GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Biosecurity Policy Consultations Meeting Take place

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The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change held consultations on a draft Biosecurity Policy from 23 to 27 March 2026 with key stakeholders across the Territory. The Policy addresses biosecurity risks posed by increased travel and trade, expanding maritime activity, and climate change. It sets out the strategic framework for a modern, risk-based and unified biosecurity system for the Virgin Islands.

The Policy will also guide the drafting of a standalone Biosecurity Bill to be presented before the House of Assembly later this year.

Speaking at the launch event, Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Honourable Julian Fraser RA, expressed his anticipation for this Policy to be debated in the House of Assembly and for it to come into force.

He stated, "Biological threats do not respect borders. Invasive species, agricultural pests, plant and animal diseases, and marine contaminants can and do enter through ordinary trade and travel. Some of these threats are already present in the Territory. Others are on our doorstep. As climate change continues to shift species distributions and increase ecological pressure, it is important to stay ahead of these risks, as far as is possible."

Mr. Lyndon John, Caribbean UK Overseas Territories Officer for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), also made remarks at the opening event. Mr. John emphasised the importance of effective border management in safeguarding food systems and biodiversity, noting that strong biosecurity measures are essential to protect livestock, crops, fisheries, and native species from invasive threats.

Government Departments and Statutory Bodies represented at the launch included HM Customs, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Environmental Health,

and the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, all of whom participated in further consultations during the week.

The Policy is being developed by consultants Tira Greene and Donna Esposito of Public Administration International (PAi) as part of the regional Darwin Plus Strategic project, "Enabling Effective Biosecurity in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories."

The project is funded by the UK Darwin Plus Initiative and managed by RSPB. It aims to build local biosecurity capacity, strengthen biosecurity legislation and improve biosecurity infrastructure across the region.

Additional Documents or Media

- biosecurity_policy_consultations_meeting_take_place.pdf