

Commonwealth Day Climate Action Photo Contest Now Live – Bahamas

In honour of Commonwealth Day on Monday 8 March, the British High Commission Nassau is holding a climate action photography contest for young Bahamians (ages 11-18).

Details of the contest are on the [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#). Young Bahamians aged 11-14 and 15-18 years old can submit photos that represent Nature-based Solutions to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts. Prizes in each age category include a Go Pro Hero 5 camera worth over \$400 and a snorkel experience at the BREEF Coral Reef Sculpture Garden and Coral Nursery.

The contest is organised by the British High Commission Nassau in partnership with the Sustainable Development Goals Unit [SDG Unit](#) of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Bahamas Reef Environment Education Foundation [BREEF](#).

Protecting the environment and combatting climate change are very important for the 54 members of the Commonwealth.

- Did you know? 31 of the Commonwealth's 54 member countries are small island states
- Did you know? The Bahamas is part of the Commonwealth action group on mangroves
- Did you know? The Bahamas is part of the Commonwealth action group on the Blue Charter (shared oceans, shared values)
- Did you know? Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the head of the Commonwealth

So join us in raising awareness about The Bahamas' role in combatting climate change through the promotion of Nature-Based Solutions. Your photo should capture the unique way that an island archipelago in the Commonwealth like The Bahamas can address climate change and its impacts.

Take an original still photo that reflects a 'nature-based solution' to climate change. Nature based solutions can counteract climate change in all sorts of ways, such as:

- the protection, restoration and sustainable management of mangroves and their ecosystems
- supporting woodlands
- protecting coral reefs and their ocean habitats
- sustainable farming and agriculture

- celebrating and protecting biodiversity on land and sea

The winners of the competition will be awarded prizes and have their photography featured in a virtual Gallery Space on the [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#).

Contest Details and Rules

- Contest will run on [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#) beginning on 8 March 2021
- This contest is only open to residents of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas
- Pictures submitted have to reflect on the theme: Nature based solutions to climate change
- Each participant is allowed to submit one (1) photograph only
- We reserve the right to refuse entry of any photo that we feel is inappropriate, i.e. portraying violence or abuse
- Photos need to be the original work of the contestants, and to be shot in The Bahamas. Contestants will be responsible for any copyright violation committed in entries
- Photo Submission: All pictures are to be sent to ukinthebahamas@gmail.com in a .jpg format, and a maximum size of 5mb, along with a short description, as well as the name and age of the photographer and the town/city they are from and contact details. Students are encouraged to submit their school, college or University name. Contestants are responsible for having obtained any necessary permission from any person/persons appearing in their photographs
- All pictures will be posted in two age-based albums (11-14; 15-18) on the UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page on and voting on pictures can take place as soon as pictures are posted
- Deadline for voting is 26 March 2021. Voting on pictures will be done by 'liking' the photos in the age-based albums. The five photographs with the top number of 'likes' by the end of this contest, will be judged by an independent judging panel
- A first, second and third prize will be awarded to six photographers—two from each age group on 29 March 2021 via Facebook announcement and email notification
- In entering, you agree to allow the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to use your image on FCDO social media channels, and/or without restrictions, although credit will be given where appropriate

Deadline for Submitting Photos

26 March 2021 by 5:00pm Bahamian time. Any picture submitted after this deadline will NOT be considered.

Prizes

• First prize: GoPro HERO5 Action Camera (valued at \$450) • Second prize: \$200 Sports Centre Vouchers • Third prize: snorkel experience at the BREEF Coral Reef Sculpture Garden and Coral Nursery

Learn more

For more inspiration you can explore the following information on climate change and its impacts:

- Nature Based Solutions – Ecosystem Based Adaptation [Video](#) (United Nations Environment Programme)
- The Commonwealth of Nations and the Environment
 - o [The Blue Economy](#)
 - o [Coral Reefs](#)
 - o [Mangroves](#)
- Climate Action: United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 [here](#)

To learn more about the Commonwealth, have a look at:

- [The Commonwealth](#)
- The Commonwealth Heads of Government [\(CHOGM21\)](#)

[Commonwealth Day 2021 speech by High Commissioner Charles Hay](#)

It's a great pleasure to be taking part in Commonwealth Day 2021 with at least a few people around me, even if we are all in masks. The very essence and heart of the Commonwealth is our people to people links, and while we have all got used to virtual meetings, having at least some people together to celebrate this day seems very appropriate. I am relieved that the latest MCO was lifted in time for us to have this event. My thanks to the Royal

Commonwealth Society of Malaysia for hosting us this evening.

It seems an age ago now but it was just a year ago that the British High Commission, as Commonwealth Chair-In-Office, co-hosted Commonwealth Observance Day with the Royal Commonwealth Society of Malaysia. It was almost the last 'normal' event we had before Malaysia and much of the world went into Covid lockdown.

