade and investment."

In an interview with The Royal Commonwealth Society, the Premier said: "The Queen's Baton relay is well and truly on its way. It's going to travel some 230,000 kilometres through a number of countries and really showcase the community spirit of the Commonwealth Games."

"The Commonwealth has an enduring legacy. It has lasting friendships and what I want to see is more trade within the Commonwealth. What we're hearing loudly from Commonwealth trade ministers is that they want to see that as well."

Held last week in London, the inaugural Commonwealth Trade Ministers' Meeting has revealed an increased appetite for intra-Commonwealth trade among Commonwealth countries since the EU Referendum result.

However, it's not just governments who want to see a renewed focus on trade in the Commonwealth. Polling recently commissioned by the RCS and PLMR shows 90% of British businesses think that the Government should prioritise trade with Australia.

Canada and Singapore are a joint second priority for UK business leaders with 82%. New Zealand and India are third and fourth priorities with 79% and 72% respectively, while South Africa is fifth with 70%.

Delivering the keynote speech at the Banquet, **the Prime Minister of Malta, the Hon Dr Joseph Muscat MP**, who is currently Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth and leading Malta's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2017, said: "The opportunities we have ahead of us are crystal clear, and the political scenario that is unfolding makes it imperative for the Commonwealth and for the European Union, to forge a stronger linkage through the United Kingdom."

Lord Howell of Guildford, President of The Royal Commonwealth Society: "In this stormy context, I believe the Commonwealth is on the pathway to new relevance, new purpose and new prosperity. My country, the United Kingdom, will play its part and draw strength from its Commonwealth friends and allies as we build our modern relationship with a reformed European Union."

In an interview with The Royal Commonwealth Society, **Dr Linda Yueh, RCS Trustee, Adjunct Professor at London Business School, and Fellow of St Edmund Hall, Oxford University** said: "Of course the UK needs to have good trade relations with the EU, but the Commonwealth offers a lot of opportunities because of things like the shared language and shared institutions. They tend to make it somewhat easier to do formal trade deals."

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Notes to editors:

BROADCASTERS, AGENCIES AND ONLINE VIDEO SITES – A free-to-use Video News Release is available for download below:

Video format: Quicktime H.264 1080i HD.

High Commissioners' Banquet VNR:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B99sotFuWzoWY2EyTEFEck5Cb0U/view?usp=sharing>

Contains:

- Overlay of function
- Commonwealth Games Baton
- Mingling guests
- Speech by Queensland Premier
- Overlay of dinner at Guildhall
- Speech by Prime Minister of Malta
- Speech by Lord Howell, RCS President
- Interview with Dr Linda Yueh, economist

Premier of Queensland VNR:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B99sotFuWzoWWVVQTHFWVUZIYU0/view?usp=sharing>

Contains:

- Overlay of function
- Commonwealth Games Baton
- Mingling guests
- Full speech by Queensland Premier (including some camera reframing/overlay)
- Interview with Queensland Premier

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens around the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the RCS promotes the value and values of the Commonwealth. www.thercs.org

The High Commissioners' Banquet, first held in 1874, aims to celebrate the unity, diversity and linkages of the modern Commonwealth and is an integral part of Commonwealth Week celebrations each year. Organised by The Royal Commonwealth Society, the Banquet was held at the historic Guildhall in collaboration with the City of London Corporation.

The polling was commissioned by The Royal Commonwealth Society and PLMR and was undertaken by IFF Research through its Business Omnibus in January 2017.

500 business leaders answered the question: 'Which Commonwealth nations or regions do you think the Government should prioritise to be the most important trading partner for the UK in the post- Brexit environment?'

To supplement the business polling, the RCS asked additional questions to its 62 branches from around the Commonwealth as well as its Associate Fellows – a global network of young people from the ages of 18-35. The polling received 194 responses between December 2016 and February 2017.

Download a two-page infographic 'Capitalising on the Commonwealth: UK Business Priorities': <http://bit.ly/2n5Me2o>

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