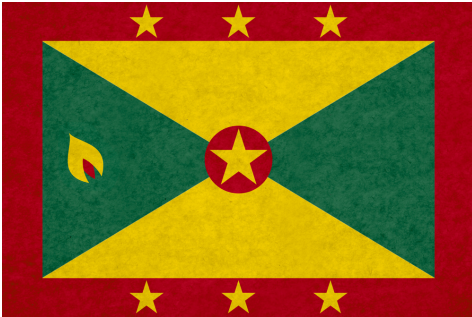


Post-Election Seminar: Grenada

REPORT SUMMARY

6-10 March 2023



Seminar participants outside the Parliament of Grenada. Credit: Dwain Thomas.

IMPACT

To contribute towards an effective and inclusive Parliament of Grenada, through a programme of discussions and workshops.

OUTCOMES

1) Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate who attend the programme have an increased understanding and confidence in carrying out their parliamentary responsibilities.

2) Increase Members' understanding of the purpose and operation of the scrutiny functions of parliament, including parliamentary questions, debates, and committees.

3) Strengthen the links between the parliaments of Grenada and the UK through the mutually beneficial sharing of knowledge and experience between members of both legislatures.

The Parliament of Grenada invited CPA UK to facilitate a Post-Election Seminar for the House of Representatives and the Senate following Grenada's General Election in June 2022. After the postponement of the programme in September 2022, following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Seminar was held in March 2023.

A CPA UK delegation of three MPs and a clerk travelled to Grenada to participate in this three-day programme. In addition, the delegation joined an International Women's Day celebration, engaged with the Youth Parliament and met with representatives from civil society.

Grenada's 2022 General Election saw several new parliamentarians elected to Parliament. The election also reset the Parliament's government-opposition dynamic, as there had been no opposition party in the House of Representatives in the 2018-2022 parliament. As Grenada approached its fiftieth anniversary of independence in 2024, there was a sense in the Seminar that this was a time of opportunity for Grenada's Parliament.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION UK - CPA UK

Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0AA

 @CPA_UK T: +44 (0)20 7219 5373 E: cpauk@parliament.uk www.uk-cpa.org 

Registered Charity No. 1095118 | Registered Company No. 4606846  INVESTORS IN PEOPLE Silver

Post-Election Seminar: Grenada

FULL REPORT

6-10 March 2023

General Election 2022

House of Representatives

The House of Representatives has 15 seats drawn from single-member constituencies in a first-past-the-post system.

The June 2022 General Election saw a change in governing party.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) increased their seats from 0 to 9. The NDC leader Dickon Mitchell became Prime Minister.

The incumbent New National Party (NNP) saw a reduction in their seats from 15 to 6.

Gender balance

Of the 15 Members elected the gender balance was as follows:

- 5 women (33%)
- 10 men (66%)

The Senate

The Senate is composed of 13 Senators appointed after each General Election in the following composition:

- 7 Government
- 3 Opposition
- 3 Independent



Speaker Hon Leo Cato and President Dr. Dessima D Williams speak at the Opening of the Seminar. Credit: Dwain Thomas.

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF PARLIAMENT

Participants agreed that whilst acknowledging significant differences between their legislatures, the UK and Grenada Parliament had the same common purpose. One participant shared that the “ultimate goal is ensuring that the peoples’ business is well-served.”

The Seminar considered the various opportunities parliament has for scrutinising the Government, including parliamentary questions. “Every question is an opportunity,” one participant shared. In addition to asking impactful questions, it is a skill to come back with further supplementary questions. Parliamentary questions can secure official responses, not informal comments that cannot be relied on, and form an evidential basis for a campaign.

Giving sufficient time to consider new legislation was shared as a priority by some participants, highlighting examples of bills speeded through their parliamentary stages and not allowing parliamentarians time to consider the impact of a Bill.

LIST OF UK DELEGATES

- Kerry McCarthy MP
- Nickie Aiken MP
- Lisa Cameron MP
- Chris Stanton, Clerk

As national leaders, those elected to public office are expected to uphold high standards. In the words of one speaker: “High ethical standards of behaviour are essential to the effective functioning of democracy.”

