

Chairman's Report - Annual General Meeting – 2025 Review

Your Excellency, The Most Honourable Jeffrey Bostic, President of Barbados and Patron of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Barbados;

Sir Trevor Carmichael, Chairman of the Board of Trustees;

Members of the Board of Trustees;

Members of the National Award Council;

Representatives of our Sublicensed Organisations;

Specially Invited Guests; Award Leaders,

Award Alumni,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good evening.

Thank you for joining us for the Annual General Meeting of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Barbados.

It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's Report for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The past year has been one of steady progress for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Barbados. Despite the challenges faced by many voluntary organisations, we have remained focused on our mission of equipping young people with the skills, confidence, resilience, and experiences needed to succeed in life.

During 2025, the Award engaged 116 active participants, with 67 new entrants joining the programme. Across the four sections of the Award, participants collectively recorded more than 1,100 hours of activity and completed 17 Adventurous Journeys. These figures represent more than statistics. They reflect the commitment of young people across Barbados to personal growth, service, and challenge. I would be remiss if I did not highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, following which we have seen a significant drop in the number of active participants. This is one of the things which the Award programme will have to continue addressing going forward.

We also recorded 21 Award completions during the year, comprising 15 Bronze Awards and 6 Silver Awards, while a total of 25 Awards were presented. Although no Gold Awards were presented during the year, we continue to see encouraging progression among participants working towards the highest level of the Award.

One of the highlights of the year was the successful hosting of the National Gold Event under the theme *Experience Barbados*. The event brought together participants from Barbados and Bermuda for a two-week programme that combined the Gold Adventurous Journey and Residential Project. Through activities including hiking, cycling, kayaking, horseback riding, and community service, participants experienced the challenge and discovery that lie at the heart of the Award programme.

Beyond programme participation, our young people continued to distinguish themselves through leadership and service. Award participants and holders received recognition at national and regional levels, including representation at the International Award Forum in Nigeria and appointments to leadership roles within the Caribbean Community. These achievements demonstrate the wider impact of the Award and the quality of the young people it helps to develop.

The organisation also continued to strengthen its foundations. During the year, we secured the renewal of our International Award licence through 2029, implemented updated safeguarding measures, and continued work to strengthen governance and strategic planning. These steps ensure that the Award remains aligned with international standards and well positioned for future growth.

I am also pleased to report continued progress at Culloden Farm, which remains an important long-term asset for the Award. During the year, the grounds were maintained with the support of the National Conservation Commission, and basic bathroom facilities were established to improve the site's readiness for future activities. At the same time, the property has continued to face security challenges, including break-ins and attempts by unauthorised persons to access the main building. Considerable effort has been invested in improving security through lighting, physical barriers, and ongoing monitoring onsite. Progress has been made with the elimination of vagrants and drug users who once frequented the property. The grounds are now usable for activities including practice camps. I remain

confident that Culloden Farm has the potential to become a valuable resource for Award participants, volunteers, and for future generations of young people.

While there is much to celebrate, we remain mindful of the work ahead. Participation levels must continue to grow, progression to higher Award levels must be strengthened, and we must continue our efforts to build a more sustainable financial foundation for the organisation.

These priorities align closely with the International Award Foundation's strategy, *Reaching for the Sky (2023–2030)*, which challenges all National Award Operators to achieve what it describes as "critical mass"—the point at which participation, partnerships, and organisational capacity combine to create sustained positive momentum. Barbados has made encouraging progress, but there remains important work to be done if we are to realise our ambition that every eligible young person in Barbados has the opportunity to participate in the Award. These challenges are significant, but they are also manageable, and I believe the organisation has the foundation needed to address them in the years ahead.

Closing Remarks

Members, this report marks the conclusion of my tenure as Chair of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Barbados.

As many of you will recall, I had anticipated stepping down following the 2024 reporting year. However, due to the absence of a quorum at the previous Annual General Meeting, elections could not be conducted and the existing Council continued to serve to ensure continuity in the governance and operation of the Award.

I have therefore had the privilege of serving a little longer than expected, and I am grateful for the support and cooperation of my fellow Council members during this period.

Looking back, I am encouraged by the progress made during the past year. We have maintained strong programme delivery, strengthened our organisational foundations, advanced the development of Culloden Farm, and continued to create opportunities for young people to challenge themselves and grow. While there

remains much work to be done, I believe the organisation is on a solid footing and well positioned for the future.

Again, looking back, during my tenure as the Barbados Award and CASC Representative on the International Council for seven years, I would have helped shape the Award globally, influencing many of the policies and operational changes under which we now operate.

As I conclude my service as Chair, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues on the National Award Council, our Award Leaders, volunteers, partners, donors, and supporters. The achievements of the Award are the result of your dedication and commitment.

Most importantly, I thank our Participants. Their determination, service, and accomplishments are the reason we do this work, and they continue to demonstrate the transformative power of the Award.

It has been an honour to serve as Chair. I remain committed to supporting the Award in whatever capacity may be required and look forward to seeing the organisation continue to grow and fulfil its mission of providing opportunities for young people across Barbados.

I do not go away that easily however. It is normal for the vacating Chair to be invited to serve on the Board of Trustees, and I will indicate to the Trustees my willingness to continue my service accordingly. This will allow me to continue the work I have started as the Trust-appointed Project Lead on the Culloden Farm Restoration and Development Project, an important initiative for the Award Barbados.

I again thank you for the honour of serving this prestigious organization.

Thank you.

Stephen R Smith
Chair – National Award Council