



Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City
Date:	27 May 2021
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Commemorative Green Plaque to the Windrush Generation at Paddington Station, Praed Street, London W2 1HB
Wards Affected:	Hyde Park
Key Decision:	No
Financial Summary:	The Green Plaque Scheme is funded by sponsorship, which has been secured for this plaque
Report of:	Richie Gibson, Head of City Promotions, Events and Filming

1. Executive summary

In the years following the Second World War, the British government encouraged the migration of workers from Commonwealth countries in response to the British labour shortage and to help rebuild the war-torn country. The arrival of over 800 Caribbean passengers on HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury Dock on 22 June 1948, has become one of the symbols of this post-war immigration and the beginning of a new chapter in the history of London and the country. This plaque commemorates their arrival at Paddington Station from ports across the UK.

Referred to as the Windrush Generation, many of those who travelled from the Caribbean, mainly Jamaica, had fought in the First and Second World Wars and came to use their skills and education to work in vital industries including transport and health. In the following years, increasing numbers of people made the same journey, following family and friends to seek work in Britain.

The Windrush Generation represent a group of the Caribbean diaspora whose origins stem from Africa, Europe and Asia. With them came music, food and culture, which are now part of the tapestry of Britain.

The plaque has been nominated by Westminster City Council's BAME Network to recognise the lives and experiences of these everyday heroes.

2. Recommendation

That the nomination for a commemorative Green Plaque to the Windrush Generation is approved, subject to Listed Building Consent.

3. Reasons for decision

The arrival of HMT Empire Windrush has become an important landmark in the history of modern Britain. Images of Caribbean passengers filing down the gangplank have come to symbolise the significant contribution the Windrush Generation has made to the infrastructure, economy and culture of Britain.

Windrush Day was introduced in 2018 on the 70th anniversary of the first landing of Caribbean immigrants. The day honours the huge contribution that the Caribbean community has made to Britain. It is intended to unveil this Westminster Green Plaque on Windrush Day 2021, at the site where many immigrants set foot in London for the first time.

4. Policy context

The Green Plaques scheme aims to highlight and improve awareness of Westminster's diverse cultural heritage and social history, provide information for visitors and to create a sense of pride in neighbourhoods.

5. Background

HMT Empire Windrush was a former German cruise liner, MV Monte Rosa, which operated as a German troopship in the Second World War. She was captured by Britain in May 1945 following the war and renamed Empire Windrush. Windrush transported British service personnel between the UK and Far East until April 1948 when she made her first and only trip to the Caribbean to pick up service personnel who were on leave.

In May 1948, HMT Empire Windrush docked in Kingston, Jamaica. Britain was starting to recover from the devastation of the Second World War but faced a shortage of workers to rebuild the economy. As there was space on the ship, an advert was placed in a Jamaican newspaper offering transport to anyone who wanted to work in the UK. The journey cost £28 for travel on the troop deck or £48 for cabin class.

On 21 June 1948 the Empire Windrush, steamed up the Thames to Tilbury Dock in Essex. The following day, in what has become a landmark in modern British history, Caribbean immigrants from Jamaica, Bermuda, Trinidad and British Guiana were among the 1,027 passengers to disembark. Eight hundred and two passengers gave their last country of residence as somewhere in the Caribbean. They were amongst the first of 500,000 Commonwealth citizens who settled in Britain between 1948 and 1971. Their arrival marked the first wave of post-war mass migration and some of the first recruits to rebuild post-war Britain.

Many of the passengers were either serving members of the RAF or veterans looking to re-enlist. Over 15,000 Caribbean citizens fought in the British West Indies Regiment in the First World War and thousands of Caribbean service men and women served in the Second World War. Many others carried out essential work on the Home Front.

Sam Beaver King MBE, a carpenter from Jamaica was one of the passengers who served in the RAF during the Second World War. He was the first black Mayor of Southwark and co-founder of the first Caribbean-style carnival, a precursor to Notting Hill Carnival, and the Windrush Foundation.

Arriving at Paddington Station

London was the most popular destination for the passengers whilst others planned to journey on to Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Plymouth and Bristol. Paddington Station was used as a gateway to London and beyond for many of the Caribbean immigrants who arrived by boat at ports such as Southampton and Bristol.

A 1948 passenger list for the Empire Windrush shows that many people listed addresses in the Paddington area as well as nearby neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill. Those without accommodation were temporarily housed in the Clapham South deep shelter, built by London Underground as an air raid shelter in the Second World War. Coldharbour Lane Labour Exchange was the closest employment exchange and many of the passengers settled nearby in Brixton and Clapham.

Stuart Hall, renowned British Sociologist, was part of the Windrush generation. He was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1932 and following studies at Jamaica College he came to Britain in 1951 through a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University. He recounts passing Paddington Station where he “saw a stream of black people spilling out into the London afternoon.”

In his autobiography, *Familiar Stranger*, he recalls the moment: “It is hard to reconstruct the effect of seeing these black West Indian working men and women in London, with their strapped-up suitcases and bulging straw baskets, looking for all the world as if they planned a long stay. They had made extraordinary efforts within their means to dress up to the nines for the journey, as West Indians always did in those days when traveling or going to church: the men in soft-brim felt hats, cocked at a rakish angle, the women in flimsy, colourful cotton dresses, stepping uncertainly into the wind, or waiting for relatives or friends to rescue them from the enveloping strangeness. They hesitated in front of ticket windows, trying to figure out how to take another train to some equally unfamiliar place, to find people they knew.”

