

## DAVID FITTON INTERVIEW

Key:

EHdK: Dr Eve Hayes de Kalaf (Interviewer)

DF: David Fitton (Respondent)

Date/Location:

26<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Senate House, London. United Kingdom.

**EHdK 00:01 I'm here with David Fitton who was the British High Commissioner to Jamaica from 2013 until 2017. David joined the FCO in 1980. Thank you for talking to us today. Could you tell me about your career in the FCO?**

DF 00:30 I joined in the 1980s, as you said, from university and spent a year, I think, a training year, as it was in those days, working on African affairs. And then was chosen to, as many people were, to learn a hard language. In my case, Japanese. So, I spent a year at SOAS [University of London] and then I spent a year at our institute in Japan studying Japanese. And then spent time in the economic section in the embassy. So that was my first posting as second secretary. I went back to Japan two more times on postings. Most recently, the one before Jamaica and in between I was in various places such as India and Turkey. And, obviously, stints in the Foreign Office in London doing various jobs: crisis management, various geographical jobs, all sorts of things. The usual sort of variety preparing, I suppose, to become a Head of Mission which I was when I went to Jamaica where I was responsible for UK-Jamaica affairs and UK-Bahamas as well.

**EHdK 01:35 What were the priorities of the UK government at that time in 2013?**

DF 01:41 Vis-à-vis Jamaica? I think probably our main priority was to help Jamaica get to grip on its security situation. In all sorts of forms. We had quite a large High Commission I was surprised to find when I got out there. I'm trying to remember how large. My memory is not great but I think probably about 60 to 70 UK-based staff which was on a par with a huge mission like Tokyo. And that surprised me a bit. Not all of them were Foreign Office staff. They were from various departments. An obvious example is DFID [Department for International Development] who were still in existence in those days. And they were there. There were people from the Home Office doing visa work and so on. People from some of the police agencies, the NCA [National Crime Agency], for example, were there helping with their Jamaican colleagues, as I say, to help promote a better security situation in the country which had been quite bad in the years before I got there and still was in certain areas. There were states of emergency from time to time. And we helped train police officers. We helped work with civil society, funding through DIFD and so on. So, it was quite a varied activity. The thing that struck me, anyway, as being less the case than when I was

in Tokyo immediately before was our trade and investment effort which was quite large in a post like Tokyo and less so in a post like Kingston, Jamaica.

**EHdK 03:16 And how did those two contexts compare then? I know we're talking about very different...**

DF 03:20 Very, very different. I mean, I was number two in a large mission in Japan. And a lot of our work there was working with the Japanese increasingly on things like security and defence but not as much as these days. But particularly on trade and investment into the UK, trade in both directions. And a large area of work was developing on the science side. Developing science links and commercial links in life sciences and so on. There wasn't much of that in Jamaica. There were small company to company links which we tried to promote. And during the four years I was there, a number of companies came through who were interested in working with Jamaican partners. And there were some Jamaican companies who looked to us for help here in the UK. So that was quite rewarding when it when it came to fruition but it was much smaller. Much, much smaller.

**EHdK 04:20 Can you name any specific companies?**

DF 04:23 A lot of Jamaican food and drinks companies who sell their products here in the UK don't always particularly need the British government's help but, occasionally, they were looking for partners to work with. So, there was that. In the other direction, I remember there was an oil exploration company who came out and looked at the possibility of exploring for oil and gas in the seas around Jamaica. By the time I left, it hadn't produced any results. But these are very long-term, often long-term plans. And it always surprised me how much energy and finance and so on they devoted to something which might come to nothing. I can't honestly tell you how it's turned out, I just don't know. But they remained pretty confident during the time I was there,

**EHdK 05:11 What kind of projects were DFID involved in? Can you remember anything specific?**

DF 05:15 There were all sorts. But it was not the DFID I'd been used to, for example, in India when I was posted there. Or working with DFID in the UK and their activities elsewhere around the world. In Africa and so on. It was more to do with civil society, helping promote security. They funded some of the work in training. The security forces, for example, the army, the police and so on were better able to protect the Jamaican society and do it in a way which, you know, didn't impinge on people's human rights and so on, things like that. So, a lot of their funding went into that. I remember, probably one of my most frequent contacts was with the Ministry of National Security and with the Ministry of Justice working on behalf of DFID primarily.

**EHdK 06:09 And which civil society organisations did you work with in Jamaica?**

DF 06:13 Now you're asking. I can't remember the names but a number of NGOs. I can picture some of the people we worked with. But I honestly can't remember the names of them. Some of them are very well known. And if they come back to me, I'll certainly let you know.