2024 will be the fiftieth anniversary of Grenada’s independence. As the country approaches that milestone, participants spoke of giving each other homework to consider. In what position do we want our parliament to be at 50 years old? How do we want to go down in history for the steps we will take for the next 50 years? “[In Grenada,] how do we get parliaments that reflect and enhance democracy in countries like ours?”



Participants on the first day of the Seminar. Credit: Dwain Thomas.

CONSTITUENCY ROLE OF AN MP

In the UK, there is an average of just over 71,000 residents per constituency. In Grenada, there are just under 6,000 voters per constituency on average. Yet despite this significant difference in scale, MPs found in discussions that they faced similar challenges and opportunities in their constituency roles.

In both the UK and Grenada, supporting constituents takes a significant amount of an MP’s time and resources. In the UK, constituent support has increased in recent years. It can be helpful for some UK members to hold MP surgeries with other support agencies present, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, to meet that increased need.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Grenada is located in the eastern Caribbean, north of Trinidad and Tobago and south of St Vincent and the Grenadines. The capital city is St. George’s and the population is over 120,000.

King Charles III is the Head of State, represented in Grenada by the Governor-General Dame Dr. Cécile La Grenade.

The official language is English with Grenadian Creole English and Grenadian Creole French is also recognised. The currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

2024 will mark fifty years since Grenada became an independent country in 1974. 1974 was when Grenada became a Member of the Commonwealth.

Grenada is known as the Spice Island for its production of nutmeg, along with other spices including mace, cinnamon, ginger and cloves.

Tourism is significant in Grenada’s economy. The island is a regular stop for Caribbean cruise ships and it receives a high number of visitors from the USA and Europe. Grenada is famous for its long beaches, primary rainforest and biodiversity.

CPA UK IN THE REGION

CPA UK enjoys a productive relationship with the Parliament of Grenada. In February 2020 CPA UK visited Grenada and Barbados as part of an Eastern Caribbean study visit on international trade, security, climate change and disaster resilience.

Parliamentarians from Grenada have engaged with CPA UK's multilateral conferences and projects such as the Westminster Seminar.

Clerks in the Parliament of Grenada are active in CPA UK's annual Caribbean Clerks Programme. This was held for the first time in-person in January 2023 in the Parliament of Barbados. Clerks and officials from 16 Caribbean legislatures participated in this programme.

CPA UK is very active in the Caribbean region more broadly. Recent programmes have included a Post-Election seminar with the Parliament of Saint Lucia in 2021 and a delegation visit to Westminster in 2022 by the Parliament of Jamaica.



Senator Hon. Salim Rahaman in Seminar discussions.

In Grenada, there is no local government system comparable to the UK's arrangement of local authorities. The central government in Grenada deals with everything from rubbish collection to road maintenance. Constituents sometimes expect an MP to have the power to intervene in many matters and sort problems out. The situation is more complex, and there is a need to increase public understanding of how the Parliament and Government work so there are realistic expectations.

The existence of agreed processes for requesting support for constituents is vital. MPs need access to the necessary knowledge and referral pathways so that when a constituent requests help, the Member knows what help is available and how to access it. Where those systems do not yet function, it can be frustrating for the constituent needing assistance and the Member who is not empowered to assist.

These needs in the constituency can be a significant responsibility for MPs to shoulder. Participants shared how they balance responsibilities in the legislatures, constituency, and their personal lives with family and caring commitments. One speaker reflected that it "almost felt like a confessional" and "brought out our common humanity."



Senator Hon. Mondy André Lewis and Hon. Kate Lewis MP.

COMMITTEES & CROSS-PARTY WORKING

The UK and Grenada use a parliamentary government system termed the “Westminster Model.” In this model, parliamentary scrutiny of the government can be highly partisan, with the opposition challenging the government. It can also be more collaborative in cross-party structures, notably in committees.

