

Caribbean Council Newsletter

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Issue 81



Caribbean governments unite to protest against British tax plans

Governments of the Caribbean have united in protest at the British government's plans to charge a higher airport departure tax on visitors to the Caribbean than the tax paid by British visitors to some other major destinations.

In November 2009 the airport departure tax on flights to the Caribbean is due to increase by between 25 per cent and 87 per cent, depending upon the class of travel. In November 2010 those increases will reach as high as 94 per cent. In an open letter to Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling, Caribbean governments united to call for a repeal of the British government's plans.

Minister Harold Lovell (pictured), chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), speaking on behalf of the many Caribbean governments said; "Our countries' economies are hugely dependent on tourism. But the British government plans to place us in a more expensive tax category compared to the whole of the USA. This puts us at a considerable disadvantage. To suggest this is a green tax and that the environmental impact of flying to California or Hawaii is less than flying to the Caribbean is patently untrue. Our holidaymakers and the overseas friends and relatives of Caribbean nationals who live in Britain are being heavily penalised and our countries call on Britain to do the right thing and change this injustice."



As the world's most tourism-dependent region the Caribbean is determined to treat this matter with great urgency. The CTO is also supporting appeals made by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and the British travel industry to change the tax plans. The Association of British Travel Agents and the industry trade paper Travel Trade Gazette have launched an online petition on the Downing Street website and almost 400 protests have already been registered. To sign the petition link to <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/APDtax/>, or to read more about protests link to <http://www.ttqlive.com/travelgivesback>



Obituary: George Arzeno Brugal

Don George Arzeno Brugal (pictured), a long time friend and supporter of the Caribbean Council was buried in the Dominican Republic on 19 February after passing away in Miami at the age of 84.

Born in Puerta Plata, he was the second of three children in a family of businessmen. Don Georgie as he was known to his friends dedicated his life to his work and soon progressed to senior positions in the family businesses - Brugal and Company, Vinicola del Norte and the Brugal Foundation, amongst others.

During his career, he was the leader of the most important Dominican Republic organisations in the Private Sector including the Association of Industries and the National Council of the Private Sector (CONEP). In this role he represented the interests of his sector and also of the country. In the 1980's he became a household name in relation to his championing of national issues.

In the mid eighties he became one of the founder members of the Caribbean Council for Europe in which context he not only was responsible for the deepening in relations between Anglophone Caribbean business leaders and the private sector in the Dominican Republic but hosted in Santo Domingo meetings that brought regional private sector interests together to consider common concerns relating to the Lome Convention, Dominican Republic membership of the ACP group and issues relating to the rum industry.

He was always generous with his time and advice and supported fully initiatives that would create a broader awareness in Europe of the importance of the Caribbean region as a whole.

More generally in business he saw the value of opening up markets while recognising the need to implement gradual change in order to support the Dominican private sector.

Events Diary

12-22 February, 2009
Havana International Book Fair,
Havana, Cuba

26 February, 2009
Future Directions in Caribbean Studies,
London

1 March, 2009
Caribbean Brunch, Mahoe Cafe Bar
(see page 3 for a special offer)

18 March, 2009
Business Roundtable on Global
Economic Crisis, Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic

18-29 March, 2009
UKTI London Trade Visit to the
Caribbean

24-26 March, 2009
Round Table Meeting on Sustainable
Cocoa, Trinidad and Tobago

14-16 April, 2009
Caribbean Hotel and Tourism
Investment Conference, Bermuda

17-18 April, 2009
Fifth Summit of the Americas

21 April, 2009
Reception, House of Lords, London

19 June, 2009
Canada and the Cuban Revolution,
London

*For information on any of the above
events please contact*

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In 2009, Virgin Atlantic celebrates 25 years of flying. In this time it has become the largest scheduled airline between Europe and the Caribbean, carrying 825,000 passengers on its ten Caribbean routes last year.

Virgin Atlantic flies to Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Havana, Kingston, Montego Bay, St Lucia and Tobago from London Gatwick and to Barbados and St Lucia from Manchester.

For more details and to make bookings, please visit www.virginatlantic.com.

Besides being an extremely successful businessman, one of the key drivers in Don Georgie's life was the social needs of his countrymen and women. The Brugal Foundation, founded by his grandfather, was the vehicle that he used to translate his desire to help. As a defender of democracy, he urged businesses in the country to reinforce their commitment to workers rights. On more than one occasion, he described democracy as being the private sector's *raison d'être*.

Mr Brugal was central to the development of the Caribbean Council for Europe, the forerunner to the Caribbean Council and in particular his personal contribution and support was fundamental in the development of UK-Dominican Republic relations. Commenting David Jessop, the Executive Director of the Caribbean Council said that above all the Caribbean Council would remember him as the individual who championed a closer relationship with the rest of the region and saw huge value in utilising the Caribbean Council as a basis to meet his counterparts in the English speaking Caribbean and develop joint initiatives.

Don Georgie was a gentleman of the old school who valued people. He and his guidance will be much missed.



FCO Minister invited to be Guest Speaker for House of Lords Reception 21 April, 2009, House of Lords, London

The Caribbean Council has invited Gillian Merron MP, the Minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility for the relationship with the Caribbean in the British Government to be the guest speaker at this year's annual reception at the House of Lords. Prior to taking up her current position in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Minister was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for International Development.

The reception traditionally is addressed by high level speakers and has welcomed in the past Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for International Development, John Prescott MP in his former role as Deputy Prime Minister and Hilary Benn MP, in his former role as Secretary of State for International Development.

The 2009 reception once again will have top prizes in its now renowned entry-ticket raffle. Rum cocktails will again provide the flavour for the evening.