**EHdK 06:30 So you mentioned that the High Commission was significantly larger than you would expect before you arrived in relation to the other High Commissioners that we've been speaking to as part of this project. Jamaica really is the biggest. What do you think has contributed to such an input of resources?**

DF 06:54 You're right, it's certainly not in terms of our Caribbean posts. It was the biggest, I think. The one in Bridgetown is probably not too far off. But it wasn't quite as big and as active, I think, primarily in the time I was there. It was the security support whether it was through DFID or through direct support to police and so on. It took various forms. But I think that occupied a lot of our efforts. We had, just as I arrived in 2013, we'd had experts out there conducting a review of their prison service. So, for the first time in my life, I visited and went into a prison in Jamaica. But then after that, numerous times.

**EHdK 07:35 Was that a consultant as I understand it? Was he posted to different places in the Caribbean?**

DF 07:42 He may well have been but he did a review of the prison service in Jamaica. And that, I think, formed the basis for a lot of the financial and technical support. which we provided. Again, some of it was through DFID and some of it through the Ministry of Justice.

**EHdK 07:57 So tell me about your personal experience.**

DF 08:01 The most bizarre experience...I went numerous times to the prison in downtown Kingston which is, as you can imagine, not a very pleasant place. But we'd worked with them before I arrived as High Commissioner and I carried on doing that and the most bizarre experience was going there for a cricket match. Part of our support was working with an NGO run by very famous Jamaican fast bowler, and I'm embarrassed to say, his name is Courtney...Courtney [Walsh]. I'm sorry, I can't remember his surname. Anyway, famous fast bowler and we did a lot of work with an organisation which he ran which was to help disadvantaged elements of society through cricket to, you know, become more constructive members of society. And he...part of this was to work with prisoners. So, we went in one time with him and he organised a cricket match in the prison. Slightly smaller than a full-sized cricket ground and no one was quite sure who would go looking for the ball if they hit it over the wall(!) It was a bizarre experience, but it showed the value of helping. Courtney Walsh was the name of the cricketer, sorry. It showed the benefit of using innovative methods to try and help the disadvantaged people in society. And that was a very good example. So, we did that. The head of the prison service in Jamaica who worked under the



Ministry of National Security at the time. It was a woman the first time I was there. And she organised a number of activities which came out of some of the sports, I think, that we provided. So, we provided technical support and help for prisoners to develop skills while they were in prison. I think some of that was funded by DFID as well. And so, she organised an exhibition of prisoners whether it was paintings or baking or whatever it was...some of the stuff that they learnt through being supported by outside organisations such as us. And so, I was invited along to one of their open days. Again, it was very strange. It was like a school fête but in a prison put on by prisoners who were demonstrating the skills they learnt. So little things like that.

**EHdK 10:22 While you were in prison, did you meet anybody who had lived in the UK? Or who had maybe been returned to Jamaica?**

DF 10:30 Not then. But there were other times that I did. I was going to mention, and we can come onto this if you like later, but one of the activities that the High Commissioner was involved in was returning prisoners who were in prison here who were of Jamaican nationality. That itself, as I am sure you must appreciate, over the years has become quite a sensitive issue. Not just with Jamaica but with other countries too. And we worked, again, funded through our Ministry of Justice and DFID helping an NGO called...I think one of them was called Open Arms. And there was another one we worked very closely with. And they were organisations who helped returnees to reintegrate themselves back into Jamaican life. So, I remember going to visit one of them. I'm not sure whether it was Open Arms or another one. And it was in a basically in a little rundown villa which had been converted into a sort of dormitory and run by a guy who has sadly now passed away. And some of the returnees or people he was looking after were there in the house while we were there. So, we met them. A couple of them had come from the UK, I think.

**EHdK 11:46 Talk to me more about those kinds of initiatives that you were involved in. Particularly, I'm interested in people who have maybe lived in the UK and then been incarcerated and were at some point deported. What interactions did you as High Commissioner have? Also, was anybody working at the High Commission specifically dedicated to that role?**

DF 12:19 We had a team. A smallish team, I think, about three or four people who were dedicated to that role. Not just that role but that was part of the work they did. They were Home Office staff or locally engaged Jamaican colleagues. And so, you know, their contact primarily with the NGOs who supported these people coming back.

**EHdK 12:43 What kind of support did they provide?**

DF 12:46 Well, as I say, they provided accommodation like dormitory accommodation or helped them to find contacts in the local community perhaps for jobs and so on once they came back. Because these were people who were brought back in. And we worked very

closely with the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Justice. But they were taken off a plane and, in theory, had nowhere to go. They might not have lived in Jamaica for quite some time some of them. And so, our work with these NGOs was to try and help them through those NGOs find a trusting environment when they came back. We helped one way. One specific way we helped was to produce a video at the time so there were lots of posters and leaflets and so on. But often it was easier just to produce a video. I can't remember whether it was online or whether it was a DVD. I think it might have been a DVD. So, you know, you would show a little bit of what was to come to these people before they arrived back. And then what sort of help was available when they got back to Jamaica.

