

**TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2020**

**CHARITY INFORMATION**

Charity Number: 1048637

Patron: Mrs Peaches Golding, OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Bristol

President: Professor Hugh Brady, Vice Chancellor, University of Bristol

Chairman: Dr K Barnard

Vice Chairman: Mr C Serle

Members of the Executive Committee that served during the year:

Mr N Ball  
Dr K Barnard  
Mr M Barnard  
Mr C Eddison-Cogan  
Mr R Elms  
Mrs J Kirk  
Mr D MacCannell  
Ms J Purdy  
Mr C Serle  
Mr S Tshabalala

**Address:** Commonwealth House  
14 Whiteladies Road  
Clifton  
Bristol  
BS8 1PD

**Independent Examiner:** CEK Accounts  
17 Sycamore Close  
Nailsea BS48 2UZ

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE  
TRUSTEES OF THE BRISTOL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY**

We report on the accounts of the Society for the year ended 31 December 2020.

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under Section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act") and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under Section 145 of the 2011 Act);
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under Section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act); and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

The examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements:
  - to keep proper accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

### ***For the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020***

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Executive Committee has the honour to present the 25th Annual Report of the Bristol Commonwealth Society.

#### **Reference and administrative information**

The Bristol Commonwealth Society is a registered charity (No. 1048637). Its registered office is shown on the information sheet.

The Trustees who served during the year are noted on the information sheet.

#### **Objects, aims, and activities**

The Society is a charity and exists to advance education and to promote within the United Kingdom and overseas the increase and spread of knowledge respecting the peoples and countries of the Commonwealth.

#### **Structure, governance and management**

##### ***Governing document***

This is through a constitution adopted 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008 as amended April 2012.

##### ***Governing bodies***

The Board of Trustees and Executive committee is responsible for the overall governance of the charity.

##### ***Recruitment and training of trustees***

The charity's trustees and committee members are appointed by the Board of Trustees after due consideration being given to eligibility, personal competence, specialist skills and local availability. New Trustees and committee members are inducted into the workings of the charity by the Board of Trustees.

#### **Risk management**

The Trustees and Executive Committee are responsible for the management of the risks faced by the Trust. A formal review of the charity's risk management processes is undertaken on an annual basis.

The key controls used by the charity include:

- formal agendas for all committee and board activities
- detailed terms of reference for all committees
- comprehensive strategic planning, budgeting and management accounting
- established organisational structure and lines of reporting
- formal written policies
- clear authorisation and approval levels

#### **Reserves policy**

Free reserves available for use by the charity are deemed to be those that are readily realisable. The charity's reserves amounted to £114,000 as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

The Trustees believe this level of reserves to be sufficient to meet the day to day requirements.

As a matter of policy, each year the Trustees review the value of the reserves required to be held in investments, cash and cash equivalents not restricted to any particular purpose. The Committee considers the charity's exposure to the risk of any significant loss of income and to the risk of unforeseen expenditure, which cannot be mitigated by executive action, and the degree of the risk ascribed to each such event is assessed.

Through the risk management processes established for the Trust, the Trustees are satisfied that the major risks identified have been adequately mitigated where necessary. It is recognised that the system can only provide reasonable but not absolute assurance that major risks have been adequately managed.

## **Report for 2020 from the Executive Committee**

The Executive is pleased to report that, despite unprecedented circumstances, it has continued to safeguard the interests of the Society whilst fulfilling its role as a charity. The Committee wishes to record its thanks to Dr Barnard for her expert guidance throughout the pandemic.

Dr Barnard is pleased to report that the Society remains in a strong position and commends each member of the Committee for making this possible.

The Chair and the Committee would also like to extend a very special thank you to the Society's members for their continued support.

### **Treasurer**

The Committee reports the resignation of the Society's Treasurer on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020. Mr Ball served in this capacity for four years and had been a supportive member since 2015. The Committee thanks him for his diligence and dedication. The position currently remains unfilled although potential replacements have kindly stepped forward.

### **Accountants**

After careful consideration and acting in the best interests of the Society, the Committee appointed new accountants in September 2020. CEK Accounts has assumed the role and the Committee feels sure they will be a great asset to BCS.

