

Charles Hay launches two GREAT Scholarships and Grant for sports education and women in sports Leadership

Distinguished guests, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen,

As the UK and the world starts to recover from the impact of the pandemic, 2022 has kicked off with new hopes and new optimism.

For the UK, this year will be a Year of Celebrations – with three showstopper events taking place across the UK – starting with the UNBOXED festival taking place in March, The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in June, and Birmingham hosts The Commonwealth Games in July and August.

Birmingham 2022 is set to be the biggest, most diverse and inclusive Commonwealth Games yet held.

- Birmingham 2022 is expected to welcome 6,500 athletes and officials from 72 countries and territories in the Commonwealth
- it will be the first major multi-sport event to award more medals to women than men
- it will have the most extensive para-sports programme in Commonwealth Games history
- it will be the first ever carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games, reducing carbon footprint through reusing assets and using innovative technologies to cut waste

Ahead of the Games, the Queen’s Baton goes around 72 countries and territories competing in the Games, baton bearers represent the communities and the baton relay represents the coming together of different communities across the Commonwealth.

I participated in the Malaysian leg of this relay in Putrajaya yesterday, and found it truly inspiring to see Malaysians from all walks of life taking part in the relay.

As diplomat, creating connections and building relationships is a huge part of what I do. Naturally, I appreciate the opportunities created and doors opened through major sporting events like Birmingham 2022. Sports truly connects people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sports education and partnerships are essential in laying the foundation for relationship building through sports. In conjunction with the Queen’s Baton Relay, I am delighted to see the British Council hosting a first-of-its-kind Sports Education Month in Malaysia. I know that the British Council has

already hosted its Smart Talk webinar series with changemakers and alumni in the sports sector, as well as a Premier Skills football clinic for youth in Bachok, Kelantan.

Today, it gives me a great pleasure to announce that two (2) new GREAT Scholarships on Sports Education will be made available to Malaysians to pursue post-graduate studies in sports education.

Each scholarship is worth a minimum of £10,000 covering tuition fees for a one-year taught post-graduate course at Liverpool John Moores University. The GREAT Scholarships is jointly funded by the UK government's GREAT Britain Campaign and the British Council with participating UK higher education institutions.

I am also pleased to launch the UK-Malaysia Institutional Partnership grant for Women in Sports Leadership. It is partnership grant for UK and Malaysian universities to study the development of female leadership in sports – an area where women are under-represented, both in the UK and Malaysia, but also in many other countries. Women occupy much less of the sporting workforce in roles such as coaching, managing, performance and development directors, and other senior leadership positions.

A grant of up to £30,000 will be awarded to a higher education institution from West Midlands which has a proven track record in sports development especially in women in leadership, working in partnership with a Malaysian university on a joint initiative to enhance the equal representation of women at the leadership levels of the sports industry.

Through this award, we hope to build on the UK's experience and expertise as a world leader in quality and inclusion and strengthen UK and Malaysia's commitment to gender equality in sports leadership through higher education.

These great initiatives will complement existing education collaborations between the UK and Malaysia. Of course, education is not the only sector being promoted in conjunction with the Games. Birmingham 2022 provides great opportunities to showcase the UK's business and tourism sectors too.

As Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, the UK is open to forge international connections. We are working with partners to expand investment, improve the business environment and boost intra-Commonwealth trade, especially in sectors like future mobility, data-driven healthcare, creative technologies, modern business services, the sports economy, e-commerce and tourism.

Before I conclude my remarks, I like to congratulate the British Council on the launch of its great initiatives. I also like to thank the Olympic Council Malaysia for successfully staging exciting activities to welcome the Queen's Baton in the last few days.

As the Baton continues to make its way across the rest of The Commonwealth to Birmingham, I know the anticipation will grow as we look forward to watch and support our athletes as they compete at Birmingham 2022.

Thank you.