Invitations will be sent out via email to members of the CBBC, Cuba Initiative and Anglo Dominican Trade Council next. For non members, a limited number of tickets are available for sale at a cost of £100 each; however the Council encourages any non members to take up membership so that they may benefit from all benefits provided by the organisation. CBBC Membership starts from £110.00 per annum plus VAT and all members receive at least one ticket to the reception free of charge depending on their level of membership.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Although some business partnership and sponsorship packages have already been taken up by members, a limited number of packages are still available. The Caribbean Council also has a number of unique opportunities specifically tailored to Caribbean Countries seeking to promote their investment and tourism offerings.

Anyone who requires more information about the reception should contact Stephanie Whittle stephanie.whittle@caribbean-council.org.



UKTI Chief Executive Visits the Region

Sir Andrew Cahn, Chief Executive of UK Trade and Investment visited the Dominican Republic, Panama and other countries in the region in mid February as a part of a regional visit.

During his visit to the Dominican Republic, Sir Andrew spoke at a business breakfast organised by the British Chamber of Commerce of the Dominican Republic. Focussing on UK Dominican relationships, Sir Andrew said that partnerships between UK and Dominican businesses were an opportunity for commercial development and expansion. Looking ahead to the opportunities presented by trade agreements, the UKTI Chief stated that bilateral business between both nations can expand with the trade agreements that have been signed, most recently the EU CARIFORUM EPA, but that removal of some existing barriers could further increase trade.

The Director of the Centre of Export and Investment of Dominican Republic, Eddy Martinez, emphasized the importance of the visit of Sir Andrew and the interest that British investors have shown in the DR. Nevertheless, he recognised that some bureaucratic barriers to trade have been identified and that the creation of the Cabinet of Investment, where the strategic investment projects that have remained in the limbo during years will be handled, should go some way to addressing such barriers.

The breakfast briefing formed part of Sir Andrew's visit programme. Following the Dominican Republic he went on to Panama. *(Picture left to right: HE Mr Ian Worthington, British Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Sir Andrew Cahn, Roberto Herrera, President of the British Chamber of Commerce of the Dominican Republic)*

Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference (CHTIC) 14-16 April, Bermuda

As the sixth largest hotel investment forum in the world, CHTIC – the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference - is the leading regional investment and development conference.

CHTIC offers two days of hearing and learning from high level executives involved with all aspects of 'creation' in the tourism industry: Building, Branding, Investing, Research, and Forecasting.

This prestigious event enables delegates to network with colleagues from all corners of the industry, to discuss the latest trends and developments and to hear the views of key figures in the industry. The conference program is available now from the CHTA web site http://cha.informz.net/cha/archives/archive_238937.html and includes sessions on tourism demand, equity capital markets, and issues and opportunities for investors in the Caribbean amongst many others.

Registration costs US\$875.00 for CHTA members and US\$975.00 for non members and is valid until Friday, 20 February. After this date, registration fees increase by \$100.00. Fees include access to all conference sessions, continental breakfast, coffee breaks and lunch on Wednesday and Thursday, the Opening Reception on Tuesday, a Reception on Wednesday and the Closing Dinner on Thursday, and a delegate list ([click here to see the companies that attended in 2008](#)). For more information please contact Vanessa Ledesma Vanessa@caribbeanhotelandtourism.com

CBBC Members who are not already members of the CHTA can take advantage of a special allied membership rate. For more information please contact Stephanie Whittle stephanie.whittle@caribbean-council.org.

Congress to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Tropical Medicine Institute (IPK) 1-4 June 2009

Havana, Cuba

The Congress will deal with topics related to infectious and parasitic diseases, including medical care, microbiology, parasitology, epidemiology and continuing education. Specialists working in these disciplines are invited to present their work and discuss their experiences and results.

For information regarding the Congress, contact: Jorge Fraga, email: congreso70aniversario@ipk.sld.cu

Future Directions in Caribbean Studies and the Implications for Publishing 1pm – 7.30pm, 26 February, 2009, London Metropolitan University, London

The Caribbean Studies Centre is holding a **Talk and Book Sale** by Ian Randle Publishers, the top publisher books in the Caribbean.

The talk will be given by Ian Randle, founder and Chairman of Ian Randle Publishers. Books will be offered for sale at discount from 1pm and the talk will start at 6pm.

For more information please contact Juliet King-Malik j.kingmalik@londonmet.ac.uk

Enjoy Caribbean Sunday Brunch at Mahoe Café-Bar Inaugural Event 1 March, 2009

Mahoe Cafe-Bar, a stylish venue in the heart of London that offers its patrons a genuine taste of the Caribbean, is host to a Caribbean brunch on the first Sunday of each month.



All guests will enjoy a buffet of tasty Caribbean dishes based on Mahoe's popular menu plus special additions for the occasion along with delicious frothy cocktails.

A live steel pan drummer will provide soothing background melodies, and each month there will be a changing feature artiste for that special touch. Each brunch event is designed to provide a relaxed atmosphere where friends and family can catch up and enjoy the weekend.



The only things missing really...are the warm sea breezes fanning your face, the white-sand beaches and... well... the sunshine...

The first 'virtual trip' to the Caribbean will be Sunday 1 March 2009, from 11.30a.m. to 3.30p.m and everyone is welcome. Buffet cost £15.00. Have as much of anything as you like!

74-82 Queen Victoria Street, Bow Lane, London EC4N 4SJ (Mansion House tube exit 4)

www.mahoecafe.com Tel: +44 (0) 20 7489 9895. Reservations welcome.

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