### **Financial Overview to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

During the year the Society received £4,737 in Gift Aid claims dating from 2017 to the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

Additionally, grants in excess of £24,000 were received in respect of Government closure.

Membership subscriptions for the year were £1,638.00.

Revenue from rental of parking spaces was £6,083.

Gross income from catering and room hire was £1,088.00 and £2,833.00 respectively (a significant decrease on previous years due to lockdown restrictions).

Charitable donations amounted to £1,736.60.

The Society's reserves to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 were £114,971 reflecting an up-lift in performance despite the pandemic.

At the year end the accounts reflected a surplus of £27,238.00.

It appears the Society's insurance policy provided cover for business interruption and a claim on that basis is being pursued. At this stage the Committee is hopeful of a positive outcome.

**Commonwealth House**

Following unfavourable feedback from visitors about the décor of the Club Room, the Committee agreed it was not the image the Society wished to project. With lockdown presenting the perfect opportunity, it was decided to commission a professional contractor to refurbish the facilities which has created a much more marketable space.

The Executive considers the improvements to be an investment which should increase private hire and be more attractive to prospective members.

**Health & Safety and Licensing**

Mrs Smith continues to identify and report to the Executive on matters concerning Commonwealth House, ensuring health and safety requirements are met for both members and tenants. She maintains a Food Safety certificate and as DPS (Licensee) ensures the premises meet current licensing regulations. She is Fire Officer for Commonwealth House.

**Events**

Mrs Smith continues to act as Programme and Event Co-ordinator.

**Room Hire**

Mrs Brown continues to act as the Society's room hire agent. The Committee extends its thanks to Mrs Brown for raising the premises' profile during her tenure.

**Tenants**

Both the first and second floor offices of Commonwealth House remain let to commercial tenants.

**Membership**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 the Society had 40 paid up members.

## **Review of Charitable Objectives and Activities for 2020**

### **Commonwealth Writers Readers Group**

The Book Club continued to explore a wide range of works by Commonwealth authors under the care of Mrs Valerie Davey. From March onwards the group held monthly meetings via Zoom with special thanks to Sue Thomas for hosting. The online meetings were very successful although the group looks forward to returning to Commonwealth House. The Book Club is open to non BCS members and the Society is pleased to offer the club complimentary use of the Club Room representing a charitable contribution of £100.

### **Bristol Beira Link**

In 2019 Mozambique was devastated by two powerful cyclones leaving large parts of the country without water or medical supplies. Much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed with the poorest members of society and children in particular most affected. In the wake of the disaster Bristol Beira Link set up an emergency committee to help with the recovery of this beleaguered Commonwealth country. BCS responded to the crisis by offering them much needed office space and meeting facilities to co-ordinate the relief effort, which in 2020 represented a charitable donation of £200.

### **Royal Commonwealth Society Associate Fellow**

The Society was delighted to grant £100 to Femi Omotoyinbo to enable him to travel from Belfast to London where on 9<sup>th</sup> March he attended Westminster Abbey. Femi, who is from Nigeria, was awarded a Royal Commonwealth Associate Fellowship whilst a member of the Bristol Student Commonwealth Society. He is a strong advocate of the Commonwealth and in 2017 the Society sponsored him to attend the Commonwealth Youth Conference in Cameroon. Femi is currently studying for a PhD in Philosophy and is a member of the International Society for Philosophers.

In his own words he says:

"I specially appreciate the kind support from BCS to attend the recent Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey. I am sincerely grateful for the trust, kindness and interest of BCS in my activities concerning the Commonwealth. I will always be grateful."

Below is a photograph taken on Commonwealth Day 2020 that Femi is keen to share with members.



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### **Commonwealth Scholars Welcome Party - 8<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

Twenty Commonwealth Scholars attended a New Year's celebration at Commonwealth House where they very much enjoyed meeting our Patron, who is particularly invested in young people within the Commonwealth.

