

Speech: High Commissioner's speech at the 2017 Queen's Baton Relay opening event, Lusaka

We are today celebrating the arrival of the Queen's Baton to Zambia. The 2018 Queen's Baton Relay was launched on 13 March at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as part of Commonwealth Day celebrations. This happy event marked the start of its 388-day journey through all Commonwealth countries and territories before it ends its journey in Australia for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games next year.

The baton last came to Zambia in 2014, when the then British High Commission, James Thornton, joined its journey through this country. I am pleased to be part of today's event. The Queen's Baton is a powerful symbol of the unity and diversity of the 52 Commonwealth nations. It carries a special message from the Head of the Commonwealth, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The message will be read out on completion of the baton's epic journey at the Commonwealth games in Australia's Gold Coast in April, 2018. No one knows what the message says until then.

Since the beginning of the Commonwealth Games back in 1930, I understand that Zambia has participated in all the games from 1974, and won some medals. Zambia should be proud of having produced medal winners, such as the late Lotti Mwale, who won the first gold medal in 1974 in Christchurch, New Zealand.

I have enjoyed watching previous Commonwealth Games and the athletes in action. What I find striking is that the Commonwealth Games bring together able-bodied and Paralympic sport. They are a true reflection of the Commonwealth's values of inclusiveness and diversity. One of the outcomes of London 2012 Olympics was how it not only brought the nation together, but how it inspired and changed attitudes on diversity, inclusion and disability.

Sport has a unique power to promote teamwork, fairness, respect and a sense of achievement, apart from the well intended rivalry and competition. Sport can be a unifying force; it is apt that this year's Commonwealth theme is of a Peace-Building Commonwealth. I hope this relay will help encourage Zambians to feel a sense of togetherness as the baton passes through the streets of Lusaka, sharing a taste of the excitement and opportunities of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

I believe the Gold Coast Games 2018 will be equally as successful as Glasgow 2014. I look forward to watching the sporting rivalry, particularly between the UK and Zambia, but let the best team win, and may Zambia bring back many medals.

Thank you

Speech: High Commissioner's speech at the Queen's Birthday Party, Brunei 2017

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Bahrin bin Abdullah, Minister of Development at the Prime Minister's Office and Yang Mulia Pengiran Datin Hajah Noorsiah binte Pengiran Hamdan

Pengiran Pengiran, Pehin Pehin, Dato Dato , Datin Datin: Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the United Kingdom's 2017 celebration of Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday.

In February this year, Her Majesty The Queen became the first British Monarch to commemorate a Sapphire Jubilee, after 65 years on the throne. Later this year, His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan will commemorate His Golden Jubilee. Together they are now the two longest reigning sovereigns in the world. In celebrating these signal achievements we warmly acknowledge the lifetime of dedication and service Their Majesties have given to Their respective Peoples.

This evening, in celebrating Her Majesty's 91st Birthday, the theme of our Reception is the Forest and how this links the United Kingdom and Brunei Darussalam, as well as to the wider Commonwealth. Appropriately enough, we are holding this event during Earth Week.

In 2015, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta, The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy initiative was launched, to mark The Queen's Service to the Commonwealth. The aim is to involve all 52 countries of the Commonwealth and to help protect one of the world's most important natural habitats – forests.

A selection of photographs of Brunei's dedications to the QCC

We are delighted that Brunei has agreed to commit three separate forest reserves to the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy:

- Berakas Forest Recreation Park, Berakas Forest Reserve;
- Ulu Temburong National Park, Batu Apoi Forest Reserve; and
- Pulau Selirong Forest Recreation Park, Pulau Selirong Forest Reserve.

We have on display a series of striking images of flora and fauna taken in these three reserves. I am pleased that two of the photographers – Bud Chapman and Dilshan Mahdi Hussainmiya – are able to be with us this evening.

Brunei's unique rainforest has inspired British artists over the years.

Boyd and Evans painting of Brunei's rainforest from HSBC Brunei

In 1991, Fionnuala Boyd and Les Evans, a husband-and-wife team, were invited, as artists-in-residence at the Royal Geographical Society, to join the Universiti Brunei Darussalam's Brunei Rainforest Expedition. During the expedition, they produced a series of paintings to celebrate the subjective experience of the forest, to accompany the scientific data that was also being collected. They spent two months at the Kuala Belalong Field Studies Centre in Temburong. I am pleased to say that, courtesy of HSBC, we have one of their large canvases on display this evening. Their work can be found in UK Museums such as Tate Britain.

But in recent decades artists have also been keen to see their works displayed in less traditional public spaces. Last December, a painting inspired by Brunei's jungle was posted across King's Cross London Underground Station. The painting was produced by a young British artist, Jake Grewal, based in South London, who won the "Art for the Underground" competition, a project to help young artists promote their work. Jake painted this work following a trip to Brunei. The image shown on the London Underground is here this evening, as well as one of his original canvases loaned to us by Jake's cousin, Julia Morel. I like to think that the vibrant colours in the Underground poster will have lifted the spirits of weary London commuters on a winter's day and perhaps even encouraged some to visit Brunei.

Paintings of Brunei's rainforest by a young British artist, Jake Grewal, based in South London, who won the "Art for the Underground" competition

As well as inspiring British artists, the Brunei Rainforest has been an important area of study for British scientists working alongside Bruneian scientists, over many decades, to research this country's rich biodiversity. We congratulate schools and other local organisations for the work they do in encouraging young people in Brunei to understand and value their pristine forests. We admire Brunei's participation in and commitment to the Heart of Borneo initiative. We will continue to follow with great interest developments in Temburong – often described as the Green Jewel of Brunei – which offer a wonderful opportunity to showcase Brunei's commitment to sustainable and green development.