The UK Parliament has many more committees operating than the Grenada Parliament. One important reason for this is simply the size of the legislature. The UK has 650 MPs, whereas Grenada has 15 MPs. All nine MPs in Grenada’s governing party have ministerial portfolios, meaning there are no government “backbenchers.” Indeed, there is no physical backbench in the Grenada parliamentary chamber. All Members sit at desks in an oval layout, not too dissimilar to a UK House of Commons committee. Yet there was a desire to ensure the Grenada Parliament utilises the committee structures available in their Standing Orders and to consider additional committees.

UK Members shared how committees provide an opportunity in parliament to scrutinise the government and exert influence. This influence comes in part from the cross-party nature of the

committee. Committees can be very influential, and UK examples of recent achievements include the Environmental Audit Committee’s work on plastic waste and the ban on plastic drink straws.

In a committee evidence hearing exercise participants reflected on the contribution questioning sessions could have on scrutiny and accountability. “Politicians are accountable to [Members] and accountable to people via [Members].”

UK and Grenadian participants were clear-eyed about the opportunities and challenges of this type of cross-party working. One participant shared that “cross-party working is not only possible but necessary.” Cross-party work is a way for Members of the Opposition to achieve results. There are also times when, given the partisan nature of politics, working cross-party on some issues can be a real challenge.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Seminar dates fortuitously coincided with International Women’s Day 2023. The programme, therefore, included a celebration of the achievements of women and girls in Grenada and a discussion on which steps still have to be taken for gender equality and equity.



Nickie Aiken MP speaking on International Women's Day.

The CPA UK delegation and all participants participated in an International Women's Day event entitled DigitALL, Innovation and Technology for Grenada's Sustainable Development. Prime Minister Hon. Dickon Mitchell, Madam President Dr Dessima D. Williams and UK MP Nickie Aiken spoke to an audience including school children and organisations supporting the empowerment of women and girls. Young women were encouraged to "not hold yourself back" and not to be quiet in calling for change as "we change the world when we roar."

THE YOUTH PARLIAMENT & CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

The Youth Parliament of Grenada has existed for 15 years. Young people become members through registration and they debate matters of national interest. In a question-and-answer session 31 youth parliamentarians quizzed the visiting UK MPs on topics, including foreign policy challenges and their personal path to becoming an MP. Several shared issues they were working to address in Grenada, including improving youth safety and tackling youth unemployment.



The delegation with members of the Youth Parliament.

In Grenada 27% of women experience some form of physical violence in their lifetime, according to a study in 2018. The delegation learnt about steps that had been taken to end violence against women and girls. For example,



Visiting the Perseverance Waste Management Centre.

campaigners secured a property to be used as a safe refuge for up to 20 women and this was reopened the week before the delegation arrived.

Tourism, the largest foreign currency earner in Grenada, was devastated by the pandemic and significant steps have been made to aid recovery. New flights into Grenada have been secured so that the airlift capacity to Grenada is now greater than before COVID-19.

Public awareness of climate change is increasing in Grenada. A climate change expert highlighted the importance of working regionally in the Caribbean to attract outside investment and progress initiatives such as carbon offsetting.

The delegation visited a waste management facility to see the actions being taken to tackle the "plastic problem" in Grenada, and they viewed infrastructure projects on the northern shore that had been built to try and limit coastal erosion.

