

# Key figures support new Commonwealth Chamber

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Key figures in the region are to be at the heart of the new Greater Birmingham Commonwealth Chamber of Commerce (GBCCC), it was revealed today.

Launched by Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, the move is an initiative to drive trade between the Midlands and the Commonwealth.

Keith Stokes-Smith, chairman of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association, has agreed to serve as president and will be joined on the executive committee by:

- **Nasir Awan MBE DL** chairman of the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce and chief executive of Awan Marketing International plc
- **Anita Bhalla OBE** former senior BBC executive who is now chair of Town Hall Symphony Hall Birmingham. She has been part of the Birmingham Social Justice Commission, led by the Bishop of Birmingham.
- **Lloyd Broad** Head of European and international affairs at Birmingham City Council
- **Claire Brunning** Head of corporate banking for HSBC Birmingham
- **John Crabtree OBE DL** Former lawyer and well-known business figure in Birmingham who is Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands. He is also chairman of the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel overseeing Birmingham City Council's implementation of the recommendations of the Kerslake review. Mr Crabtree, a former president of Birmingham Chamber, has a wide variety of business, community and charitable interests, predominantly in the West Midlands.

- **Preet Gill** MP for Birmingham Edgbaston, *who is* international development minister in the shadow cabinet.
- **Deb Leary OBE** Chief executive of Staffordshire-based Forensic Pathways who was named in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List for her commitment to entrepreneurship and the community.
- **Martin Levermore MBE** Chief executive of Medical Devices Technology International Limited (MDTI) and chairman of trade and business at the Birmingham Commonwealth Association.
- **Rupi Nandra MBE** Head of international programmes at Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce.
- **Adam Parker** Manager of aviation strategy and forecasting at Birmingham Airport.
- **Alex de Ruyter** Professor and director of the Centre for Brexit Studies at *Birmingham* City University. He has published over 60 research outputs, including leading international journals.
- **Mark Smith** Executive director of business engagement at Aston University.
- **Professor Louise Toner** Associate dean at Birmingham City University faculty of health representing the British Commonwealth Association.
- **Tom Brett Young** Immigration specialist at law firm VWV Birmingham, which set up a Brexit planning team in the wake of the referendum.

The Commonwealth Chamber becomes the tenth division of the GBCC and will offer a membership-based international gateway for firms wishing to develop bilateral trade opportunities in Commonwealth countries.

Paul Faulkner, chief executive of the GBCC, said: “I’m delighted that we have gathered such an experienced and high-profile committee for the GBCCC.

“As we approach Brexit, we believe trade with Commonwealth countries will become even more vital and our move has been given huge impetus with the awarding of the 2022 Commonwealth Games to Birmingham.”

GBCC chief operating officer Russell Jeans said: “The committee of the new Commonwealth Chamber will now work vigorously to ensure that Birmingham is at the top of its game in driving trade between the city and the Commonwealth.

“At its inaugural meeting this week, ideas were already flowing and we will be announcing further key appointments over the coming weeks.”

Paul Kehoe, president of the GBCC, said: “This is a tremendous step forward for the Chamber and one that more firmly puts us on the international stage and underlining our place in the world of trade.”

Mr Faulkner and Mr Jeans will represent the GBCC on the committee.

To find out more, or register your interest in becoming a member, email [gbccc@birmingham-chamber.com](mailto:gbccc@birmingham-chamber.com) or call 0845 603 6650.

*Pictured: The newly-formed committee of the Greater Birmingham Commonwealth Chamber of Commerce with Birmingham Chamber executives after their inaugural meeting.*