



Response to the letter from the Scottish Government on 19 January 2016 in consideration of Petition PE1585

We are very disappointed with this response to our petition from the Scottish Government. Here are some points we would like to make:

1. We feel that the statement, “**we** agree that Scotland has strong historical connections with Jamaica, as it does with many countries around the **world**” entirely fails to understand the uniqueness of **Scotland’s** link with Jamaica. What other country in the world has a flag that shares the saltire and was designed by a Scot? Jamaica has a higher proportion of Scottish surnames than any other country in the world, including Canada and New Zealand. The introduction of these Scottish surnames into Jamaica began as early as 1656 with prisoners of war from the Battle of Dunbar. It is true that Scottish people were involved in other Caribbean islands but not to the same extent as in Jamaica and the benefits that came to Scotland through Jamaican sugar and other commodities was far greater than that from other islands.

We would argue that the Scottish Government should not view the relationship of Scotland to Jamaica in the same terms as its relationship with other countries in the world – this is a unique association and it ought to be recognised as such.

2. The letter speaks about the Scottish **Government’s** Trade and Investment Strategy and we feel that to exclude Jamaica from that strategy is a missed opportunity to encourage very considerable mutual benefits for both nations. There are some Scottish firms in Jamaica already but there are other investment opportunities to explore. The special nature of **Scotland’s** connection to Jamaica opens up possibilities for a vital cultural exchange, including a heritage tourism market that would see Scots visiting the many historical sites in Jamaica with Scottish links, and Jamaicans, who are becoming increasingly curious about their Scottish heritage, going the other way.

Some world-class Jamaican products, among them rum and coffee, are not widely available in Scotland. There are good opportunities for individuals as well as firms. For example, Kier Construction is seeking to recruit British people to work as managers there. Recycling and solar energy are other areas that provide excellent possibilities.

Scotland could learn much from **Jamaica's** world-class athletes and coaches, as well as their music industry. Linking Brand Scotland with Brand Jamaica would undoubtedly create mutually beneficial commercial and cultural opportunities.

We are stressing the business angle here, because there is much to be gained by Scotland adding Jamaica to its list of Priority Countries for trade. This is about prudent investment, both commercial and cultural, rather than any idea of seeking a handout for Jamaica.

3. We note that in the letter there is no response to the assertion that historically trade with Jamaica contributed significantly to the foundations of **Scotland's** economic growth and prosperity, and that therefore Scotland should now seek to advance the prosperity of Jamaica. In this regard, we believe that it is important for the Scottish Government to follow through with the current priorities in its International Policy Statement (see <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/7071/2>), which states: "**our** commitment to fairness and human rights does not end at our borders. For example, our relationship and partnership with Malawi will remain **important...** Scotland will use its international engagement to continue to act as a good global **citizen.**"

We believe it is indeed fair and right that Scotland has this special relationship with Malawi, but surely there is an even stronger moral argument that it is fair and right for Scotland to act honourably as a good global citizen and make Jamaica a Priority Country for trade.

The same document refers to the Diaspora Engagement Strategy, which has not featured Jamaica, and we believe it is important for this omission to be rectified.

3. Flag Up Scotland Jamaica has, since its launch on 1 August 2014 at the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce during the Commonwealth Games, been involved in a number of initiatives which are already serving to strengthen the links between the two nations. These include the following:

- Through a Big Lottery Grant we were able to bring Jamaican poet Yasus Afari (né John Sinclair) and musician Claudius England to Scotland to take part in the June 2015 Glasgow MELA Festival. Claudius England then stayed on and visited schools, churches and three prisons, where he made a very significant positive impact.
- We have started to set up schools partnerships between the two nations and have appointed Lynne Vint, head teacher at Antonine Primary School in Bonnybridge, to coordinate this aspect of our work. Flag Up have also presented to P7 classes at Hyndland Primary in Glasgow and Hecklegirth Primary in Annan, Dumfriesshire.
- In Jamaica there has been a productive meeting at the Ministry of Education, and Patrice Townsend, the International Affairs Officer there, is keen to develop more schools partnerships with Scotland. We also have a link with

the University of Technology in Jamaica through their Director Anthony Davis, who has been an active member of Flag Up Scotland **Jamaica's** steering group. Through this link, we hope to encourage more Jamaicans to come and study in Scotland, thus reviving an educational association that was once both popular and essential to **Jamaica's** development.

- We have appointed Barry Warwick to coordinate the development of Flag Up Scotland in Jamaica.
- We provided essential information and contacts to photographer Stephen McLaren, whose exhibition '**A Sweet Forgetting**' is currently showing at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.
- We have helped to establish Emancipation Day, 1 August, as an annual event on **Scotland's** cultural calendar – including hosting Scottish African soul singers Unoma Okudo and Angel Wade on the Flag Up Emancipation Day stage during the Merchant City Festival in Glasgow.
- The Flag Up Scotland Jamaica project has received widespread support, including endorsements from the historian Sir Tom Devine, Her Excellency the Hon Mrs Aloun Ndombet-Assamba, **Jamaica's** High Commissioner to the UK, Sir Geoff Palmer of Heriot-Watt University and Anne McLaughlin MP.
- We have sought and gained the support of a number of MSPs, 40 of whom have signed motions related to our campaign. On 18 August 2014, Margaret Mitchell lodged Motion S4M-10824 to support the launch of this campaign and raise awareness of its aims. On 21 November 2014, John Mason MSP lodged Motion S4M-11652 to commemorate the centenary of William McGhie's birth and his contribution to the design of the Jamaican flag. On 31 July 2015, Kenneth Gibson MSP lodged Motion S4M-13867 to recognise the achievements of this campaign and to show cross-party support for it in the Parliament.
- We have been active in the media and have had positive articles in a number of newspapers, including *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Daily Record*.
- Our petition was warmly received by the Petitions Committee on 15 December 2015 and also received strong support from the Caribbean Cross-Party Group.

Apart from help through the £10,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, this has all been achieved through the goodwill and endeavour of people in Scotland and Jamaica.

In the light of the above, we would argue that the foundations of a bilateral partnership are in fact being laid and we would ask the Scottish Government to follow through with this existing momentum and engage with the Jamaican Government through Her Excellency the Hon Mrs Aloun Ndombet-Assamba to properly endorse and pursue this partnership.

We see the formal establishment of this bilateral partnership at a governmental level as a golden opportunity for Holyrood to project an imaginative, outward-looking and internationalist image of which it can be proud.

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