

# PAX Productions Ltd

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## Proposal

### 2007 - Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery

It is proposed that PAX Productions Ltd creates and develops a programme of events to celebrate two hundred years of the abolition of slavery in 2007, in collaboration with its partners CEED (Charity) Ltd and Sierra Leone Bristol Association. Freetown, Sierra Leone was one of the major transshipment ports for slavery due to the favourable features of the harbour and the proximity of Sierra Leone to Europe. When slavery was abolished, Freetown was the place where all freed slaves could return.

The proposed coordinating committee will include The Bristol City Council, the Arts Council, local organizations, agencies, key individuals, PAX Productions Ltd, CEED (Charity) Ltd and the Sierra Leone Bristol Association and Africans in One.

Central to this programme would be the twinning of Bristol and Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. There are vitally important historical and cultural reasons why Bristol and Freetown should be twinned.

For example:-

- Most of the slaves from West Africa passed through the ports of Bristol
- Scipio Afrikanos, who was a slave boy from Sierra Leone, was a servant to the Earl of Suffolk. He died at the age of 18 and is buried in St Mary's Church, Henbury, Bristol.
- One of the Captains of the slave ships, John Newton, converted to Christianity whilst he was on the Plantain Island in Sierra Leone. He composed the song Amazing Grace.

There are five areas of protocol where Bristol and Freetown should be twinned;

- Arts and Cultural
- Business and Trade
- Education
- Health Services
- Youth and Sport

It is proposed that the time for the twinning of these two cities should be in late summer or early autumn 2007.

The celebrations could take the form of the following activities:-

- A one week festival of Arts and Culture called the Agbara Festival. Agbara is an African word for heavy, torrential rain that washes away past troubles and brings regeneration. This is an opportunity for all ethnic groups to portray their cultural backgrounds – dance, costumes, music, food – and is a demonstration of cultural diversity. It is proposed that this takes place in the Memorial Stadium in Bristol during the May/June period of 2007.

- An interprimary and secondary quiz & performing arts competition to take place before the summer break and during the Black History month of October. The anticipated benefits will be a growth in the understanding of history, healthy competition and integration amongst the students.
- An international exchange visit where young people from Bristol visit Freetown and The Gambia and young people from Freetown and The Gambia visit Bristol.
- An exchange visit from the Mayor of Freetown and the Mayor of Bristol with civic receptions.
- Touring the Slave Ports, Dungeons and Castles of Sierra Leone and Gambia and also possibly touring with key slave ships that were used to transport slaves. The Amistad is kept in USA although most ships – such as Black Prince and Scipio which sailed out of Bristol – are no longer in existence. These ships would be exhibited in Sierra Leone and The Gambia and in the five major ports Manchester, Liverpool, London, Hull and Bristol for one month each. This is to educate and create awareness and also raise revenue.
- A thanksgiving service at Bristol Cathedral and in St George's Cathedral, Sierra Leone in the September or October, coinciding with Black History Month.
- A football match between teams from Bristol Rovers and Bristol City and teams from Sierra Leone.

#### Conclusion

Elements of this programme would be repeated at regular intervals; for example, the Agbara Festival could become an annual event. This type of event should be financially viable and sustainable. Proceeds raised from the football matches will go towards future International Young People's Exchange visits, setting up Women's Projects and Youth Projects in Sierra Leone and the refurbishment of buildings associated with the slave trade in Sierra Leone. This in turn will contribute to the tourist industry and local economy of Sierra Leone.

We are asking business, organisations and individuals to submit their names to the Coordinating Committee that will be responsible for the programming and implementation of these events.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Coordinating Committee please contact me at the address below. We anticipate that our first meeting will be held in March 2006.

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