This annual event offers great opportunities for cultural exchange and friendship amongst these exceptional students, many of whom maintain on-going links with the Society. After a buffet lunch which explored flavours of the Commonwealth each student sang a song that reminded them of home.

The Scholars' Regional Representative for the year was Faria Uquaili from Pakistan who thanked BCS for such a vibrant and at times moving occasion. The event represented a charitable donation of £171.00.

### **Commonwealth Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Commonwealth Sunday was celebrated at the Lord Mayor's Chapel where students Sarah Natumanya from Uganda and Collet Mweene from Zambia read passages from the Bible and our Patron read the Queen's Message to the Commonwealth. Also present was Cllr Jos Clarke, Lord Mayor of Bristol and the service was led by the Rev Harold Clarke. After the ceremony, guests returned to Commonwealth House for a Cypriot themed lunch.

The event represented a charitable expenditure of £160.00.

### **Fly the Flag, Commonwealth Day 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

The Fly the Flag initiative began in 2014 at the request of Her Majesty the Queen who asked for the Commonwealth flag to be flown from prominent buildings around the Commonwealth. In 2017 it became an annual event with the flag being raised in communities great and small across the world. In Bristol the flag is raised each year outside of City Hall by a student from a Commonwealth country who has been nominated by BCS.

In 2020 the flag raiser was Isaac Kipkemoi from Kenya who was studying for a PhD in the School of Geographical Sciences at the University of Bristol. At the time he was also working with the SCience of Climate, LAnd, Water, Plants & Society (SCI-CLAWPS) research group at Cardiff University on the impacts of climate and climate change on water and vegetation dynamics in Horn of African drylands.



After the flag was raised, our Patron read the Queen's Message to the Commonwealth, the theme of which was "Delivering a Common Future", and guests responded to the Affirmation. The ceremony was also attended by Deputy Mayor of Bristol, Cllr. Asher Craig, and Lord Mayor Cllr. Jos Clarke. A reception was held afterwards in City Hall where light refreshments were sponsored by BCS, representing a charitable donation of £105.60.

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### **St Paul's Carnival**

For the first time in its history the St Paul's Carnival Committee held a digital event which was viewed by a staggering 250,000 people worldwide. The Carnival dates back to 1968 and although it is one of Bristol's most anticipated cultural events (bringing valuable revenue to the City through tourism) it also encompasses a series of workshops, talks and schools' programmes around inclusion which BCS is proud to support. £100 was donated towards this important work.

### **Community Groups and Other Organisations**

As part of its Community Engagement Programme, BCS offered Commonwealth House for complimentary use by outside organisations including local theatre group, Beyond the Brink, the Lansdown Poetry Group, African Voices Forum, Bristol Beira Link and Senegambia Hidden Talents.

Additionally, the Club Room was made available to the Royal African Society, Bristol Anglo German Society and Primary Science Teachers' Training at discounted rates. This represented a charitable donation of £800.

### **Charitable Response to the Pandemic**

The Covid-19 crisis saw charities across the UK re-align their core objectives to meet the demands of the pandemic and BCS was no exception. Below are some of the initiatives we supported in response to the pandemic.

#### **Food Bank**

The Society engaged with St Nicholas of Tolentino Food Bank in Easton after learning of a sharp increase in demand for its services. Many of its clients were facing extreme hardship through loss of earnings and families were struggling to feed their children. To put it in to perspective, the food bank had been helping in the region of 50 people a week but after March 2020 it was catering to around 600. Through social media, BCS made a charitable appeal to the wider community and the response was overwhelming with people offering financial support as well as food and

warm clothing. Many donations were brought to Commonwealth House and the Committee also co-ordinated food collections from across the city.

### **The Vulnerable**

The onslaught of the pandemic left many older people shielding and unable to leave home. Those without support found everyday tasks such as shopping impossible and the situation was further compounded by a sense of alarm and isolation. Within the framework of the Society's resources, the Committee sought to identify members of the community it could best help and thus in April a plan was devised to offer assistance to the vulnerable.

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### **Commonwealth Scholars**

In the autumn of 2020 the Society was contacted by a number of Commonwealth Scholars who had been adversely affected by the pandemic. Students who were due to return home found themselves stranded amid limited flights and vastly increased air fares.

