

20/06/2022

**Re: Windrush Day grant scheme**

Dear Secretary of State,

Lambeth is proud to be the home of the Windrush generation. It is a core part of our identity, history, and heritage. Lambeth Council has been a leading local authority in campaigning to improve the lives of the Windrush generation residing throughout the UK and overseas, as well those of their dependents and families.

As a local authority we have, supported and led the campaign for justice for the Windrush generation and their descendants, so many of whom settled in our borough when they came to the UK. We all acknowledge that the UK owes a profound debt to the Windrush generation. However, we are acutely aware of the fact that successive governments have not addressed the issue of inherent unfairness and systemic racism in the process through which the Home Office manages claims for citizenship.

We have supported residents to apply for the compensation they deserve, lobbied to release the Windrush Review, and the lessons learnt from it in full, funded and supported annual Windrush Day celebrations across schools and community groups in Lambeth and we campaigned for the Windrush memorial to be built in Windrush Square in Brixton.

The contribution the Windrush generation and their descendants have made not only to Lambeth but to the UK's national cultural, social, and economic life over the decade is, rightly, now widely and nationally acknowledged. That is why, as a council, we already provided financial support for the local Windrush Day programme, alongside dedicated officer support, working with local groups to coordinate and deliver the Windrush Day events and assist local community groups in their applications for UK Government Windrush Day grant scheme funding.

Given the history of our borough and the support we have shown as a council and civic community, it is then, profoundly disappointing, to have learned that the vast majority of local groups were unsuccessful in their application for the Windrush Day Grant Scheme this year. These include groups such as the Brixton Project, a community-focused arts organisation that had submitted a collective bid for several organisations within the borough, and the Black Cultural Archives, the only national heritage centre dedicated to the histories of African and Caribbean people in Britain, to name but two.

The feedback that we have received from groups and the local community regarding the Windrush Day Grant Scheme is of significant dissatisfaction regarding bid expectations, a lack of transparency of decision-making as well as lateness, year on year, when it comes to decisions being granted – or in the case of this year, not granted – and how this makes planning appropriately for events exceptionally difficult for such groups.



Due to the decision taken not to award Windrush Day Grant Scheme funding to our local groups this year, we have had to put in place additional emergency funding to support groups who were unsuccessful – to avoid cultural and educational events, that volunteers have spent over a year planning and organising, having to be cancelled, and to ensure that the community have the opportunity to meet and celebrate this most important day in our local and national calendar .

However, as a council that has lost a significant amount of its central government grant since 2010, is endeavouring to recover from Covid whilst facing a cost of living and inflationary crisis, it is simply unsustainable – we cannot keep filling the gap left by government when our Windrush community deserves to have their voluntary and community work rewarded and their invaluable cultural and economic contribution respected and acknowledged. What perplexes our older Windrush residents and their descendants the most is how they feel excluded and ignored by government on the very day that has been earmarked to acknowledge and celebrate their existence, history, and contribution to our country.

Our theme for the programme of Windrush Day events in Lambeth is “We Are Here”, which invites us to learn about the history, stories, and experiences of the Windrush generation and their descendants, ensuring their legacy is recognised and celebrated across Lambeth. Unfortunately, our local groups are asking themselves if their government knows if they are here too.

We look forward to your earliest response on the concerns presented above.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Claire Holland, Leader, London Borough of Lambeth

Cllr Jacqui Dyer, Deputy Leader, London Borough of Lambeth