NEXT STEPS

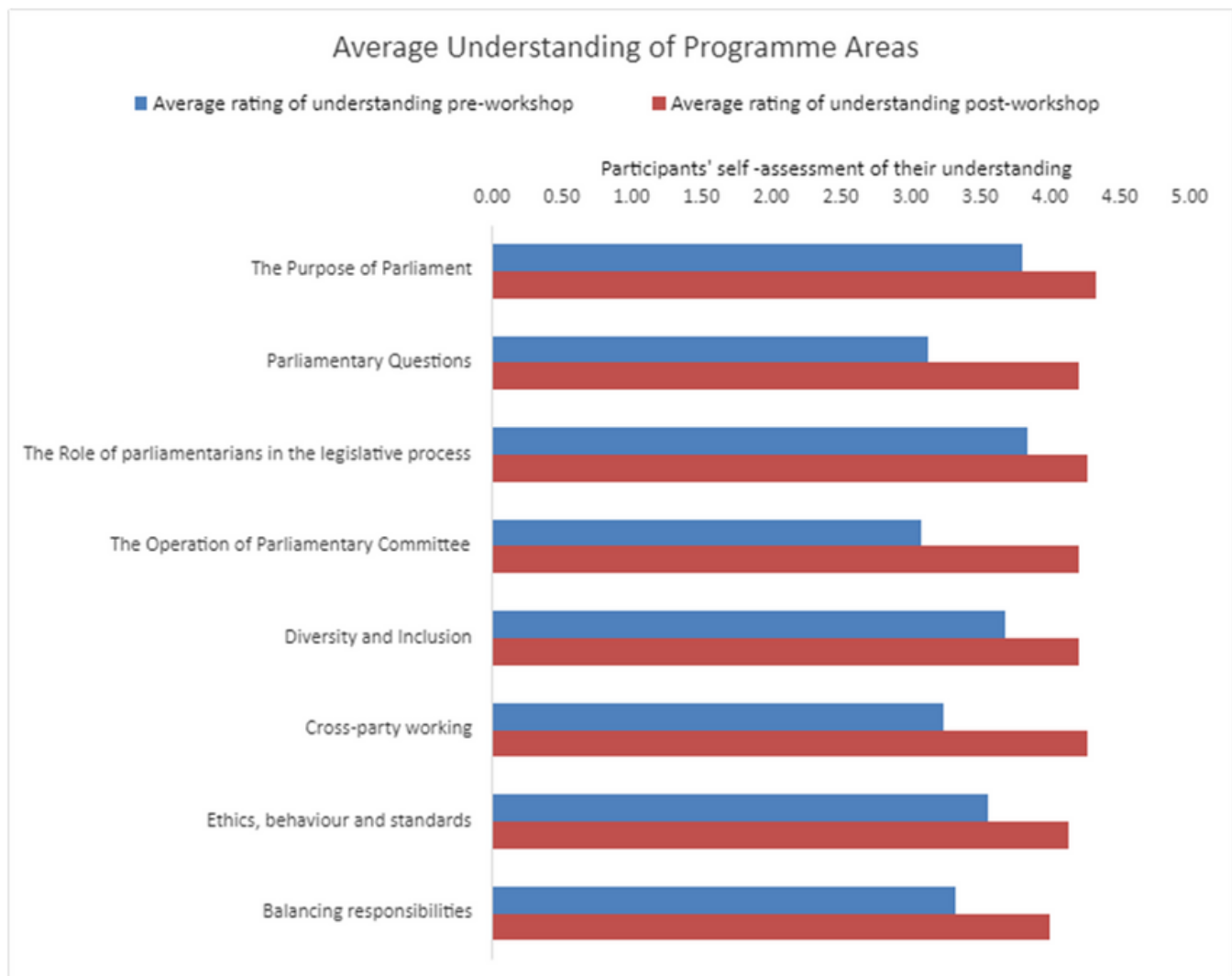
CPA UK will continue to work in partnership with the Parliament of Grenada, providing support when beneficial and facilitating ongoing engagement with their counterparts in the UK Parliament.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Participation in the Programme

14 Members of the House of Representatives participated (88% of the total membership).

8 Members of the Senate participated (62% of the total membership).



Programme

DAY 1: TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023

TIME

SESSION

10.00 - 10.30h

Opening Ceremony

Senator the Hon. Dr. Dessima D. Williams, President of the Senate
Hon. Leo Cato, Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Hon. Dickon Mitchell MP, Prime Minister of Grenada,
Kerry McCarthy MP, CPA UK Delegation Leader.

10.30 - 11.00h

Learning Objectives

Participants from the UK and Grenada will each write down personal learning objectives for the Seminar in a pre-assessment questionnaire and share them with other participants.

Facilitator:

Nickie Aiken MP, UK Parliament

11.00 - 12.15h

Session 1: The Purpose of the Parliaments of Grenada & the UK

This introductory discussion will cover the core purpose for the existence of our parliaments. Speakers in this session will discuss the purpose of upper and lower houses as well as their unique powers and responsibilities.