Last year, Royal Brunei Armed Forces celebrated its 55th anniversary. The British Armed Forces are proud to have served continuously alongside RBAF for those 55 years. They regularly train and exercise together and conduct defence engagement tasks in the Asia Pacific region. Brunei's forests also serve as an important training location. On display in this room is a large photograph of 12 soldiers from the Household Cavalry – more often associated in people's minds with their plumed helmets and ceremonial uniforms on occasions such as Changing of the Guard – but in the picture they are heavily camouflaged in the Brunei jungle. If you can't spot all 12 you can find the solution on our High Commission Facebook Page. More seriously, the Garrison has a permanent Jungle Training School. Last month, the UK and Brunei jointly hosted a Jungle Training Symposium. That was one of the events highlighted

when His Majesty The Sultan graced the Garrison with a visit in March to mark the upcoming departure of the 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles as they shortly end their current tour of duty. Pictures from these events will be shown on the screens behind me.

For this evening's Queen's Birthday Party, I want to thank the Empire Hotel and my own staff for their unstinting efforts in organising this evening's programme. My warm thanks also go to our generous sponsors Ben Foods, which supplies excellent British produce to Supa Save, as well as to the individuals and organisations responsible for the visual displays. I would like to thank the two choirs – from Maktab Duli and the Military Wives in Brunei – for singing the two anthems and to the two Gurkha ceremonial pipers. Also my grateful appreciation to the Garrison for their work in creating such an atmospheric display at the entrance to this room.

Finally, my thanks once again to Yang Behormat Dato and to Pengiran Datin for gracing this occasion as our Guests of Honour. Sadly for me, this will be the last time I have the privilege to host the Queen's Birthday Party in Brunei. As for all of us who have the pleasure to spend time in the Abode of Peace my fond memories will certainly include the green, pristine Brunei Darussalam captured in the imagery around us.

Thank you.

[Press release: Foreign Office response to US sanctions on individuals connected with the Asad regime's chemical weapons programme](#)

The UK welcomes US action to sanction individuals connected to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The abhorrent attack on Khan Sheikhoun is a stark reminder that the international community must work together to deter the future use of chemical weapons in any circumstances.

Sanctions send a clear signal that actions have consequences and seek to deter others from a similar acts of barbarism. We welcome the role sanctions play in increasing pressure on the Syrian regime to turn away from its military campaign.

We will continue our efforts to hold accountable those responsible for chemical attacks, including through the UN and EU, and to energise international support for the UN-led political process. Only a political settlement will bring an end to the war in Syria.

News story: Send and receive bigger files with our online services

Business customers that use our online services can now send us 20MB files online.

When customers send us documents via our online services, they can now send us files that are up to 20MB. This is an increase from the previous file size limit of 10MB.

The types of documents customers typically send us include:

- their scanned applications
- detailed plans
- evidence to support their applications.

The increased file size limit of 20MB applies to documents sent via [the portal](#), our online transactional channel, or [Business Gateway](#), our business-to-business solution.

We will also return files that are up to 20MB through these online channels.

We expect this will improve our customers' experience when they deal with us online. It is one of a number of changes we have made to our online services following customer feedback.

Press release: RACE DRIVEN to support driverless cars

RACE – UKAEA's state of the art robotics technology centre at Culham Science Centre – is to consolidate its position as a test site for driverless cars as a number of major investments in this area were announced today.

These projects will play a key role in putting the first driverless cars on public roads in the coming years. Most notable is the DRIVEN consortium* led by award-winning driverless car developers Oxbotica and including RACE. DRIVEN has received over £8m in funding from the Government's CCAV (Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles) £13m investment in this area. This will go towards developing and operating a fleet of vehicles to operate on public roads, with complete autonomy, within the next two and half years. The

project will culminate with these vehicles travelling autonomously from London to Oxford (with safety drivers on board as a precaution) – as a public demonstration of the viability of this technology.

RACE will play a key role in the project. Oxbotica's main field test activities are conducted from their base in the RACE building, and they make use of the 10 kilometres of roads, junctions, roundabouts (even traffic lights and pedestrian crossings) within the closed Culham site; a perfect 'test track' for these vehicles to test their ability to monitor and react to other vehicles, cyclists and people in realistic circumstances, whatever the weather. This latest funding comes amid strong support for the whole robotics and artificial intelligence community. 'Cutting edge artificial intelligence and robotics systems that will operate in extreme and hazardous environments' will benefit from a £270m Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund announced in the 2017 Spring Budget, and a recent House of Lords Science and Technology Committee report recommended the route ahead to harness the huge potential of connected and autonomous vehicles.

RACE Director Rob Buckingham said:

RACE has been working with Oxbotica for some time now. The DRIVEN team brings together the right combination of interests and enthusiasm to change the conversation in this exciting field from mostly speculation to real world detail. DRIVEN will show how autonomous vehicles will change the world, both for the public and industrial users.

DRIVEN is important because it will answer questions around cyber security and insurance as well as the underlying technology. RACE has a key supporting role: enabling testing on the Culham Science Centre site before we venture on the public roads. DRIVEN reinforces our aspiration to enable connected and autonomous vehicles to be widely adopted. Starting in Oxfordshire we are already thinking about how autonomous vehicles fit within a modern transport plans for both Oxford and Didcot Garden Town. DRIVEN is a very important step on this journey.

*The DRIVEN consortium is led by Oxbotica Ltd.; the other partners in the project are the Oxford Robotics Institute, insurer XL Catlin, Nominet, Telefonica, the Transport Research Laboratory, UKAEAs RACE facility, Oxfordshire County Council, Transport for London and Westbourne Communications.

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