GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Public Consultation on Plastic Waste Reduction and Container System

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The Government of the Virgin Islands has launched a public consultation on proposed measures to reduce plastic waste and strengthen recycling across the Territory.

The consultation, led by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, focuses on proposals of phasing reduction of selected single-use plastic items and introducing a container deposit-return system for beverage containers.

Minister for Health and Social Development Honourable Vincent Wheatley, emphasised the urgency of addressing plastic waste in a small island environment adding that the proposals are designed to balance environmental protection with economic realities..

“The Virgin Islands is our home. It is who we are, our identity, our pride, and our future. We do not have unlimited space for waste, and inaction becomes more costly for everyone, especially for future generations.”

Honourable Wheatley said, “These measures are not about inconvenience or punishment. They are about responsibility, fairness, and creating systems that work for our communities.”

The proposed measures aim to reduce litter, improve public health, protect marine ecosystems, and strengthen the Territory’s resilience to flooding and storm impacts.

Permanent Secretary Ms. Tasha Bertie, described the consultation as an important step in developing practical and sustainable environmental policy.

Ms. Bertie said, “As a ministry, we are committed to developing solutions that are environmentally responsible, financially sustainable, and workable for residents and businesses alike. This consultation allows us to test proposals, identify challenges early, and ensure that any eventual policy and legislation is supported by strong systems and clear guidance.”

Ms. Bertie explained that the consultation will also examine operational matters such as collection logistics, costs, public convenience, and the role of private-sector partners, adding Public input at this stage is critical to designing a system

that is accessible, efficient, and fair.

Under the proposed container deposit-return system, consumers would receive a refund when empty beverage containers are returned to designated depots or participating retailers. The system is designed to encourage recycling, reduce litter and ultimately strengthen the Territory’s waste management system.

The phased reduction of selected single-use plastics will include fair transition periods for businesses, exemptions for essential medical, disability, and food-safety uses, and continued engagement with stakeholders.

The consultation is open to residents, businesses, non-profit organisations and community groups. Feedback received will directly influence final legislation, implementation timelines, and public education programmes.

The public is encouraged to review the consultation document and submit feedback by contacting the Ministry of Health and Social Development at **468-2274** or via email at **ministryofhealth@gov.vg**. The consultation period closes on **6 March 2026**.

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