

# STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730

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## **STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLASTIC WASTE REDUCTION AND CONTAINER DEPOSIT-RETURN SYSTEM PUBLIC CONSULTANCY**

**Release Date:** 9 February, 2026



Fellow Virgin Islanders, residents and visitors. I am Vincent O. Wheatley, Minister for Health and Social Development.

The Virgin Islands is our home. It is who we are, it is our identity, our pride and our future.

From our beaches and reefs to our ghuts, and neighbourhoods, the natural beauty of The Virgin Islands sustains our health, our livelihoods, and our tourism economy. Yet every day, plastic waste places growing pressure on our land, our seas, and our waste management systems.

When drains and ghuts are blocked, flooding increases. When plastics enter our marine environment, our reefs, fisheries, and coastlines suffer. When waste is burned or dumped illegally, public health is put at risk.

Given our topography, we do not have unlimited space for waste, nor can we afford to ignore challenges that directly affect our environment, economy and our quality of life. Over time, inaction becomes more costly for everyone, especially for our children and the next generation of leaders.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Health and Social Development has proposed changes to effectively manage plastics and recyclable materials in the Territory. Before any final policy decisions are made, we are coming directly to you, the public, to hear your views.

This national consultation is designed to educate the community on practical, proven measures to reduce plastic waste and strengthen recycling across the Territory. It will also facilitate meaningful dialogue by allowing your recommendations to help shape the final legislation. This is an important step toward building a cleaner, healthier, and more resilient Virgin Islands.

We are seeking your feedback on two key actions. The first is the phased reduction of certain single-use plastics that are commonly littered and difficult to manage throughout the Territory. Time will also be allowed for businesses to transition and ensure exemptions for essential medical, disability, and food-safety needs. The second is the introduction of a container deposit-return system for beverage containers. This system has been proven internationally to reduce litter, increase recycling, and create new economic opportunities.

This consultation is expected to be about partnership. The voices of residents, businesses, community organisations, and young people matter. Your feedback will help shape the final regulations, determine fair transition periods and ensure the system works across all our islands.

I encourage everyone to review the consultation document, ask questions, and share your views. Let your voices be heard. Together, we can protect our environment, strengthen our resilience, and build a cleaner, healthier Virgin Islands. A Virgin Islands that future generations will be proud to call home.

To access the consultation documents and provide feedback, please contact: [Ministryofhealth@gov.vg](mailto:Ministryofhealth@gov.vg).

This consultation period will be open from 9th February to 9th March.  
We look forward to your contribution as we shape policies that will be game-changers for the Territory, as we move toward a cleaner, greener Virgin Islands.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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**For Additional Information Contact:**

Natasha Lettsome-Humphrey  
Public Health Communications Specialist  
Ministry of Health and Social Development  
Telephone: 468-2286

Email: [nlettsome@gov.vg](mailto:nlettsome@gov.vg)