**EHdK 13:50 Was there any kind of psychological or psychiatric support available?**

DF 13:57 Not that we provided. We weren't specialists in that area but through the NGOs, it might well have been available. Some of the NGOs that I visited, I mentioned one, but there were a couple around Kingston and there was one in Montego Bay I went to as well. I wouldn't call them psychiatric support, but they provided more than just practical support. They provided a sort of friendship. The people we...certainly I visited. I can think of one particular chap in Montego Bay who ran an organisation there whose name, again, I can't remember but he was committed to this. He spent his whole life there. Goodness knows what his family thought of the time he spent with them because, you know, he seemed to be totally committed, he and his staff, to helping these people.

**EHdK 14:45 And you mentioned Home Office staff that were based at the High Commission. What was their role?**

DF 14:50 Well, there were people who worked in a relatively large visa section, for example. So, issuing visas whether it be for or study or for visit visas or for work. Various forms, you know. There were often people who were doing business with the UK who needed to have visas to come here. People studying likewise.

**EHdK 15:13 Just to clarify for our listeners. Jamaicans need a visitor visa to enter the UK whereas some of their Caribbean counterparts do not. So that meant that created quite a lot of bureaucratic work for the High Commission.**

DF 15:32 As it happens with the visa service worldwide, some of that was outsourced. There's an organisation and it differs in different countries but they had a visa centre in Kingston. It wasn't that far from the High Commission but people who had to go in for interviews for those sorts of visas had to go to that place rather than come to the High Commission and the paperwork was transferred to the High Commission.

**EHdK 16:00 And the interviews that took place in the visa centres were carried out by third parties?**

DF 16:06 Yes. And the initial visa applications were.

**EHdK 16:09 And what kind of questions would they ask you?**

DF 16:12 They would, you know, they would ask for details of finances. What was the purpose of the visit and so on. I guess the background to all of this is that is in the past there were people who have given one reason for going to the UK. And it turns out their reason for going has not been that reason and they've ended up overstaying their visa validity. So, when issuing visas anywhere it's a case of trying to understand why people are going on whether they are entitled to a visa.

**EHdK 16:45 What kind of technologies were available at that time? Because I know that from about 2010 the British government began introducing online application systems. It may be even before. I just wondered when that was introduced in Jamaica?**

DF 17:05 I can't honestly remember. I'm not sure. I mean, some of them were...it was possible to do a certain amount online but if you if you had to provide fingerprints, you know, to match your passport and so on then you might you'd have to come in to do that.

**EHdK 17:20 Did you have a lot of British citizens who were based in Jamaica?**

DF 17:24 Not a huge number. We had a consular section who look after Brits overseas as they do in any embassy or consulate. And we had a number of honorary consuls. These were people who are paid a small amount of year, not a salary, but just a one-off payment a year and then only if any problem arises in a remote part of the country, they are the first point of contact for Brits, you know, people with British passports who are in trouble, might have lost their passport, for example. So, we have that plus a permanent consular team, a permanent consular team based in the High Commission in Kingston who would help people who have problems whatever it might be. If they're in trouble with the law or they might have lost their passport. As I say, passports weren't issued by the High Commission, they were issued by the Passport Office.

**EHdK 18:21 The Passport Office in the UK?**

DF 18:25 The Passport Office in the UK. So, during the time I was there, I think, initially when I was there and this was certainly the case before I was in Jamaica, people would apply for their passport via the embassy or High Commission. It would be sent off and in some cases it might even be issued in that country. But during the time I was there, it was all moved to back to the UK.

**EHdK 18:43 So the passport processing service...the passport was printed in the UK and then physically posted back?**

DF 18:52 Either back to the High Commission or embassy in the country concerned or to the individual, in some cases.

**EHdK 18:59 Did that cause any issues?**

DF 19:01 Yeah. People weren't used to it, and they were often used to, you know, in the old days let's say when they would come into an embassy, apply for a new passport, hand over their paperwork, have an interview and then maybe a few days later or a few weeks later would be given a passport. It sometimes would take quite a while because of the need to post the thing back to the UK. Maybe in a country like Jamaica, probably about a couple of months at least I think.

**EHdK 19:30 I'm just imagining a British tourist, for example, who...**

DF 19:33 Well, in that case they're emergency travel documents and the consular section can issue those.

**EHdK 19:41 What was your relationship like with other West Indian diplomats? Did you meet regularly with other diplomats stationed in Kingston? What kind of meetings did you have? What kind of discussions?**

DF 19:59 There were frequent opportunities. There were social and work-related opportunities. But to be honest, there weren't that many other Caribbean country diplomats in Jamaica. I'm desperately trying to think who was there now. There was a Trinidad High Commission. I don't think there was a Barbados one in Jamaica. They probably, you know, we're close enough not to need to do that. There was one other. There was an honorary diplomat from one of the other Caribbean countries there. But the number of missions was quite small anyway. There were very few European missions there. About four or five from the EU. The Americans, the Canadians, the Mexicans, some South American ones, Russian, Chinese, Japanese. That was more or less it. So, you know, the social gatherings or the work gatherings which involved overseas diplomats, whether it was briefing meetings and so on, most would go. So those would be the opportunities to catch up with other diplomats if you weren't doing it one to one.

