GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Plans Announced for National Emancipation Festival Summit

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Government Proposes National Summit on the Future of Emancipation Festival

(Funding, Promotion, Rise and Shine or J'ouvert – Major Topics to be Discussed)

The Government of the Virgin Islands, through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sustainable Development has announced plans to host a National Emancipation Festival Summit later this year. The summit will bring together stakeholders and the wider public to discuss the future of the Territory's premier cultural celebration.

Junior Minister, Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith, made the announcement during the government's mid-year review held on 10th September, involving Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and senior public officers. She explained that the summit will address critical matters, including the relocation of the Road Town Festival Village, marketing and promotion, financing, and the rescheduling of major events, such as the rise and shine tramp and the parade.

She underscored that while the Emancipation Festival continues to be successful every year, the celebrations have evolved and there is need for restructuring to ensure its sustainability and alignment with the overall tourism product of the Virgin Islands.

"It's a contentious discussion, so we decided that we are going to come public with an Emancipation Festival Summit," the Junior Minister stated. "There's a lot of negativity about our festival and the way it's going right now, so the best thing for us to do is come public, air our grievances, (and) let's decide how we're going to move forward with festival."

The Junior Minister of Tourism and Culture further announced government's intention to move the Road Town Festival Village from near the Wickham's Cay roundabout off the James Walter Francis Highway to behind the R. T. O'Neal Administration Complex by 2026. Initial discussions have taken place with the Ministry of Communications and Works and the BVI Ports Authority, owners of the land.

“We’re very ambitious but we’re hoping to get that done because we recognise the importance of having a permanent site for our festival village, and using the current festival village for other things that are necessary for the development of our Territory,” Honourable Hodge-Smith said.

Also speaking at the Mid-Year Review, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, Mr. Joseph Smith-Abbott, reinforced the Ministry’s broader cultural and tourism agenda. He announced plans to complete a National Tourism Policy, National Tourism Plan, enact legislation to support the growth and diversification of tourism as a principal pillar, and implement the Cultural Policy.

He also announced plans for Culture and Tourism Month, Fungi Fest, Literary Fest, museum restoration and workshops, and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation CTO Tourism HR Conference in the coming months.

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About:

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sustainable Development is responsible for advancing the Territory’s tourism sector, preserving and promoting cultural heritage, and implementing policies that support sustainable growth and environmental stewardship.

Photo Credit: Mr. Franklyn Skerritt, Department of Information and Public Relations.

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Additional Documents or Media

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