This past year has been unique and difficult for all of us in different ways. We have faced multiple challenges and in many cases, personal tragedy or economic hardship. This has affected all countries large and small, rich and poor.

However, out of diversity, we find strength and resilience and we innovate to find solutions. Scientists around the world have worked at a speed few thought possible, to make multiple vaccines available, and the number of people vaccinated around the world multiplies by the day. We have all had to find virtues in the virtual world too – although we don't have many guests here with us tonight, for the first time we are filming and live-streaming this event to a much bigger virtual audience across Malaysia and overseas.

In the UK, for the first time in over 50 years the decision was taken to cancel the Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey. But instead, Commonwealth Day has been celebrated on television with the broadcast of a very special programme 'A Celebration of the Commonwealth' on BBC1 on the eve of Commonwealth Day.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also meant that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting due to be held in Rwanda in June last year had to be postponed, which has meant that the UK has had a further year as Commonwealth Chair-In-Office.

Although the world has been in lockdown for much of the last year, the work of the Commonwealth has continued. This is a critical year for our natural world, which has long been a focus for the Commonwealth. 2021 is the first year of the UNESCO Ocean Decade. And this year will see both COP26 climate negotiations and COP15 Convention on Biological Diversity, when world leaders will come together to agree the steps to build back greener and live more sustainably and in harmony with nature.

I have been privileged as British High Commissioner here in Malaysia to represent the UK as Chair in office for two years now and to witness the steps Malaysia has taken in that time to progress the Commonwealth's goals: Fairness; Prosperity; Sustainability and Security. Just to mention a few examples of many:

- the Parliament of Malaysia hosted the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy's Asia Regional Women's Political Leadership Conference, focussing on policies and initiatives which mainstream gender equality across the Asia region

- Malaysia completed the SheTrades Commonwealth pilot, supporting women-owned businesses to become more competitive, promoting economic growth and job creation
- Malaysia was one of four Commonwealth member countries to have the I-Work project designed to improve the employment prospects of young people including those from disadvantaged backgrounds by piloting and introducing new approaches to employer-led skills development
- the Universiti Malaya is one of five new universities to host Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholars. Since April 2018, 47 scholars have benefited from this scholarship scheme
- Malaysia was the first country to begin creating an energy and emissions calculator, with the aim of creating easy-to-use energy models to support climate planning. For this, they used a £3.5 million budget extension to the 2050 calculator programme announced by the UK at CHOGM 2018

I was delighted that Dato' Sudha Devi, a most distinguished Malaysian diplomat, has been appointed Chair of the Commonwealth Foundation. And it has been very heartening to see young Malaysians being recognised and celebrated for their work and contribution to their communities, society and the environment.

This morning I was joined in a 'Blu Hope on Commonwealth Day' webinar by Mogesh Sabathy, who is the Co-Founder of Ocean Hope Project, a youth-led group that aims to raise the visibility of ocean issues and environmental conservation through campaigns and youth leadership training. Mogesh is a finalist in the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2021 – a great achievement in itself, and we very much hope Mogesh will go one step further and be one of the winners in the virtual ceremony to be held on Wednesday.

Malaysian co-founders of Zero Waste Malaysia, Khor Sue Yee and Aurora Tin are the most recent winners of the Commonwealth Points of Light Award. Their NGO is working in the community and with companies to get zero waste policies adopted by Malaysians and businesses. The Commonwealth Points of Light award celebrates outstanding acts of volunteering, thereby inspiring others to volunteer and make a positive impact in their community. I'm especially pleased that Zero Waste Malaysia have taken the time to participate and support the series of 'Blu Hope' webinars in 2020 to help educate and inspire Malaysians to live a zero or near-zero waste lifestyle.

Today, as well as Commonwealth Day we are also celebrating International Women's Day. The Commonwealth Secretariat have marked this event with two social media campaigns #SheLeadsTheWay – celebrating women's leadership in the Commonwealth and #SeatheShe – recognising women's contributions to ocean science.

I would like to particularly mention three Malaysian women scientists who are working to help protect the ocean:

- Assoc Prof Dr Goh Hong Ching, Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaysia and Malaysia lead for the Global Challenges Research Fund Blue Communities project and the NUOF Netcom Fish mangrove protection project
- Professor Zainura Zainon Noor, Deputy Director of the Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Water Security, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and key collaborator for Global Challenges Research Fund Water Security Hub
- Hui Ling, PhD Student at the University of Nottingham Malaysia, who is researching the effect of micro-plastics in the ocean

I now take great pleasure in introducing this year's Annual Commonwealth Day Message from Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

[Foreign Secretary response to Myanmar Ambassador calling for release of Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, is responding to the statement released on 8 March by Myanmar's Ambassador to the UK Kyaw Zwar Minn in which he called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

I commend the courage and patriotism of Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn in calling for Aung Sung Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint to be released and for the results of the 2020 election to be respected.

