



THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION

Staying engaged – promoting and fostering the Commonwealth

NEWSLETTER

<https://www.comassoc.org>

Issue 3, Spring 2026

Message from the Chair, Max Gaylard

Dear TCA Members

Greetings to you all on behalf of your very active and hard-working Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Association (ExCo/TCA), and a warm welcome to our newest members. The process of reaching out not just to the Foundation and Secretariat alumni, but also to those who have worked for or otherwise been associated with other Commonwealth organisations, continues apace. The result has been a gratifying albeit modest increase in our numbers.

Members will also be interested to know of and welcome the long-running process and culmination of the establishment of the Commonwealth Association's Patsy Robertson Award for Young Journalists, Writers and Communicators, in close collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. With special thanks to the Secretariat, the first such iteration of the Award is scheduled to take place at Marlborough House this coming 25 June 2026.

We have also been very active as your Executive Committee in early preparations for the 2026 edition of the Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture now into its sixth year and a highlight of the TCA annual calendar. The topic for this year will be climate change, where we aim to add our voice in a constructive way to the critical global debate, and in doing so celebrate the 100th birthday year (on 8 May) this year of eminent Commonwealth citizen David Attenborough.

SAVE THE DATE: The Commonwealth Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM), Monday 29 June 2026

The **2026 AGM** of the Association will be held on **Monday 29 June from 2 pm to 4 pm**. As an online and stand-alone meeting (rather than combining it with the annual lecture), it will enable members from across the Commonwealth to have a fuller discussion. The AGM agenda and other documents will be circulated shortly. We look forward to your participation in the AGM.

The Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture, Marlborough House

This year's Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture, established in 2021 to honour the legacy of TCA founding inspiration and longtime Chair, the late Patsy Robertson, is in the process of being organised in

partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC).

The 2026 Lecture will focus on Climate Change, reflecting the significance of this issue to the Commonwealth as well as the wider global community. The Lecture aims to provide a high-level, thought-provoking perspective on climate change, in the lead-up to two important international summits – the 2026 CHOGM in Antigua and Barbuda as well as COP31 in Türkiye.

In addition to members of The Commonwealth Association, the invited audience will include representatives of Commonwealth governments and Accredited Organisations (AOs), Secretariat staff, as well as other distinguished guests. As in previous years, the 2026 lecture will be hosted at Marlborough House and will be followed by a reception. Further details will be shared in the near future.



The Patsy Robertson Award for Young Journalists, Writers and Communicators

Affirming its belief in the importance of young people, the ExCo has established the Patsy Robertson Award for Young Journalists, Writers and Communicators, in partnership with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP). This award comprises a cash prize and a trophy to young journalists whose work promotes just, peaceful and inclusive democratic societies in support of the Commonwealth Charter and UN Sustainable Development Goal 17. The 2026 Award will be presented at the Commonwealth Youth Awards ceremony on 25 June 2026 at Marlborough House.

The 2026 winner was selected by a panel comprising members of TCA ExCo, High Commissioners, the CYP and the Commonwealth Journalists Association, in a three-stage adjudication process to assess 30 shortlisted nominees from five Commonwealth regions.

ExCo Meetings

The Commonwealth Association ExCo meets at least quarterly to plan future activities and to follow up on committed plans.

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO)

The Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO), which promotes the voice of the civil society within the Commonwealth and facilitates a collective voice of Commonwealth AOs and their networks, was re-launched at the IFCO conference on 27 April 2026.

Of the 97 AOs, 87 are members of IFCO. They approved the new IFCO constitution on 10 March 2026, and it came into effect immediately. The exhaustive consultation on IFCO's draft constitution included the AOs as well as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, and the Commonwealth of Learning. The AOs also participated in the online ballot to approve the constitution. This all inclusive process has provided IFCO with a strong mandate for its future operations.

Contribution to the Hurricane Melissa Fund

TCA donated £700 to the relief fund in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa that devastated Jamaica in October 2025.

All partner AOs were also invited to submit nominations for the position of the Chair as well as the membership of the Steering Committee. The election process was

overseen by an independent Nominations and Elections Committee chaired by Stephen Twigg and including Karen Brewer, Clara Cole, Matthew Neuhaus and Carl Wright, many of whom are members of TCA.