In addition, those who were coming to Bristol were required to quarantine for fourteen days at great expense before they could take up their pre-booked accommodation. There was a sense of abandonment amongst the Scholars who seemed to have fallen through any safety nets that may have been available to them. On hearing of their plight, the Society wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and contacted the University of Bristol. Following our intervention the Committee is pleased to report that all the Scholars involved received appropriate support.

Micheal Aregbesola, a Scholar from Nigeria, would like to share these words with members:-

"The Bristol Commonwealth Society is truly a platform where diverse people of Commonwealth heritage are given the opportunity to be genuinely inspired and educated for future generations of the Commonwealth community. The Bristol Commonwealth Society gave me the platform and support to engage Commonwealth scholars across Universities in South West of England on better ways to deliver a Common Future for the Commonwealth. This engagement has really educated me on how best to transform the capacity of the Commonwealth community in delivering the sustainable development goals.

Moreover, the Bristol Commonwealth Society has also been of great help to me in navigating my living successfully in Bristol. This is really a wonderful organisation I will keep on cherishing and supporting the values they stand for".

### **Present and future activities**

#### **Club Activities**

At the date of writing, Covid-19 restrictions still prohibit indoor gatherings although these should end on 21<sup>st</sup> June. The Chair and Committee are really looking forward to “business as usual” and, once safe to do so, a full programme of events will be made available. Top of the agenda will be the re-opening of the Club Room and a Sunday lunch but the Committee welcomes further suggestions from members.

## **Website**

A more up to date website has been commissioned which will incorporate options to join the Society, make a donation or book events digitally and will be easier for clients to navigate. Other social media platforms will also be used to their full advantage.

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## **Membership**

A membership drive will be prioritised now that our Club Room and Bar have undergone refurbishment. More innovative ideas for the programme along with a better website should also encourage interest.

## **Urban Creations**

Over the past year BCS has formed a collaboration with Urban Creations who own and manage luxury holiday accommodation in and around Clifton. Their website now hosts a link to our facilities along with printed leaflets advertising the Club Room for private hire. In reciprocation, BCS members, their guests and room hire clients will be able to stay in Urban Creations’ accommodation at discounted rates. We are sure this will be a very beneficial arrangement for both parties.

Many of their properties are also let to students and further discussions are taking place as to how those from Commonwealth countries could benefit from BCS membership. Initial thoughts include a language exchange, a Commonwealth debating club and of course a safe environment for study.

## **The Queen’s Commonwealth Trust**

In October 2022 the Queen celebrates her Platinum Jubilee and to mark the occasion the Queen’s Commonwealth Trust (QCT) will be supporting the Fund for Young Leaders. The QCT offers these inspirational young people grants, bespoke advice and access to resources through a network of hubs which are found in each of the Commonwealth’s 54 countries. The hubs are fully inclusive of indigenous and marginalised communities. The candidates represent the next generation of change makers and BCS is already making plans to support this fantastic initiative.

## **Commonwealth Scholars**

Our successful engagement over several years with Commonwealth Scholars has inspired discussion about an association of alumni. The ability to connect world-wide via Zoom offers enormous potential to create a network of Scholars who wish to remain in contact with the Society, sharing their experiences and achievements once they have returned home. This is an exciting opportunity for BCS and we will be taking it forward this year.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf:-

