

Speech: Value Valparaíso

First I would like to thank the many people in Chile, including the President, the Government of Chile, many of our business, military, and other contacts, and many members of the general public who have sent messages of condolence and support following the terrible attack in London. An attack on innocent people. An attack at the heart of our great global city. An attack on the heart of our society and our values of liberty, freedom and democracy. An attack which affected people of many nations – people from 11 countries were killed or injured, which reflects the nature of London as a global, multicultural hub, a welcoming place to all. The support from here in Chile and elsewhere around the world shows that we can come together and build a stronger community and a better world.

And in coming together here today, I hope that in a small way, we can contribute to building stronger links between our two countries. Thank you all for coming along today to talk about heritage and urban development. This is not about heritage for the sake of history. It is about how, if we value heritage, we can create value from it, and contribute to a better society, a better urban space, and a better quality of life for citizens.

I would like to thank some of the many people and organisations who have made this seminar happen and brought us together today including:

- Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes
- Ilustre Municipalidad de Valparaíso y su Alcalde Jorge Sharp
- Comisión de Desarrollo Patrimonial a través del Concejal Daniel Morales
- Fundación Piensa y Metropolítica
- Armada de Chile y el Museo Marítimo
- British Council
- Colleagues from the British Embassy – Marianne Becker, Paula Orellana and Francisca Muñoz.

The idea for this seminar originated from another tragedy. The Great Fire of Valparaiso, in 2014. At that time the worst fire in the history of Chile – although sadly we have seen swathes of Chile devastated by fire in recent weeks.

I first came here to Valparaiso shortly after my arrival in 2014 to commemorate 200 years of the Battle of Valparaiso – a conflict about free trade. A topic as pertinent then as it is today. And just as then, about promoting economic links, with Valparaiso as a great port, and the potential to be a hub at the heart of globalisation. And I am glad to say London has been in the news here in Chile this week for different reasons to terrorism. The news that Chile Day will take place in London for the seventh year running, on 29/30 June, to promote Chile, free trade and investment, in London, as the best city in the world to do business.

In visiting Valparaiso I was surprised to find the striking British Arch, and so many other historic buildings in Valparaiso that once had links to the UK.

The iconic arch was, of course donated by the British community to mark the centenary of Chile's independence.

Soon after my first visit, the terrible fires took place and I returned to talk to the bomberos and the authorities here to try to understand more about what had happened. The overriding image of that very difficult time for the city, was one of community. Of people from many different sections of society coming together to help one another, at a time of adversity. People also told me of some of the difficulties and challenges of this city, of community tensions, of poverty, of housing, of a city with past glory. Of a city where there are many plans and projects, but where progress is needed to benefit people. It made me think of cities in the UK where we have also faced similar challenges.

I have come back here many times. Sometimes for meetings and events with the Armada de Chile, for whose help, including today, I am ever grateful. Sometimes to see the local authorities or universities. Sometimes just as a private individual, or with friends, to enjoy a very different place to Santiago. And I have brought many visitors here, including of course HRH Prince Harry in 2014, and more recently HRH Prince Edward. Yesterday and the day before, the British Council and British Embassy organised here in Valparaiso the Pacific Alliance seminar on innovation, bringing together experts from Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and the UK to discuss ways to fuel innovation. This vibrant, diverse, individualistic city stimulates creativity, draws people here and makes them want to come back.

Last year the Embassy was awarded a small amount of extra money, in recognition of some of the work we had done to further links between the UK and Chile. For once, I had complete discretion over how the money should be spent. (Normally the limited funds that we do have, come with very tight rules on scope and criteria). I felt it was important to use these new funds for something outside Santiago, where we already had a number of projects. Also to do something that was beyond the normal range of Embassy work. I talked to people here and we came up with the idea of exchanging ideas and experiences about using heritage in urban development. Hence this seminar

That is not to say we have the answers in the UK. Quite the contrary. We have many experiences on how difficult this can be, and sometimes it has gone wrong. But there have been some successes. But always it is a work in progress. Because any city is about an evolving space. A changing environment to meet the needs of the people. Developing areas to bring greater economic benefits. And increasingly, the need to protect and make the most of the environment. But there is something more.

Something intangible. Something which speaks to the spirit, and relating to identity and self expression, and connecting to what is around you – about valuing what you have. Which in turn, can create value – to attract more businesses, generate more jobs, bring more money to a city, which in turn can improve housing, urban spaces, benefit people and also create a new urban environment in which creativity can flourish.

I am delighted to welcome to this seminar our two speakers from the UK –

Duncan MacCullum and Philip Davies – who will share with you some ideas and experiences, drawing on some examples of British cities, including Liverpool, which has a long shared history with this city of Valparaiso. Both are great ports of the world.

I should also say that the UK team are here just as facilitators . We are not here to present or promote any particular project on Valparaiso. I know that there are a number of possible projects under consideration. There are strong views on what should happen. It is not for us to input one way or the other. Nor do we have funds for follow up work. This is a one off chance for such a seminar. So over to you on how you want to make best use of this opportunity.

The aim of today is to talk about examples of creating a 'Culture of Value'i.e . valuing the heritage around you, and sharing experiences of how preserving and rescuing heritage can help transform a city landscape: sharing examples of how heritage can be used to create a 'Value Offer'to bring economic benefits, through tourism, urban development and social development; and to talk about practical steps to 'Realise Value' – how to turn a vision into change for a better city.

We are here to learn more about your experiences and offer up some examples of similar challenges in the UK. I hope that the presentations this morning stimulate dialogue and ideas on how best to 'Value Valparaiso'. So, most of all, welcome to you.