

Press Release

Embargoed until 12midnight on Sunday 9th February 2014

'History in the making' - 500 Commonwealth flags to be raised throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man at 10am on Monday 10th March 2014, to mark Commonwealth Day.

For the first time ever, local authorities and civic dignitaries, community groups and charities throughout the British Isles are taking part in local flag raising events and ceremonies of dedication to mark Commonwealth Day.

This new, unique initiative, which has caught the imagination of thousands of participants, enables people in their local communities to become involved and join with others nationwide in associating themselves with widespread public expression of commitment to the Commonwealth, appreciation of the values it stands for, and the opportunities offered to its citizens around the world.

A specially written Commonwealth Affirmation will be read out at each ceremony before the raising of the Commonwealth flag at 10am on Monday 10th March 2014, led by either the Lord Lieutenant, Member of Parliament, Lord Mayor, Lord Provost, Mayor, Leader, Chairman, or nominated representative of each participating local authority or administration.

In Sark the flag will be raised by the eldest and youngest pupils of Sark School on the Millennium Field. The affirmation will be read by Mr Michael Beaumont, Seigneur of Sark with the children giving the response. Members of the community are invited to join the school for the raising of the flag. Mrs Sarah Cottle, Headteacher, said that she was delighted that the whole school would be involved in the event which would help raise awareness and understanding of the importance of the Commonwealth for the pupils of the school and the wider Sark community.

Charity teams will mark the day by taking Commonwealth Flags to the top of the UK's four highest National Peaks and use the occasion to raise funds for their worthy causes: Cancer Research UK - Scafell Pike, England; Help for Heroes - Ben Nevis, Scotland; Walking with the Wounded - Mount Snowdon, Wales; and Fields of Life - Slieve Donard, Northern Ireland.

Commonwealth Flags will also be flown at many locations of special significance including the four capital cities of the United Kingdom, Land's End in Cornwall, the most westerly point in England; St. David's in Pembrokeshire: the westernmost city in Wales; Carlisle in Cumbria: the northernmost city in England; Lowestoft in Suffolk: the easternmost town in England; and Unst in the Shetland Islands, the most northerly inhabited island in Scotland. Flags will also be raised at the Rothera Research Station on the Antarctic Peninsula, and at the Halley VI Research Station on the Brunt Ice Shelf, as well as King Edward Point and Bird Island in South Georgia.

"This will be the largest, single, raising of the Commonwealth Flag in the history of the Commonwealth", said Bruno Peek LVO OBE OPR, Pageantmaster and originator of Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth. "The success of this year's event bodes well for 2015 and the future", said Peek, "as we extend the invitation to participate and involve all 53 countries of the Commonwealth and UK overseas territories, to make this the largest-ever annual occasion involving local communities throughout the worldwide Commonwealth family".

I am also delighted that the Virdee Foundation, a well-respected, world-wide charitable Foundation has accepted my invitation to join this project for the lifetime of the event, especially as I have always been convinced that this annual occasion will grow in size and stature over the next few years, providing a unique fund-raising opportunity for Commonwealth causes such as those outlined within the Virdee Foundations Memorandum and Articles of Association - the protection of women and children from abuse and the relief of abused women and children, a worthy cause close to my heart too."

"The Virdee Foundation is delighted to be a part of this initiative, working closely alongside Bruno, to enable us through the 'good will' of those taking part, to assist us in donating charitable funds raised by those taking part, to the important cause outlined above, said Peter Virdee, Chairman of the Virdee Foundation."

His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth said:

"Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth is a most imaginative way for people in local communities – wherever they live, learn or work – to join together with others throughout the Commonwealth in a spirit of respect and understanding to celebrate the variety and unmatched diversity of our global family. I welcome and commend it."

“All our citizens, particularly the young, can express appreciation for the Commonwealth and the values for which it stands as set out in the Commonwealth Charter, and the rich opportunities it offers for mutual support towards more inclusive social and more equitable economic progress.”

Esri UK Interactive Map:

*"We are exceptionally proud to support the 'Fly a Flag' for Commonwealth initiative and, to help raise awareness of the day, we have built an interactive map www.esriuk.com/flyaflagmap that shows where the individual flag raising events are taking place, throughout the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man," explained Dr Richard Waite, Managing Director of Esri UK. We strongly encourage all local authorities and others taking part to post the map on their website, so local citizens and the media can easily find details of their local event and become involved in what will be a most special day." **The map will be available to be available for viewing by the media and the public from 5th February.***

Those taking part will be receiving their Commonwealth Flags on Monday 10th February 2014, one month in advance of the event.

NOTE TO EDITORS

For further information.

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Names of Local all Authorities and others taking part:

See pages 7 through to 12 in the Guide To Taking Part by going to:

www.flyaflagforthecommonwealth.com

Official 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth interactive Map:

Please visit: www.esriuk.com/flyaflagmap

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