**EHdK 21:12 When you had your discussions on securitisation and looking at the region in particular. Who was sat at the table? Did you have a lot of engagement with US diplomats or Canadian diplomats?**

DF 21:25 It varied. We did a lot bilaterally with the Jamaicans but we worked also very closely with the US and Canada in particular, as you mentioned, and we did some tri-part and bi-part projects with some of those countries. We also worked with the EU Commission

delegation who were based there on some security and civil society type projects. But it was primarily with the Americans and the Canadians, I think, or ourselves alone.

**EHdK 21:57 I'm also interested in the reparations debate because I know that began to kind of pick up momentum around the time that you were in Jamaica. Were you aware of any either protests...or I was reading a Verene Shepherd article recently and your name was mentioned as well which is quite interesting. I just wondered if that was something that was a priority or on the radar?**

DF 22:22 It was very much on the radar although I wouldn't say it was, you know, the top issue all the time. But occasionally I was invited to events, particularly at the university, where people like Verene Shepherd and the, oh gosh, the Vice Chancellor whose name you will probably know better than me, who, you know, they would arrange....

**EHdK 22:44 Hilary Beckles.**

DF 22:25 That's right, Hilary Beckles. Or we would appear together on a TV programme with interviews and so on.

**EHdK 22:53 Oh, great. What kind of media coverage was that?**

DF 22:56 Well, it may not have been specifically about reparations. It may have been about a visit or something like that which sparked off, you know, a UK minister visiting might spark off a debate about reparations from certain quarters and occasionally I would be invited along...It wasn't always comfortable as a subject which had to be faced and had to be discussed at times. But I don't remember any particular protests, demonstrations or things like that. But certainly, at the university there were people who felt very strongly about it with every justification and wanted to air their views.

**EHdK 23:38 I know that in 2013, the CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy (CCSS) came out. What was your involvement with CARICOM?**

DF 23:50 I think that may have come out of...it followed out of a CARICOM Summit which took place just before I went out to Jamaica but which I did attend as part of my pre-posting briefing here in London. And there was one other, at least one other CARICOM meeting while I was there. I wasn't particularly involved informed of that strategy but it did...it reflected a lot of what we were already trying to do with countries like Jamaica. And to a lesser extent in those days with some of the other CARICOM countries. But I think the activity in countries like Trinidad and Tobago has probably increased since I left. And it reflected a bit of what we're doing and also influenced a bit of what we were doing if you can look at it that way.



**EHdK 24:33 How prominent, how important were the issues of migration, citizenship and also forcible return in the diplomatic relations that that you were having?**

DF 24:46 They were fairly prominent. As I said earlier, a lot of my contacts were with the National Security Ministry and the Ministry of Justice. And those were issues that were, you know, uppermost in their minds as well.

**EHdK 25:02 What were their specific concerns?**

DF 25:04 Well, they were concerned...to give an example I mentioned earlier...about the state of their prisons and how they could be better run and so on.

**EHdK 25:14 Was there a feeling that Jamaica was having to deal with...basically a lot of pressure due to prison population size?**

DF 25:24 Yeah, the main prison in Kingston was probably, if I'm honest, not really fit for purpose. It was an old prison from the 19th century originally. Parts of it had been modernised but not hugely. And we contributed some funding to help build bits of the prison but and I think one of the things we specifically contributed to was a reception centre for families across the road from the prison. But, you know, they were always interested in trying to learn from our experience and if we could help support them in any way, they were keen that we should. So, all of those sorts of issues were uppermost in the Jamaican government's mind as well as ours. We had a separate issue which we've touched on which was the government was keen here in the UK to return prisoners to countries where they came from. If they had been in prison for a certain amount of time and had committed certain offences.

**EHdK 26:26 So what kind of crimes would see a deportee basically face a long prison sentence in Jamaica?**

DF 26:34 It varied. Obviously, violent crimes. Sometimes murder and so on. Rape, that sort of thing. It really did vary. We had a British prisoner, a British national who was in prison in Jamaica who had committed murder in Jamaica. But there were Jamaicans too who, you know, had committed violent crimes here in the UK and who had served a certain amount of their time here. And then the UK Government was keen to deport them back.

**EHdK 27:04 And what about deportations, as well, so maybe not severe criminal acts but something that would be enough to get somebody deported from the UK?**

DF 27:17 I'm not aware of any of those during my time. Most of the deportations we dealt with were people coming from prison in the UK. Or there may have been some who had overstayed their visas so they were in a detention centre. I guess that meets the requirements of what you've just mentioned. But the majority of cases we dealt with were, I

think, prisoners who were being deported back to Jamaica as they were sent to other countries. Not all successfully but some of them challenged the deportation case and were successful in that challenge.

