

PRESS RELEASE

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Accomplishments, Challenges and Remaining Objectives Identified for Communications and Works

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The Minister for Communications and Works, Honourable Kye Rymer, has highlighted renewable energy expansion and water infrastructure improvements as twin pillars for progress in 2025, underscoring the Government's commitment to sustainability, resilience, and reliable public utilities.

Speaking at the Government of the Virgin Islands' Mid-Year Retreat on Wednesday 10 September 2025, Honourable Rymer emphasised that both sectors are advancing in tandem to deliver long-term benefits for residents across the Territory. The retreat brought together Ministers and Permanent Secretaries to report on accomplishments to date, outline priorities for the remainder of the 2025 budget year, and shape strategic priorities for 2026.

100% Renewable Power for Anegada and STEP Expansion

One of the most transformative milestones this year has been achieved on Anegada, where the power grid is now running 100% on renewable energy, even as it undergoes final testing. This achievement marks a new era of energy independence and resilience, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and positioning Anegada as a model for the rest of the Virgin Islands. At the same time, the Solar Technology Energy Programme (STEP) continues to expand, with contracts signed, solar panels installed on homes, and systems connected to the national grid to recycle excess power. To date, one hundred and seventy (170) applicants have registered. Complementing this, the Government has introduced a zero percent customs duty on renewable energy products for the next five years, making solar and renewable technologies significantly more affordable and accessible to households and businesses.

Modernising Water and Wastewater Systems

Running parallel to the renewable energy transition is a comprehensive overhaul of the water and wastewater network. A partnership with Operators Without Borders

(OWB) is helping reduce non-revenue water through training, technical expertise, and operational support.

Key initiatives underway include:

- Ongoing repairs to reservoirs;
- Installation of security fencing and lighting to safeguard reservoir sites;
- Replacement of aged distribution pipes to improve water reliability;
- Development of Standard Operating Procedures for efficiency and accountability;
- A hydrology study paired with leak detection and targeted repairs.

Together, these efforts are aimed at securing the Territory's water supply, modernising wastewater systems, and ensuring sustainable resource management.

Commitment to Delivery Despite Challenges

Minister Rymer emphasised the importance of these initiatives, stating:

“Our Ministry's work matters to everyone. It touches lives daily through water, electricity, transport, roads, ports and communication. When our budget was passed on December 19th, 2024, we were given a clear task. Our 2025 mandate was not a list of vague aspirations, but a concrete funded plan to deliver to the people.”

He noted that while challenges such as project delays, high costs, and tendering difficulties have arisen, the Ministry is exploring solutions such as stronger procurement oversight, stakeholder engagement, and public-private partnerships.

Honourable Rymer was joined at the Retreat by Permanent Secretary Mrs. Elvia Smith-Maduro, Deputy Secretary Ms. Haley Trott, Assistant Secretary Ms. Sharlene Smith, and Chief of Infrastructure Mr. Duane Fraites.

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About:

The Ministry of Communications and Works continues to ensure the continued development and maintenance of public infrastructure in keeping with international standards so that public utilities are reliable and affordable in support of an enhanced community life for every resident and visitor in the Virgin Islands.

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