

## PRESS RELEASE

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# Operation Restoration Continues At Long Bay, Beef Island

**Release Date:** 28 January, 2025



Restorative work of the public picnic area at the Long Bay, Beef Island beach is expected to be completed before the end of the first quarter of 2025.

The works are part of the Operation Restoration Project which seeks to restore the beach dune and is a collaboration between the Government of the Virgin Islands and a grant funding from Unite BVI.

Environmental Officer, in the Ministry of Environment Natural Resources and Climate Change, Ms. Angela Burnett Penn said the 150 native trees planted are from more than 12 different species that historically dominated the beach dune.

Ms. Burnett Penn added, “These native trees are good for protecting the beach dune from erosion and provide the best habitat to attract and support biodiversity, such as birds. Some of the native trees planted are iconic, well-loved species such as *Lignum Vitae*, cedars and seagrapes.”

Operation Restoration includes additional roadside parking and walk paths to the beachfront, allowing additional easy, scenic access points for beachgoers. Picnic benches will also be placed within the shade of the dune vegetation for the public’s enjoyment.

Ms. Penn said native trees will also be labelled and other educational signage added to allow the dune to serve as an outdoor living classroom to visitors, students and the wider public to learn about their function and importance.

The invasive neem tree, introduced from the Indian subcontinent and parts of Southeast Asia, was removed as it outcompetes native trees and provides limited benefits for the beach environment. Neem trees dominated the beach dune following the destruction of the natural, historic vegetation by Hurricane Irma in 2017.

As part of the restoration, the public can look forward to the planting of additional seagrape trees along the beachfront in the coming weeks. The public is also reminded that it should respect the barrier created to protect the beach dune by only parking in designated parking areas.