**EHdK 27:56 You were in post from 2013 until 2017. As you know, the Windrush scandal really hit the front page...became front page news in April 2018. I think that's an interesting time period in terms of the time that you're in Jamaica and your involvement, as well, with all of these different processes that we've been talking about of people acquiring their documents or people, British nationals, being deported to Jamaica. Did you pick up at all or did any of your staff bring to you any concerns regarding British nationals who either could not obtain their documentation or were having problems renewing their documents?**

DF 28:55 Yeah, the terminology is interesting. You say British nationals. In the eyes of the Home Office, they might not have been British nationals. The phrase Windrush scandal had not come across my radar at all by the time I left Jamaica. But the issue...there were a couple of cases which had arisen during my last year there which effectively were part of the Windrush problem but I hadn't realised. I don't think any of us had at that stage...[realised] to what extent they were part of the problem.

**EHdK 29:24 Why do you think that was? Why do you think that it took such a long time for the scale of the scandal to resonate?**

DF 29:31 It's a very good question. I don't honestly know the answer. But I think part of the answer was that not enough cases had come to light. And you know, a number of us working on UK-Jamaican relations - whether it was the High Commissioner or people who were my staff or people back in the UK - might not have been aware that this was a major issue. Perhaps they should have been but they weren't. It came to my attention almost accidentally. The first case I think was somebody who was in Jamaica. A person who had lived in the UK since childhood and had gone out to Jamaica...I may have got some of the story wrong so please forgive me. But my memory is that he had gone to Jamaica. He was about my age. He was in his late 50s at the time. And he'd gone to Jamaica possibly for a funeral or something like that. Anyway, for family reasons and afterwards, he'd stayed on. And when he wanted to fly back, he had his return ticket. But when he got to the airport, he didn't have a visa to enter the UK on his Jamaican passport...It would have been on a Jamaican passport. And he didn't realise he needed a visa because he had lived in the UK all his life and he assumed that he would automatically be able to get back in. And somebody in the press picked it up. And I can't remember his name and I wouldn't want to mention the name anyway. But what struck me was from this article in the press, this person had lived in the same town I lived in when I was his age. We might even have been at school together. I don't know. Anyway, I saw this case. I thought it was very strange. I asked my visa staff how this could have happened, and they came to the same conclusion based on logic that I did. He must have had a Jamaican passport but had not had a visa to return

because he didn't realise he needed one. And he was effectively stranded in Jamaica. And my colleagues in the Home Office, staff in the visa section at my suggestion, got in touch with their Home Office colleagues in the UK to see if they could work this out. And it wasn't straightforward. It should have been but it wasn't straightforward. This will sound very familiar to you now that the story has become much bigger. People in the UK wanted him to provide evidence of him having lived in the UK whether it was a driving licence, school attendance and all sorts of things which, of course, he wouldn't necessarily have taken with him to Jamaica. So, it was quite a sad case. Now, in his case I think if I remember rightly, he was fortunate in that he had family in Jamaica who he could stay with while all this was being sorted out. And eventually it was sorted out and he went back. And you're probably going to ask me how long it took, and I can't remember. It was longer than it should have taken. It was weeks, months. Not long afterwards, there was another case. Two sisters. But that didn't come up in the press. I think they asked to come into the High Commission because they had a similar case, and they couldn't get back. And I actually met them. They came into my office and sat down and had a cup of coffee. And we talked it through and, again, they had family in Jamaica. Obviously, they'd been to visit this family. But for some reason, they hadn't realised or hadn't been told that they needed to make sure that their passport was in order to get back.

**EHdK 33:06 So, again, did they travel on a Jamaican passport?**

DF 33:10 Yes, of course. If they'd had on a British passport, they wouldn't have had any problem at all.

**EHdK 33:12 When did these changes come in? Do you know when the border controls staff told people that they needed a visa?**

DF 33:19 Whenever visas were introduced then this would have always been the case. And there may well have been cases like this before I was in Jamaica. There may have been cases while I was in Jamaica. But they just didn't come to light. The people may have sorted the problem out through their own contacts, or they may have had to wait, as these people did, and sorted it out and just not come to our attention. But these two particular cases came to my attention. I think the second one of the two sisters was not long before I left Jamaica. But that's why it's remained in my memory. You know, it clearly wasn't right. Something was wrong. And one of the things that was wrong, and which the Jamaican government tried to help with, was that the Jamaican authorities in London, for example, when they were issuing passports, new passports, renewing passports, put a little slip in saying don't forget if you travel, you might need a visa to come back to this country.

**EHdK 34:14 So it sounds like that was...a good idea?**

DF 34:17 That was a good idea. But, you know, people may not have realised it was necessary.

**EHdK 34:22 But that was the Jamaican authorities taking it upon themselves to...**

DF 34:26 They were. I think...I suspect partly at our suggestion to try and help not have to face this problem again. But the basic problem was that these people, these Jamaican people who found themselves in trouble, had been living in the UK. Some of them perhaps born in the UK but some of them certainly living in the UK since they were children came across and were then part of the so-called Windrush generation. So, they were British subjects at that time but they never actually obtained a British passport.

