

Basil Watson chosen to design national Windrush Monument

- Internationally renowned artist selected by Windrush Commemoration Committee
- Design pays tribute to the vision of the Windrush pioneers
- Monument expected to be unveiled on Windrush Day 2022

The monument, which is backed by £1 million of government funding, will pay tribute to the dreams, ambition, courage and resilience of the Windrush pioneers who arrived in Britain after the Second World War and the generations that followed over the years.

The three figures – man, woman and child – dressed in their “Sunday best” are climbing a mountain of suitcases hand-in-hand, demonstrating the inseparable bond of the Windrush pioneers and their descendants and the aspirations of their generation.

The design will stand as a testament to those who landed in Britain to help rebuild the country, as well as to lay a foundation for their families and their future, influencing and contributing to every aspect of our society.

The announcement, which delivers on a manifesto commitment, comes as the nation celebrates Black History Month with events taking place up and down the country.

Communities Minister Kemi Badenoch MP said:

I want to congratulate Basil Watson on being selected to design the National Windrush Monument. The government is very pleased to be sponsoring this commemoration.

His design will celebrate and honour the contribution of the Windrush generation, right at the centre of our nation’s capital.

The Monument will become a permanent place of reflection and inspiration for all, reminding us of our shared history and heritage.

Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE said:

I am thrilled to be able to reveal the final design of our National Windrush Monument, which so vividly captures the experiences of the Windrush generation and their descendants across the country.

It was empowering to see how Basil's design deeply and emotionally effected so many – adults and children alike.

This Windrush Monument represents the past, present and future and I hope it will be the catalyst for other monuments commemorating the extraordinary contribution of the Windrush generation to this country.

Basil Watson said:

I'm truly honoured to be chosen to design this monument from an outstanding field of applicants.

I feel privileged that I now have this opportunity to express the aspirations, vision and courage of my parents, who took the long sea voyage to England in 1952 as part of that Windrush generation in search of a brighter future.

I look forward to bringing my design to life, because I know how much this means to the Windrush community.

Basil Watson

His Excellency Seth George Ramocan CD, High Commissioner to the United Kingdom said:

It's my delight to offer warmest congratulations to Basil Watson, for his dedication and vision in creating this superb design.

It is an honour to be a serving High Commissioner and to see this monument moving into place as a symbol of the great efforts and contributions of those that made their journey to the UK and their descendants.

This National Windrush Monument is a testament to the great contributions made by the Windrush generation – it echoes the energy and direction the community have in both paying tribute to those who made their first steps here and moving forward with all the energy and drive that they gave following generations.

Following a public engagement phase over the summer, the winning design was selected by the Windrush Commemoration Committee (WCC), chaired by Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE.

Sculptor and painter Basil Watson has designed public sculptures and monuments across the world including statues of Martin Luther King, Usain Bolt and Merlene Ottey. This will be his first public artwork in the United

Kingdom, where he lived for part of his childhood with his family, who are part of the Windrush generation.

Basil, who was awarded the Order of Distinction (Commander Class) in 2016 by the Jamaican government in recognition of his artistic accomplishment, will now begin work to convert his maquette into the 12-foot-high bronze monument that will be unveiled to the public on Windrush Day – Wednesday 22 June 2022.

[Hear Basil talking about his design concept in more detail](#)

UP Projects was appointed to manage the selection process and make sure that the views of the Caribbean community in the UK were sought on what would represent a meaningful legacy.

A long list of 16 artists who matched the criteria of the artistic brief was put forward to the Windrush Commemoration Committee, chaired by Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE, who then chose a shortlist of four artists.

The shortlist of four artists in the running to design the Windrush Monument was revealed earlier in the year. Alongside Basil Watson, the list was made up of a mix of world-renowned, established and up-and coming artists working across the visual arts – all of whom are of Caribbean descent: Jeannette Ehlers, Thomas J Price and Valda Jackson.

Over the summer the public were invited to have their say on the artists' proposals through an online survey. UP Projects' team includes a Caribbean Networks Consultant and a Curator & Caribbean Community Engagement Consultant, who liaised with the Caribbean community as a major part of the public engagement strategy.

Basil Watson's design received the most positive feedback from the online survey and focus groups which included individuals from a range of ages and locations. Their views were taken into consideration by the Windrush Commemoration Committee when they made their final selection.

The Monument is expected to be unveiled on Windrush Day 2022.

Windrush Monument

The Windrush Monument will be a permanent tribute to a generation of arrivals from the Caribbean to Britain – from the arrival of MV Empire Windrush in 1948 and in the decades that followed.

It will recognise how the Windrush generation has enriched our nation's history and made invaluable contributions to all aspects of British life, from our health and transport services to our politics, businesses, literature and culture.

London Waterloo station is strongly associated with the stories of many members of the Windrush generation. It stands at a point where thousands of Windrush pioneers first arrived in London before starting new lives across the UK.

The monument will be an ambitious public artwork that stands as a testament to the contribution of Caribbean pioneers in communities across the United Kingdom. It will create a permanent place of reflection and inspiration and be a visible statement of our shared history and heritage.

[More information on selecting an artist for the Windrush monument](#)

Over 250 international and British cultural leaders, curators and leaders in the Caribbean community were invited to nominate artists who have the ability and experience to create a significant civic monument. Over 100 artists were nominated, a quarter of whom were invited to express an interest. A longlist of artists, all of Caribbean heritage and many of whom have lived experience of the Windrush legacy, was then created.

The longlist comprised a rich and diverse range of 16 artists, all of Caribbean heritage, based internationally and in the UK, from London and from regional cities. The artists represented a range of artforms and approaches including multi-media installation, film, performance as well as sculpture, including Sonia Barrett, Christopher Cozier, Ebony G Patterson, Dominique White and Alberta Whittle.

Key facts and figures

1. DLUHC announced a £1 million budget towards a Windrush monument to be constructed within London Waterloo station.
2. The location within Waterloo station is on the upper concourse, adjacent to Victory Arch, Exit 5 of the station. The site is opposite Platform 19.
3. The Windrush generation has come to be defined as those people who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain between the arrival of the MV Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 and the Immigration Act 1971. The monument will be a tribute to them, their descendants and the wider British Caribbean community.
4. UP Projects curates and commissions contemporary art in the public domain. Founded in 2002 by Emma Underhill, the charity's mission is to support artists to make new work that has social relevance, encourages learning and enriches the public sphere.
5. UP Projects makes work that is relevant to the places they work in and people that they work with. They take time to understand who their diverse audiences are, and what their needs and aspirations are. UP Projects works collaboratively with a broad range of both public and private-sector partners including major public bodies, significant cultural institutions, cultural festivals, and research and learning facilities. Collaboration is central to the work that UP Projects do and the way that they work.

Windrush Day

2019 saw the first national Windrush Day take place, with activities and events taking place up and down the country. Through educational workshops, theatre performances and historical exhibitions communities honoured that landmark day over 70 years ago when the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury

Docks.

The government is committed to building on the success of Windrush Day 2019, 2020 and 2021, embedding 22 June in the national conscience, ensuring that we continue to honour and recognise the outstanding resilience, innovation and creativity of the Windrush generation and their descendants.

Photos – Credit: Basil Watson