Members of the new IFCO Steering Committee

Photo: Bishakha Mukherjee

Dr David N Jones from the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work was elected unopposed as Chair, having steered the renewal process as Interim Chair since September 2025. Of the 20 nominations for IFCO's new Steering Committee, 14 members with the highest vote were selected, and includes Dr Bishakha Mukherjee, Vice Chair of TCA ExCo.

The renewed IFCO looks set to be very different from its parent body, especially in the area of enhanced partnerships espoused by the Commonwealth Secretariat in view of its critical budgetary constraints. Positive and collaborative relations are being developed with the Secretariat, the Chair of its Board of Governors, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning, FCDO and High Commissions.

TCA Communication Channels

Emails: We continue to use our **Google Group, Comassoc**, to circulate news about the Commonwealth and our members.

Members can also send messages directly to the Association's membership by using comassoc@googlegroups.com; they do not need to send them through David Blake.

TCA Website: Some of our news stories also go on our **website** comassoc.org. We look forward to receiving further contributions from the membership, which can be shared under 'Memories Unlocked'.

YouTube: We post TCA lecture videos on the **Commonwealth Association YouTube channel**. We are also considering the creation of a **Facebook page** for TCA.



Your contributions: If you attend a Commonwealth-related meeting, please consider sending us a report for **TCA website** - and please include **photos** where possible. If you:

- feel strongly about any Commonwealth issues, please consider writing about them.
- have memories of your time with the Secretariat or other Commonwealth organisations, please share them.
- wish to discuss any ideas, you can phone David Blake on 01494 583112 or 07740856948 or Shobhna Rattansi on 07769 977 658.

THE COMMONWEALTH INVESTMENT NETWORK (CIN)

The CIN, introduced at the 2024 CHOGM, is being implemented by the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance to drive investment and sustainable growth across the Commonwealth. The CIN aims to strengthen collaboration among local, regional and international partners to identify and support investment opportunities, focusing on vulnerable Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The UK Government funded the pilot programme. An ExCo member was on the judging panel which selected beneficiary enterprises like:

● **Belmont Estate, Grenada:** an organic agribusiness that has evolved into one of the country's leading agri-tourism and sustainable development enterprises.

● **Eagle Vetiver Systems Limited:** pioneers sustainable land restoration in **Papua New Guinea**, to rehabilitate degraded land and capture carbon.

Further information about the CIN is available at <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-investment-network-summit-showcases-climate-solutions-small-states>

Climate Action



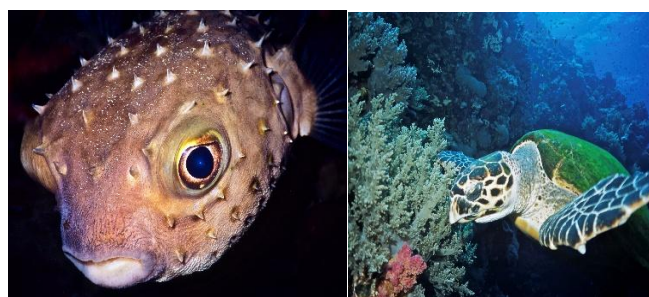
Terry at the helm of his favourite Red Sea dive boat, October 2023
Photo : Terry Dormer

Terry Dormer, the Commonwealth Association's Representative for Climate Action, continues to update

members of developments on climate issues through his periodic reports. This also involves reporting on meetings attended, most notably those arranged by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Good progress has been made on the proposed exhibition of photographs of coral reef fauna, with the 50 pictures selected by members already prepared as mounted canvas prints. Work continues to identify suitable dates and venues.

Terry feels that the ongoing global wars are not remotely as dangerous to the biosphere (including humanity) as the growing climate catastrophe. It is both timely and appropriate that this year's Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture will address the grave dangers of global warming .



Up close and personal with a friendly burrfish and the hawksbill turtle, a critically endangered species which prefers red soft corals

Photos: Terry Dormer

2026 Christmas Social

The Christmas Social 2026 will be arranged for early December. If we continue to use the Atrium at Marlborough House for these gatherings, the number of attendees will be restricted to 30. **We welcome your suggestions regarding this annual event.**

2025 Christmas Social

On 12 December 2025 members gathered in the Atrium at Marlborough House for their Christmas Social. It was good to catch up with colleagues and, as usual, the food and drink slipped down like a treat.



Members of the Commonwealth Association at 2025 Christmas Social
Photo: Shobhna Rattansi

Compiled and edited by: Shobhna Rattansi and Felix Samuel