**EHdK 34:58 Why do you think...What do you think stopped them from obtaining a British passport?**

DF 35:01 Well, it may have been that they just didn't see it was necessary. The status under which they came - or a lot of this came out later in the press in the UK - the status under which they came, they were able to work, to go to school, had access to health care, National Health Service and all the rest of it, quite rightly. And I think it's no surprise now that the situation on immigration - nothing to do with Jamaica but generally - became much tougher in the 2000s onwards.

**EHdK 35:36 Why was that? Why specifically?**

DF 35:38 Well, it was clearly the decision by the British government at the time. In the mid...I don't know when the date would be around...2008? 2010? You know better than I do. Clearly a decision was taken to be tougher on immigration. And so, people who might have gone to Jamaica, let's say, to quote one country I'm familiar with, would have gone and not had that difficulty coming back because they might have had a Jamaican passport, but they might have been able to prove that they lived in the UK.

**EHdK 36:08 There was more informality in the system...and potentially people, if they found they were challenged, for example, by somebody at passport control could quite easily prove that they lived in the UK through various connections.**

DF 36:23 And it probably was more of an issue once they got back to the UK in those days. Whereas in more recent years, and from 2000s onward, the airlines became responsible for checking people. So, you know, the airlines were fined quite heavily if they allowed people to travel who didn't have the right to travel. Mr. X, who found himself in Jamaica and wanted to board a plane suddenly found he couldn't. So, he's stranded in a country he doesn't know as well as he should. And, in the old days, he might have got at least as far as the immigration desk at Heathrow or Gatwick and then been able to get his family to provide some information for him.

**EHdK :00 How did that policy come in with the airlines?**

DF 37:03 Well, I think it was...it was seen as a way of helping to solve a problem of people travelling to the UK who didn't have the right to travel.

**EHdK 37:12 Was it just for UK airlines...or was this for...?**

DF 37:15 No, I think it applied to all airlines and not just in Jamaica, by any means, in any country.

**EHdK 37:19 Effectively then immigration control was kind of being handed out to, or extended to, airline staff. And because the airlines faced really hefty charges of, well, fines, if they if they allowed people on their planes that were then returned. That led to a situation in Kingston, for example, when people couldn't even get on the plane.**

DF 37:45 Yeah, I wouldn't say immigration was handed out to the airlines because, you know, the people applying for visas had to go through quite a detailed process. But the airlines were asked to check that they did have the correct documentation: visa, work visa, visit visa, whatever it was. So, in that sense the airlines were given the job of becoming a first barrier at the airport. But the documents were checked when people arrived at the airport in the UK.

**EHdK 38:14 Were you aware of any campaigns, for example? You mentioned, which I thought was very interesting, the fact that the Jamaican High Commission in London put a slip of paper into people's passports to let the nationals there know that they might encounter difficulties. Were you aware of any other campaigns or any NGOs or civil society organisations that got involved in informing people or communicating with people?**

DF 38:38 Not at that time but I suspect, I'm almost sure, it did begin to happen once this issue became more widespread and better known. But, as I say, there were only a couple of cases that arose that came to my attention. And I'm pretty sure there weren't other cases that came to the attention of my staff that they didn't inform me about if they were serious like this. If there was a case that came to the attention of my staff and they were able to sort it out, resolve it, then they may not have told me. But that would have been solved particularly quickly. That may have...I don't know what that might have been. There may have been some documentation but it wasn't the correct documentation. But cases like those two I mentioned were obviously very serious and on a human level as anything else we wanted to do whatever we could to try and help. And I hope I'm right in saying that in the end we were able to help. But not just us. The combined efforts of the Jamaican authorities, us and the Home Office back here. From, you say, it was 2007, I wasn't sure of the date...the hostile environment was from [2012]. From then there was certainly a more hostile environment which didn't help resolve this problem.

**EHdK 39:54 The hostile environment was introduced really in 2012 but from the mid 2000s measures began having an impact on immigration control. That's really interesting. What about...I might have already asked you this...but what about Jamaican nationals in Kingston? Whether people who were eligible, for example, for a British passport that began applying for the documents either for themselves or their children from Kingston and what kind of impact did that have on the consular services?**

DF 40:35 Yes, there were. There was a section of the consular team which specialised in dealing with this. So, these people would still have to apply for their passport for themselves or their relatives in the same way that a Brit would who was renewing his passport, let's say. But these British citizens might be dual citizens. They might have Jamaican or another nationality and want to make sure that their children had British nationality. So, they would apply and occasionally the people would apply ...the Passport Office would ask our team in the Commission to interview these people to check that what they were saying was correct. And there were cases. I can't think of any off the top of my head now but there were cases where people fraudulently applied to British passports in this way. And that was the reason that a specific officer was there to interview people,

**EHdK 41:30 Can you remember the specific examples of fraud?**

DF 41:37 I can remember one example, which I won't go into, where there was a lot of concern that it was a fraudulent case. It came to my attention...it was brought to my attention. And so, you know, it took a long time for the issuing of the passport. It followed a number of interviews. But in the end, in that particular case, it was issued. The person was able to satisfy us that it wasn't fraud, but it was serious enough to take a number of interviews, a number of concerns. Because a British passport is like any passport. It was a valuable document to some people. So, there were people who perhaps tried to take advantage but, more often than not, they were people who were renewing a passport or, as you say, were trying to get it for a younger child or something.