Speakers:

Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament,
Chris Stanton, Principal Clerk of Select Committees, UK Parliament.

12.15-12.30h

CPA Benchmarking Exercise

Mr Andrew Augustine, the Clerk of the Parliament of Grenada, will provide an overview of the CPA HQ benchmarking exercise undertaken by the Grenada Parliament and highlight the key learnings for the current Parliament of Grenada.

1230 - 1330h

LUNCH

13.45 - 14.45h

Session 2: Workshop on Parliamentary Questions

This interactive session will consider how parliamentarians can use parliamentary questions effectively to achieve their objectives. We shall look at the various types of parliamentary questions, the role of supplementary questions, and examine what makes an effective question.

Facilitators:

Senator the Hon. Roderick St. Clair, Parliament of Grenada
Dr Lisa Cameron MP, UK Parliament,
Nickie Aiken MP, UK Parliament.

15.00 - 16.00h

Session 3: The Role of Parliamentarians in the Legislative Process

This session will explore the legislative process in the UK and Grenada, including the different stages of legislation and legislative scrutiny. Members will then discuss how they can contribute to the process and their respective roles in passing effective legislation.

Speakers:

Chris Stanton, Principal Clerk of Select Committees, UK Parliament
Senator the Hon. Claudette Joseph, Parliament of Grenada
Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament

END OF DAY 1

18.00 - 20.00h

The Governor General of Grenada, Dr. Cécile La Grenade, will kindly host a reception for participants in the Post-Election Seminar at the Governor General's Residence



The Seminar participants in the Chamber of the Parliament of Grenada. Credit: Dwain Thomas.
Both the House of Representatives and the Senate use this Chamber for their sittings at different times.

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023

TIME

SESSION

10.00 - 11.00h

Session 4: An Overview of the Committee Systems in the UK and Grenada

The session will look at the roles and powers of parliamentary committees in the UK and Grenada. We will consider the impact committees can have and how their operation can complement the work in the Chamber, with an introduction to the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Speakers:

Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament,
Chris Stanton MP, Principal Clerk of Select Committees, UK Parliament.

11.15 - 12.15h

Session 5: International Women's Day

To mark International Women's Day this session will be celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women in Grenada and consider the steps that can be taken for gender equality in the parliaments of the UK and Grenada.

Speakers:

Senator the Hon. Dr. Dessima D. Williams, President of the Senate,
Nickie Aiken MP, UK Parliament,
Dr Lisa Cameron MP, UK Parliament.

1230 - 1330h

LUNCH

14.00 - 16.00h

Session 6: Workshop on Committee Inquiry Oral Evidence

In this interactive workshop participants will put into practice the techniques discussed in the previous sessions and gather vital information from witnesses for their inquiry. Video clips of committee oral evidence sessions will be used as illustrations.

Facilitators

Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament,
Chris Stanton MP, Principal Clerk of Select Committees, UK Parliament.

16.00

END OF DAY 2

DAY 3: THURSDAY 9 MARCH 2023

TIME

SESSION

09.30 - 10.00h

Arrival by participants and networking

Tea and coffee will be available.

10.00 - 11.00h

Session 8: Cross-Party Working

This session will consider when cross-party cooperation can be valuable in different areas of parliamentary work. We will examine how this is achieved and consider examples of how Members from across the political spectrum have worked effectively together on important issues.

Speakers:

Dr Lisa Cameron MP, UK Parliament,
Hon. Peter David MP, Parliament of Grenada

11.15 - 12.15h

Session 9: Ethics, Behaviour and Standards in Parliament

Parliamentarians are expected to adhere to high standards in public life. Approaches to upholding standards in parliaments will be compared and the issue of parliamentary privilege will be considered.

Speakers:

Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament,
Chris Stanton, Principal Clerk of Select Committees, UK Parliament.

1230 - 1330

LUNCH

13.45 - 14.45h

Session 10: Balancing Responsibilities

Parliamentarians will have competing priorities in Parliament. In this session, Members and Senators will split into groups, to explore in detail their experiences in managing ministerial portfolios alongside constituency work, external employment as well responsibilities that come with being a public figure.

