

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

'YOUTH OF THE NATION LEAD THE WAY BY FLYING HIGH'

For the first time in the history of the Commonwealth, and to celebrate this great family of nations, young members of the United Kingdom Army Cadet Force (ACF) will take the Commonwealth flag to the top of the highest peaks in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on Commonwealth Day - Monday 13 March 2017. As well as the mountaintop ceremonies, Army Cadets will observe Commonwealth Day by raising the flag at 53 other locations throughout the United Kingdom at 10.00hrs that morning as part of this international initiative.

Lord Mayors and Mayors, Lord Provosts, town and parish councils, local authorities and local communities, school children and college students, members of Girlguiding and the Scouts from around the UK and Commonwealth, Sea and Air Cadets, charities and community groups, Commonwealth Ex-Servicemen and major shipping lines, training ships crewed by disabled crewman people, and many others around the world will raise more than 950 Commonwealth flags at 10.00hrs local time on Monday 13 March – Commonwealth Day 2017, in a shared celebration of this amazing family of nations that encompasses the globe.

The Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth initiative, now in its third year, is again catching the imagination of thousands of participants from all walks of life, inspiring them to join with others throughout the Commonwealth. As a collective public expression of commitment to the Commonwealth, it enables participants to show appreciation for the values the Commonwealth upholds, and the opportunities offered for friendship and cooperation with fellow Commonwealth young and old citizens around the world.

P&O and Cunard Line, for the third year, wherever they may be travelling in the world that morning, will be raising the Commonwealth flag on board their ships at 10.00hrs local time, and the Jubilee Sailing Trust likewise on their two ships, Lord Nelson and Tenacious, involving the disabled members of the community in this event.

Scouts in The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Malaysia, Maldives, Republic of Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Samoa, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago will also be raising the Commonwealth flag at 10.00hrs local time on 13 March, joining thousands of other young people around the world in committing themselves to the values of the Commonwealth Charter and this year's special theme: 'A Peace-building Commonwealth'.

English Heritage will also be raising the Commonwealth flag at many of their historic properties and in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex, 60 town councils are taking part, thanks to generous financial support from the enterprise agency, **Nwes**.

The UK's leading enterprise agency, Nwes, is leading the way to seek, encourage, build and support a young entrepreneur within each of the Commonwealth countries.

Partnering with Commonwealth Pageantmaster and founder of Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth, Bruno Peek LVO OBE OPR, Nwes seeks to involve and educate the international communities about the Commonwealth and the importance of its unity.

Our uplifting project, which aspires to improve the communities' right across the Commonwealth, commenced with a pilot project in Kenya.

In January 2017, Nwes started providing business support and shall do so for a period of 12 months, to a local Kenyan lady, Violet Adhiambo. Violet is introducing a female sexual health program to eight schools in the Kisii county of Kenya, which is located in the South West of the country, supporting the good works already undertaken in Kisumu, Kenya, by charity Sageinkenya.

The Hon Charles Nyagoto, Ward Councilor for the district claims that of the 8 schools in his district, 100% of the girls between the ages of 13-18 years old are not in the position to afford the appropriate product to effectively manage their menstruation. This results in many girls dropping out of school or being absent for significant periods of time.

Many Kenyan girls are also uneducated on the facts of menstruation, puberty and reproductive health and this, together with cultural myths, can lead to embarrassment and low self-esteem.

In many households the subject of menstruation is considered strictly taboo. These myths which have been passed down from generation to generation hold very little knowledge about the actual biological process of menstruation. This lack of factual information, often results in the girls' practical needs related to managing their menstruation, not being appropriately addressed.

Nwes was established in 1982 and is now the largest non-for profit enterprise agencies in the UK. They provide total business support, boost self-employment and encourage enterprise. Nwes has a vision for the future and that vision lies within the strength of the Commonwealth – the desire to build a stronger international unity, by building and supporting its entrepreneurs.