**EHdK 42:29 Were you contacted by any Jamaican officials? I know that you left post in 2017 which was shortly before the scandal erupted. But were you...What was the position of the Jamaican officials when you when you were? Was this ever discussed?**

DF 42:51 Those cases, I think, that I mentioned...certainly one of them. The one that appeared in the press - because it appeared in the press - it became very well known. And I remember discussing that with opposite numbers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You know, in passing and to report on progress really.

**EHdK 43:13 What do you know about the Jamaican national identity card? Because I know there have been a number of efforts to improve the National Identification System NIDS. Did you have any kind of...?**

DF 43:27 Not really, no. I think the only the only recollection I have about that is that there was a British company who made ID cards, make passports and so on and was interested in doing it. In the end, I don't think they won the contract. But that was the only knowledge I have of that.

**EHdK 43:54 So when the scandal erupted in 2018 where were you?**

DF 43:59 I was back here. I had retired from the Foreign Service in September 2017. And, you know, it rang a lot of bells because of those cases I've quoted. It did begin...when I read those very good articles in The Guardian at the time, thinking, "Gosh, this is a really serious issue which was much more serious than we were aware of at the time."

**EHdK 44:27 And as we know Amelia Gentleman really picked up on...for a number of years she was in the background tracing, basically, what was happening and collating evidence of the impact that this was having on people's lives. Did you have any discussions with former colleague?**

DF 44:46 No, I can't honestly say I did. It may have come up in passing whenever I was talking to colleagues in the Foreign Office, but I can't recall and not in any serious way.

**EHdK 44:58 We've spoken about trade and commerce and industry. We've talked about registrations and deportations. We've also talked about the reparations debate and securitisation issues as well as prisons. Were there any other business interests in the region that the UK was involved in?**

DF 45:29 Less at the time in Jamaica than in the Bahamas but there were energy companies who were helping. Obviously, as in many parts of the world, energy security was an issue less so than these days, perhaps. But it was a key issue. And it probably was in Jamaica, too. We had a very small project we helped with on solar energy. Very, very small in Jamaica. It was almost just an extended research project. But there were companies who were interested in providing temporary power generation in Bahamas, for example, there was that. And I suspect that's become more of an issue since I left.

**EHdK 46:13 Looking towards the future and the major issues that you think will and are affecting not just Jamaica but the broader Caribbean region?**

DF 46:25 Well, energy is going to be a worldwide concern. Energy security. I mean, the Caribbean has lots of lovely sunshine so solar power ought to be a potential solution to some of those problems. Wind power too perhaps. Sorry, that's just focusing on energy. But

I think when the vote on Brexit happened there are a lot of people - politicians, particularly in this country - who talked about, you know, developing trade with the Commonwealth and trade deals with different parts of the Commonwealth. And there was, perhaps, I don't know for certain, but I suspect on the Jamaican side, I hope that that might provide an opportunity for Jamaican agricultural exporters, food exporters, processed food exporters. And potentially it could. There may be prospects, you know, bringing food and agricultural produce from that part of the world is more expensive than bringing it from Europe. But in the long run it might provide more opportunities. So, there may be better prospects for trade.

**EHdK 47:30 What were the conversations you were having around Brexit at that time?**

DF 47:35 It happened in 2016, the vote. I think before that probably our conversations were as they were elsewhere in the world about what might happen and what might not happen. But when we all woke up to the results of the vote in June 2016, the first thing I did was telephone the foreign minister. The Jamaican foreign minister. I hadn't didn't have any instructions from London, but I said to her, "You'll have seen this as we have. We're all waiting to see what precisely this means. But, rest assured, it doesn't...it won't make any difference to UK-Jamaica relations in any negative way. And, potentially, it could help improve relations." But I wasn't speaking to any sort of brief. I was just trying to reassure the Jamaican foreign minister that UK-Jamaica relations were at the top of my agenda. And also to enable her, if she was asked by the press, if she had spoken to the British government, to be able to say yes. And that was all really but on a personal level it was quite a shock to see that result that morning. And I think the first thing that happened was I was immediately invited onto a TV show that evening with the French ambassador. The EU ambassador had been invited but he didn't want to go. But the French ambassador agreed to go, and I went, and we had a discussion about what it means. And I don't think either of us really knew at that stage what it meant or what it would mean. But we were trying to be as reassuring as possible about...all sorts of clichés such as the UK is still part of Europe even if it's not going to be part of the EU and so on. So, it was quite a difficult time in terms of understanding what it meant and waiting to hear what the government wanted us to say about it.