Speakers:

Nickie Aiken MP, UK Parliament,
Dr Lisa Cameron MP, UK Parliament.

15.00 - 16.00h

Feedback and Closing Remarks

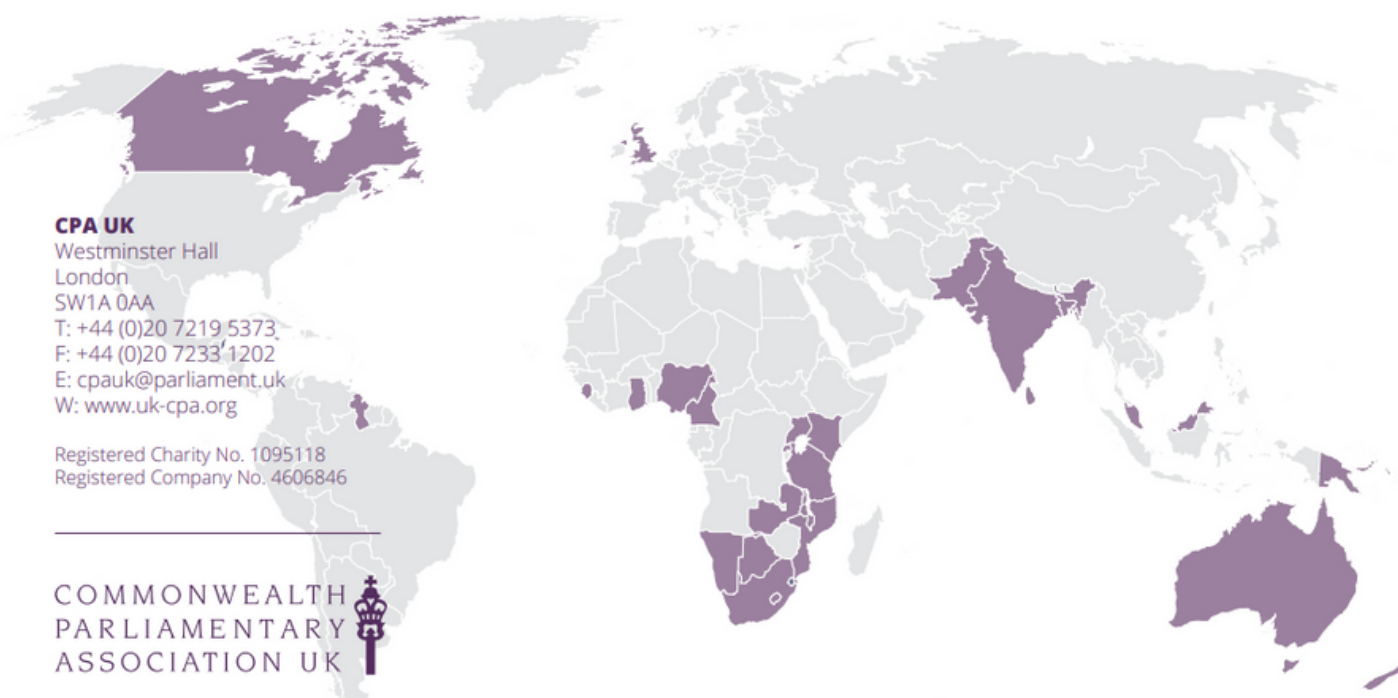
In this final session, participants will share their learnings from the Seminar and explore opportunities for further support and cooperation.

Speakers:

Kerry McCarthy MP, UK Parliament,
Senator the Hon. Dr. Dessima D. Williams, President of the Senate.

16.00

END OF POST-ELECTION SEMINAR



CPA UK

Westminster Hall
London
SW1A 0AA
T: +44 (0)20 7219 5373
F: +44 (0)20 7233 1202
E: cpauk@parliament.uk
W: www.uk-cpa.org

Registered Charity No. 1095118
Registered Company No. 4606846

COMMONWEALTH
PARLIAMANTARY
ASSOCIATION UK 

Author: Martin Vickery