The military regime must end their brutal crackdown, and restore democracy.

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[PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 8 March 2021](#)

Good afternoon

this has been a big day and an emotional day for millions of families up and down the country

as children see – and play with – their friends for the first time in months.

And although I know that some will have been anxious

as pupils always are on the first day of term –

I also know that the overwhelming feeling is one of relief.

And we all know that the education of our children is so important that the greater risk now is keeping them out of school for a day longer.

I want to thank all the teachers who have got their schools ready

and who have been teaching throughout the whole period

– whether that's remotely or in person –

your work has been astonishing.

And I want to thank the parents and all those who have been teaching at home

who have had to master Zoom

who've had to communicate every detail of the syllabus from fronted adverbials to quadratic equations.

And we all know that the burden has disproportionately fallen on women, often holding down jobs and providing childcare at the same time.

So our job now as government is to build on your efforts so that from now on our school children not only catch up on lost learning

but take the biggest possible step forwards with a concerted national programme for educational recovery.

It is thanks to all of you

parents, teachers, pupils –

thanks to this huge national effort to keep kids at home

that we have been able significantly to reduce the spread of the virus.

And so today we have been able to take that crucial first step on what we hope is our cautious but irreversible roadmap to freedom

Today allowing people to meet one-on-one outside for the first time in months,

allowing care home visits to take place with all appropriate precautions.

And this first step on the road map is made possible above all by our NHS which has now vaccinated more than one third of the entire UK population.

And we take this first step with confidence because all four of the most vulnerable groups have not only been vaccinated in overwhelming numbers

but it is now at least three weeks since they received their first dose and so they will be feeling the full benefits of the vaccine protection.

We will continue on this roadmap

but we must remember that today's return to schools will of course have an impact on the spread of the virus

and so at all times and as we decide on the next steps when we take them we will be driven by the data,

and with the number of patients being admitted to hospital with Covid each day still around eight times higher than the lows of last Summer,

it is more vital than ever to follow the rules.

Hands, face, space,

and please continue to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Thank you very much.

Government to give police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments

The government will strengthen police powers and create a new criminal offence to tackle unauthorised encampments, Home Secretary Priti Patel will announce today.

The new offence will target trespassers who intend to reside on any private or public land in vehicles without permission, and where they are causing significant disruption, distress or harm to local communities.

Police will be given powers to seize vehicles and arrest offenders. The measures will target harmful encampments which reflect badly on the wider nomadic community as a whole, the majority of whom are law-abiding.

The measures deliver on a manifesto commitment to tackle unauthorised encampments and will be part of a new major criminal justice bill to be introduced to Parliament imminently.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This new offence will enable the police to fine or arrest those residing without permission on private or public land in vehicles in order to stop significant disruption, distress or harm being caused to the law-abiding majority.

I am delivering on my commitment to give the police the powers they need to tackle these encampments swiftly and effectively.

The criminal offence will be tightly-defined and will only apply in cases where:

- a person is aged 18 or over they are using vehicles to reside on the land – this ensures occasional campers are not affected
- they are residing or intending to reside on land without the consent of the occupier – this will ensure unintentional instances of trespass are not affected, such as ramblers or hikers
- they have caused or are likely to cause significant damage, disruption or distress
- they fail to respond to a request from the occupier or police to leave the land and remove their property or they return to the land within 12 months with an intention to reside with a vehicle, following that request

The new offence will be punishable by a prison sentence of up to 3 months, or a fine of up to £2,500, or both.

The government will also amend the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJPOA). This contains provisions which allow police to direct trespassers away from land.

The amendments will broaden the range of factors which police can consider when enforcing the law, to include interference with access to utilities like water, gas and electricity, and environmental damage such as excessive noise pollution or littering.

New provisions will also mean that people directed away from land must not return for 12 months.

These legislative changes will be brought in following the response to 2 public consultations. The first in 2018 asked whether police powers should be strengthened, with some respondents saying they wanted to see more protection for local communities, and for the police to be given greater powers.

The second public consultation in November 2019 asked how the government should strengthen the police's powers.

Two-thirds of people responding on behalf of local authorities to the 2019 consultation were in favour of a new criminal offence. Around 94% supported one or more of the proposed amendments to extend the powers the police have to direct trespassers to leave land.

The government recognises people's right to a nomadic life, but this must be balanced against the rights of landowners and local communities, who are entitled to live their lives without having to deal with the significant problems which some unauthorised encampments can cause.

As of January 2020, statistics* showed the number of authorised traveller pitches increased by 41% from January 2010. The government will continue its work to provide more authorised sites for travellers to reside upon.

*In the January 2020 Traveller Caravan Count there were 356 transit pitches provided by Local Authorities and Private Registered Providers in England and Wales. This was an increase of 41% from the January 2010 Traveller Caravan Count.

See the [full 2019 consultation response](#).