**EHdK 49:34 And did Brexit resonate strongly with Jamaicans? I've been asking about the Windrush scandal, for example, and the responses that we've received so far is that most...not all but most people in the Caribbean. It wasn't on their radar. So, the Windrush scandal wasn't something that was really...it was seen as something that was happening in the UK, that was happening overseas and not really related to or that integral to what was going on in the Caribbean. What about Brexit? What was the reaction?**

DF 50:14 I think before it happened probably, as you say, it didn't really impinge on people's lives. But once the vote happened, the newspapers and the media reported events in the UK quite a lot because everyone had family and friends here. And, you know, close links



with the UK. Not all of them were positive links but they always seemed to have an interest in stories about the UK, good or bad. There may have been something on the sporting field which Jamaicans were interested in. But there may have been other stories which were done in the UK. Let's say, the UK had developed strong links with countries in Europe and was turning its back on the Caribbean, that sort of thing was a bad story for Jamaica. So, there was a lot of interest whatever direction it took. So, when Brexit happened, yes, there was a lot of interest but I don't know how deep it went. And it was probably seen as a problem that the UK had and not one for Jamaica. But there may have been people in the business sector who said to themselves, are there opportunities here? I don't think anybody, any of us, myself included at that stage, knew for certain what that would mean whether there would be real opportunities.

**EHdK 51:29 And just to put some context for our listeners, the Commonwealth Games are starting this week as well.**

DF 51:34 Was it the same week? Gosh, was it? I mean, while I was there, we had the Glasgow games and got heavily involved in preparations for that and even ran for a short distance with the baton to hand it over. And, of course, athletics in particular in Jamaica was and is very popular as we saw at the World Championships, athletic championships, this week. It's huge and, you know, for the Commonwealth Games for us as Brit hosts at that time in Glasgow, and I suspect the same is true of Birmingham this week, having Jamaica participate with a strong team was really very important and very welcome. And at that time, Jamaica had some extremely strong runners. Usain Bolt was still running. Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce who is still running now was running then and winning medals. I didn't mention sport when you were asking me about our activities, but sport was quite a big part of what we did whether it was helping, you know, Jamaican athletes and Paralympians take part in events at the Commonwealth Games and also at the 2012 Olympics and then afterwards. So, I kept those links. Sport is always a good way of having friendly links with a country, but I kept those links at the forefront of our relationship to the extent I could.

**EHdK 53:03 We're going to start wrapping up the interview now, so I wanted to bring that back to the Windrush scandal really. Did anybody come to you or speak to you about the Windrush scandal? Even your own thoughts about its impact on Britain's reputation overseas. Was there anything that you thought was basically damaging that came out of that scandal?**

DF 53:34 Yes, I did think it was damaging. Do you mean, did anyone come to me after I left?

**EHdK 53:40 Yes, either did you have direct conversations with anybody who came to you to talk about the scandal? Or what were your personal impressions about the legacy, basically, the ongoing impact of what the UK government essentially did?**

DF 53:55 Well, to answer your first question, no, nobody did come to talk to me. And I didn't go out of my way to talk to anyone. I had thoughts on it, personal thoughts which I'll come to, but I didn't particularly see...unless anyone was interested I didn't particularly want to make anything of them. On a personal level, I thought it was quite terrible what happened. As I said earlier, even the couple of cases that I had to deal with on a human level were quite shocking. But, you know, in an administrative sense, I think they were very badly done by the people concerned. Once it became clear that this was a much bigger issue by 2018, I personally felt very shocked by it.

**EHdK 54:43 What needs to change?**

DF 54:45 Well, it's very difficult for individuals to understand what the problem is whether it was a conscious effort to make life difficult for people And, you know, we talked earlier about the hostile environment on immigration. That, if you like, is a conscious effort to make life difficult for illegal immigrants. But its side effect was to make life difficult for legal immigrants. And I think that's where proper administration is required. And it clearly wasn't there. Some of it may have been mistakenly absent. It may have been accidentally absent. I'm not sure that everything that happened to these people who suffered was done deliberately. But some of it was done because of a lack of proper measures in place even something simple like the Home Office destroying people's landing cards which seems to have happened when they came after a certain time. I suppose somebody somewhere said, "Well, we have to get rid of all this old paperwork". And, you know, it may be a mistake or an accident, whatever you choose to call it, but it has terrible consequences, as we've seen, for people. So, it was the human aspect that affected me most about it.

**EHdK 56:07 Okay, thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end the interview?**

DF 56:10 No, as I say, it's a long time now since I dealt with Jamaica directly and I left Jamaica in 2017. But there are one or two elements which obviously stay very uppermost in your mind when things like that happen so it's interesting to talk through.

**EHdK 56:29 Okay. Thank you so much for your time today.**

[END OF AUDIOFILE].