

THE QUEEN'S COMMONWEALTH CANOPY ONE YEAR ON

On 15th November, Commonwealth dignitaries and representatives of the forestry, academic and corporate sectors joined Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the one year anniversary of The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy (QCC).

↑ The Central Forest Reserve, St Christopher (Kitts) and Nevis

The reception was attended by high-profile guests, including Sir David Attenborough; the UK Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP and the Deputy Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Hon. Shawn Richards.

From its launch at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta in November 2015, with just seven committed countries and three projects dedicated to the initiative, the QCC has received commitment from 20 countries, with 38 projects now dedicated to this pan-Commonwealth project just one year on.

From Antigua and Barbuda to Zambia, all five Commonwealth regions are now represented in the QCC, with dedications as diverse in nature and size as the Commonwealth family itself.

Some projects, while small in scale as the countries that made them, are significant through their very dedication. Singapore boldly dedicated six, precious hectares of its first and only UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Singapore Botanical Gardens, to the QCC, while Mauritius committed the oldest botanical garden in the Southern Hemisphere, the 37ha Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, as one of its five dedications. The Commonwealth's Chair in Office, Malta, will be revitalising a small natural woodland with the local Scouts movement and reintroducing locally extinct flora such as the Moon Spider Orchid, while Fiji has committed the 92 hectare Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, which contains many tree species that are critical to the survival of the endemic Fiji Tree Frog.

Other projects are as vast in scale and vision as the countries themselves. Australia has committed to planting 20 million trees by 2020 to re-establish green corridors and urban forests on public and private land, and Canada has dedicated the 6.4 million hectare Great Bear Rainforest, an iconic and globally significant tract of forest along the central and north coast of British Columbia, which is home to a quarter of the earth's temperate rainforest and 26 separate First Nations. St Christopher (Kitts) and Nevis, has committed the Central Forest Reserve



Together our forests will thrive



National Park, which consists of the entire area of St. Kitts that sits above the 1,000 foot contour, some 25% of the total land area of the island, while the United Kingdom has dedicated the National Forest, an area of 200 square miles covering parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire.

As an alternative to dedicating existing forests to the QCC and conserving them for future generations, a number of countries have established programmes within their local communities to plant new trees. The Seychelles has created a programme to plant 20,000 trees within the next two years to help restore and rehabilitate degraded forest areas which have resulted from numerous forest fires and the impact of invasive alien species. Namibia's N/a'an ku sê Foundation has established, and dedicated, the N/a'an ku sê Forest Conservation Revegetation Project, which seeks to collect and propagate indigenous seedlings in a nursery using recycled water, before planting the seedlings to reverse long term land degradation and restore indigenous forests.

Following the success of the Buckingham Palace Reception, the QCC Management Committee is now working towards securing commitment to the initiative from the remaining 32 Commonwealth members. A high-profile presence at the Commonwealth Forestry Conference, to be held in India in April 2017, will contribute significantly to this goal.

It is anticipated that, by the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, all 52 members of the Commonwealth family will have committed to this visionary project to conserve our



forests for future generations and to honour The Queen's leadership of the Commonwealth for over six decades. The next CHOGM will be held in the United Kingdom in 2018.

MORE INFORMATION

The QCC is led by the Royal Commonwealth Society, in partnership with the NGO, Cool Earth, and the Commonwealth Forestry Association. www.queenscommonwealthcanopy.org

◀ HM the Queen with Sir David Attenborough and Lalatiana Accouche, Principle Counsellor of the High Commission of the Seychelles

↗ Locally extinct Moon Spider Orchid to be reintroduced in Malta. © Amata Ciro

↑ Endemic Fiji Tree Frog

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Preserving the world's green corridors, forests, jungles and botanic gardens is the simplest and most effective way to keep breathing life into planet earth. Over my nine decades, I have witnessed the devastating effect of the destruction of our forests and disregard for the importance of trees. I do believe that we have an obligation to nurture and replenish our natural environment for the benefit of our children and grandchildren. I am immensely grateful to Your Majesty for showing great leadership by putting your name to this initiative. I am also pleased to see so many governments here tonight responding to the call. We all have a role to play. And, in your 90th year Your Majesty, we are fortunate that you are still thinking about the future and how to make this a better world.”

Sir David Attenborough