Paddington Station remains an essential hub for commuters coming and going from all over the world and the plaque will be an enduring visual reminder for travellers of where the Windrush Generation began in London, brimming with excitement and hope.

The Windrush effect

In the years that followed, increasing numbers of people from the Caribbean would make the same journey. By 1961, the number of people in England and Wales who were born in the Caribbean was just over 161,000.

The British Nationality Act 1948 gave the status of Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies to all British subjects connected with the United Kingdom or a British Colony, until this was restricted by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962.

Key industries such as British Rail and the National Health Service as well as the manufacturing and construction industries recruited heavily from the Caribbean and the prospect of long-term employment opportunities attracted many Caribbean men and women to travel to Britain in response to press adverts.

The Government of Barbados, concerned with rising unemployment, approached London Transport to set up a formal arrangement for recruitment and in 1956, London Transport became the first organisation to operate a scheme recruiting staff directly from the Caribbean.

Between 1956 and 1970, thousands of new recruits came to London from Barbados to work for the network. The recruitment scheme became a model for other public sector employers including

British Rail and the National Health Service. The NHS visited the Caribbean to recruit trained nurses and young women to come to Britain to train to meet the health needs of the population.

Edna Allen (now Chavannes) was born in Jamaica in 1930. After leaving school, she worked for three years as a teacher, but always wanted to be a nurse. The opportunity came in 1951 when she applied via a newspaper advertisement to become a nurse in the UK. Edna travelled to Bristol on SS Cavina and arrived age 21 on 14 March 1951 before travelling by train to Paddington Station. She dedicated her life to her service in the NHS and local community working as a nurse, midwife and health visitor over the next 44 years.

The early post-war workers made a huge contribution not just in the post-war period but across decades of employment.

The Windrush scandal

In 2018, thousands of people from the Caribbean who arrived in the UK as children were threatened with deportation in what became known as the Windrush Scandal. Many of the Windrush generation, who arrived on British shores between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries, were told they were here illegally despite having lived and worked in the country for decades. Many lacked the correct documentation to prove their right to remain in the UK and at least 83 people were wrongfully deported to Jamaica.

Following public outcry against the injustice, the Government's Windrush Scheme was created to assist those who do not have documentation confirming their immigration status.

6. Financial Implications

The cost of production and installation will be covered by the sponsor, Westminster City Council's BAME Network.

7. Legal Implications

Paddington Station is a Grade I Listed Building and an application for Listed Building Consent has been submitted.

7. Consultation

The nomination is supported by members of the independent Green Plaque panel chaired by Cllr Paul Swaddle. Members are: Adrian Autton, Development Manager, Westminster Archives and Local Studies; Helen Glew, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Westminster; Rachel Anthony, Committee Member, Westminster Guides and Colin Thom, Senior Research Associate, Survey of London, UCL Faculty of the Built Environment who said: "I think it is an excellent idea to recognise the important role that Paddington Station played in the arrival of the Windrush generation into this country. Given the significance of that event in Britain's social and demographic history, and the desirability of the council doing as much as possible to celebrate diversity and recognize the contribution of West Indian immigrants to the cultural life of this city, I am very much in favour of this proposal."

Network Rail has confirmed their support of the plaque installation and have been consulted on the proposed wording. They have agreed to install the plaque on behalf of the council. Ward members have been informed and no objections have been raised.

If you have any queries about this report please contact Claire Appleby on 07971 026 113 or cappleby@westminster.gov.uk.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Location plan showing Paddington Station and the site of the plaque installation at 1:1250 scale.

Appendix 2

The proposed location of the Windrush Generation Green Plaque, in the pedestrian route from Platform 1 to the Elizabeth Line at Paddington Station.

Appendix 3

Wording and layout of the proposed Green Plaque.

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City**

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: **Councillor Paul Swaddle** _____

State nature of interest if any

.....
(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled Commemorative Green Plaque to The Windrush Generation, at Paddington Station, Praed Street, Paddington, W2.

Signed

Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
.....
.....

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Strategic Director Finance and Performance and, if there are resources implications, the Strategic Director of Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.

Other Implications

1. Resources Implications

1.1 There are no resources implications arising from this report

2. Business Plan Implications

2.1 There are no business plan implications arising from this report

3. Risk Management Implications

3.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report

4. Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications

4.1 There are no health and safety and wellbeing issues arising from this report

5. Crime and Disorder Implications

5.1 There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report

6. Impact on the Environment

6.1 There are no environmental issues arising from this report

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report

8. Staffing Implications

8.1 There are no staffing issues arising from this report

9. Human Rights Implications

9.1 There are no issues relating to responsibilities under the Human Rights Act 1998 arising from this report

10. Energy Measure Implications

10.1 There are no energy measure issues arising from this report

11. Communications Implications

11.1 The council's communications team is aware of the proposed Green Plaque and unveiling ceremony