'We want to uplift communities across the Commonwealth and give support to those who wish to empower themselves. This project aims to unify the Commonwealth by finding entrepreneurs who wish for a better life' – Caron Lemmer, Special Projects Manager, Nwes.

Sageinkenya is a growing UK based charity helping young girls in Kenya whose families cannot provide them with hygienic sanitary products of low family income. This has a detrimental impact on their education, as they often stay away from school during their menstruation. The charity currently provides monthly supplies of sanitary towels and underwear to over 800 girls in 16 schools in 3 counties of Western Kenya.

David Pearson, Chairman, says, ***"This is such a basic need that we in the West take for granted and Sageinkenya offers such a simple solution to the problem. We are delighted to be involved in Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth and with your support, we can reach our target of assisting 2000 girls each month."***

A personal message from the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland QC, and a specially written Commonwealth Affirmation, will be read out at each ceremony before the raising of the Commonwealth flag at 10.00hrs. In a common act of witness around the globe members of this great family of nations will reaffirm the commitment of all Commonwealth member states to democracy, development, and respect for diversity.

Bruno Peek LVO OBE OPR – Originator and Commonwealth Pageantmaster, of 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth', said: ***"I am amazed how quickly this event has caught the public imagination in the UK and around the Commonwealth. We are only in our third year, and the involvement of the Army Cadet Force and Nwes this year, along with the participation of so many people of all ages and from all walks of life, shows the enormous potential of this project and of the Commonwealth. It is a positive and uplifting way for people to link with and assist fellow citizens of the Commonwealth in a family that spans across oceans and continents. There is a real sense of promise, and hope for the future in this current troubled world of ours."***

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland QC, said: ***"At a time of increasing instability and uncertainty in the world, the Commonwealth family of nations in its rich diversity becomes an ever more-needed source of strength and hope for all its members. 'A Peace-building Commonwealth' is a natural follow-on from our previous theme of 'An Inclusive Commonwealth', and reaffirms the Commonwealth Charter principle that international peace and security, sustainable economic growth and development and the rule of law are essential to the progress and prosperity of all."***

The ACF's Deputy Commander Cadets, Brigadier Matthew Lowe, said: ***"The Army Cadets is one of the UK's leading voluntary youth organisations with a mission to inspire young people – from all sorts of backgrounds – to challenge their limits, become more independent, confident and able to step up to any challenge. Many of our cadets go on to pursue civilian careers but they do so having taken on board the Army's values of selfless commitment, courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty and respect for others – great values for any citizen. Our cadets also develop a strong understanding of the importance of international peace and security which makes us especially proud to be playing such a key role in the Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth celebration."***

Public institutions, schools, civil society organisations and the media in Commonwealth member states are being encouraged to consider how 'A Peace-building Commonwealth' can be promoted through their activities – including Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth.

Pageantmaster Bruno Peek said: "I am also extremely delighted to announce that our chosen international charity for this event for COMMONWEALTH DAY 2018, and for the next five years, is Make-A-Wish UK, especially as we respect and applaud their amazing work in this country and abroad and if this project can assist in providing a young child with their one true 'wish', along with raising valuable funds for this good cause, Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth will have achieved one of the aims and objectives of the Commonwealth Charter signed by Her Majesty The Queen as Head of the Commonwealth on 13th March – Commonwealth Day 2013, at Marlborough House, London".

Make-A-Wish UK Chief Executive Jason Suckley said: "*Make-A-Wish is delighted to be the chosen charity for Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth on the 12th March 2018 and to work in partnership with Fly a Flag for the next five years. Make-A-Wish UK exists for one reason; to grant magical wishes to enrich the lives of children and young people fighting life-threatening conditions. We go above and beyond to grant very special wishes to very special children; their dreams made a reality at a time when they need it most. To be part of this day will mean that we can reach more people who may be able to help us grant more children their wishes. Showing support for the Commonwealth brings a sense of unity and belonging throughout our communities and we would like to ask all our supporters to get involved too.*"

NOTE TO EDITORS

Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth

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