



Message by HE The Governor Andrew Pearce, OBE

At his swearing-in on Friday, 2 February 2018

Honourable Madame Speaker

Honourable Premier

Honourable Ministers of Government

Honourable Deputy Governor

Honourable Acting Attorney General

Honourable Financial Secretary

Honourable Leader of the Opposition

Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you all for your kind words of welcome.

I am deeply honoured to have been sworn in as Governor of Montserrat. I will do my utmost to fulfil my responsibilities to the Government and people of Montserrat and the UK Government and to represent Her Majesty The Queen honourably and diligently. In the few short months since my appointment was confirmed, I have heard and learned much about Montserrat, its charms and its challenges. But nothing could have prepared my wife and me and our daughter for our first sight of Montserrat as we approached the island yesterday, circled the north and landed. The first line of the chorus of the territorial song, “Montserrat, by nature blessed” could not be more appropriate. My wife and I feel equally blessed to be here and to be given the opportunity to spend the next three to four years working with you and living among you. You might want to know a bit about me. I grew up in rural Norfolk in England and am very much still a country boy at heart. I love the natural world and am at my happiest

hiking on a ridge top or digging about in a garden. I studied chemistry at university and did a bit of research into new battery technologies before joining the Foreign Office. My career saw me find my lovely wife, Pornpun, whilst on my first posting to Thailand. We have been posted together with our family since to Israel, South Africa, Romania and Thailand again. Most recently I have served as Head of Security for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a fascinating and demanding job navigating the threats of the Arab Spring, and as Charge D’Affaires in Vilnius in Lithuania.

I have enjoyed all my jobs – well almost all. But I am genuinely delighted to work now on a new field in Montserrat. And most importantly, to do my part in making things better for the Montserratian community. I have been fascinated by the UK Overseas Territories since following the Falklands War as a schoolboy. The remote, exotic islands which make up so many of these territories, with their resilient and friendly communities, have always had a strong pull on my imagination. Now being appointed as Governor in Montserrat is a very special opportunity to satisfy that personal quest.

I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Elizabeth Carriere, and the work she did in a number of areas. It was clear from my conversations with her how much she loved Montserrat. She worked tirelessly, I know, to improve the island’s safety and security systems, the criminal justice system, child safeguarding, support to the Royal Montserrat Police Service and Her Majesty’s Prison and on disaster preparedness and response. I applaud her in particular for the work she started, with the Honourable Deputy Premier, on public sector reform through the Empowering Excellence Programme. Work is still at an early stage but I understand that great progress has been made and, in my role as the Head of the Public Service, I will give this work the same support and priority that she did. A modern, motivated and efficient public service is a cornerstone and driver of a thriving economy and business environment in Montserrat. The two are indivisible.

But the Governor is one person. I know that the Honourable Premier, Deputy Governor and all members of our Cabinet and Government also work unstintingly to deliver the best future for Montserrat. None of us can achieve real improvements on our own. It is through the support, work, creativity and commitment of many other people, both inside and outside the public service, that we can make a real difference. The cliché of “working in partnership” is often used and sometimes over-used. But, for me, it will be the watchword of my time as Governor. Partnership – friendship and respect – are central to so many crucial relationships: between the Governor and the Government, the public and private sectors, the Government of Montserrat and the UK Government. And to progress in so many key fields, including: Good governance, the rule of law, criminal justice, safety and security and human rights – these are also foundations of a thriving economy. Without them, visitors, investors and businesses will not come and certainly

will not stay. I will support all of these areas and work with the Government of Montserrat to ensure that Montserrat maintains its reputation as one of the safest places in the Caribbean and is a safe place to live, work and do business.

2017 saw the most devastating Atlantic hurricane season in history. So many islands and countries, including the mainland United States, were hit very hard by four major hurricanes. Our thoughts are with all those affected as they try to rebuild their countries and their lives. Montserrat was very lucky to escape the worst and I know you count your blessings that you did. As we approach the 2018 season, I will work with all the disaster preparedness and management agencies in Montserrat and in the UK to ensure that we are as well prepared as we can be. After last year there can be no room and no excuses for complacency and a lack of preparedness. The governments and peoples of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, British Virgin Islands, St Maarten, Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos Islands and others know that it only takes one storm.

In a place like Montserrat the preservation and protection of the natural environment is also vital to the economy and well being of the island. A pristine environment attracts tourists and foreign investment. They do not want to visit beaches, dive on reefs or hike on trails that are strewn with rubbish. The scourge of plastics and other non-perishable rubbish in the ghauts, on the beaches and in the sea is a growing problem. My wife and I will do what we can to help the government and people to keep this beautiful island clean.

My wife's and my priorities in the next few weeks are to get to know as much of the island and as many people as possible. It will be a steep learning curve, including (I hope) hiking the Oriole Trail in the next couple of weeks! We will begin our learning visits and meetings immediately, and hope to have visited most parts of the island within our first couple of months. We will do our best but please bear with us. It will take us time. You will see us out and about under our own steam, especially at weekends. So do please say hello. It is the people of Montserrat who matter. Please do let us know your feelings and concerns. We can't solve everything and cannot do everything, but I will always be keen to listen and learn. And above all I will always do my best to help make things better – simpler, stronger, nicer and happier – wherever possible.

Thank you again for your warm welcome and may God bless Montserrat.