.....  
Dated .....  
DR KAY BARNARD, CHAIR

	<b>31.12.2020</b>	<b>31.12.2019</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Subscription	<b>1,638</b>	533
Donations	<b>1,144</b>	175
Rents Received & Tenants Contributions	<b>30,456</b>	28,803
Rents - Car Parking	<b>6,083</b>	5691
Room Hire	<b>2,833</b>	12,138
Functions & Catering Income	<b>1,087</b>	3,604
Dividends & Interest Receivable	<b>1</b>	2,284
Gift Aid	<b>4,737</b>	0
Coronavirus Covid 19 Grants	<b>24,436</b>	0
	<b>72,415</b>	53,228
<b>LESS: OVERHEADS</b>		
Purchases	<b>3,092</b>	4,694
Staff Salaries & Book-Keeping	<b>18,430</b>	20,501
Office & General Administration	<b>3,938</b>	3,765
Upkeep of Premises	<b>11,281</b>	10,474
Functions & Catering Costs	<b>0</b>	2,133
Charitable Expenditure & Donations	<b>1,736</b>	1,916
Equipment Hire	<b>0</b>	131
Insurances	<b>2,762</b>	2,860
Sundry Expenses & Retirement Gift	<b>0</b>	0
Accountancy	<b>2500</b>	3,800
Legal & Professional	<b>0</b>	205
Commission	<b>2,145</b>	4,199
Bank Charges	<b>37</b>	60
	<b>45,921</b>	54,738
<b>NET PROFIT(LOSS) before Depreciation and Investments FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>26,494</b>	(1,510)
<b>DEPRECIATION FOR THE YEAR</b>		
Depreciation	<b>(7,905)</b>	(2,075)
<b>MOVEMENT IN VALUATION OF INVESTMENTS</b>		
Surplus (Loss) on Valuation of investments	<b>8,649</b>	13,008
<b>NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE</b>	<b>27,238</b>	9,423

**YEAR**

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

		<b>31.12.20 20</b>	<b>31.12.201 9</b>
	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>3</b>		
Tangible Assets		370,670	353,181
<b>INVESTMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>		
Unit Trust Portfolio		114,971	126,322
		<b>485,641</b>	<b>479,503</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Stock		400	400
Debtors & Prepayments		1,060	659
Cash at bank and in Hand		39,908	3,743
		<b>41,368</b>	<b>4,802</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Amounts falling due after more than one year		10,000	
Sundry Creditors & Accruals		6,985	1,519
		<b>16,985</b>	<b>1,519</b>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>510,024</b>	<b>482,786</b>
<b>CAPITAL &amp; RESERVES</b>			
Unrestricted Funds	<b>5</b>	510,024	482,786
Approved by the Executive Committee on			
K Barnard - Chair			

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

<b>3</b>	<b>TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>Comput er Equipm ent £</b>	<b>Furniture &amp; Fittings £</b>	<b>Freehold Property £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
	<b>COST</b>				
	At 01 January 2020	5,787	56,857	346,956	409,600
	Additions		25,394		25,394
	Disposal				
	At 31 December 2020	5,787	82,251	346,956	434,994
	<b>DEPRECIATION</b>				
	At 01 January 2020	5,300	51,119		56,419
	Charge for the year	122	7,783		7,905
	Disposals				
	At 31 December 2020	5,422	58,902	0	64,324
	<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>				
	At 31 December 2020	<b>365</b>	<b>23,349</b>	<b>346,956</b>	<b>370,670</b>
	At 31 December 2019	487	5,738	346,956	353,181
<b>4</b>	<b>INVESTMENTS</b>			<b>31.12.20 20 £</b>	<b>31.12.20 19 £</b>
	Investments			<b>114,971</b>	126,322

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

The investments were valued on the 31 December 2020 and the surplus on revaluation has been credited with reserves, with opening and closing market value of investments reconciled as follows:

	<b>£</b>
Balance at 01 January 2020	126,322
Dividends and interest income received in year	8,649
Cash drawdown in year and prior year adjustments	(20,000)
Movement in valuation of investments	
Balance at 31 December 2020	<b>114,971</b>

			<b>31.12.20</b>		<b>31.12.201</b>
			<b>20</b>		<b>9</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>RESERVES</b>		<b>£</b>		<b>£</b>
	Balance as 01 January 2020		482,786		473,363
	General surplus (deficit) for the year		18,589		(3,585)
	Movement in valuation in investments		8,649		13,008
	Balance at 31 December 2020		510,024		482,786
<b>6</b>	<b>STAFF COSTS</b>				
	Salaries and other Costs		18,430		20,501
<b>7</b>	<b>CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE &amp; DONATIONS</b>				
	During the year the Society expended the following				
	Amounts on charitable works and student subsidies		1,736		1,916

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020