GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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First National Tourism Policy Nears Approval as Government Advances Long-Term Tourism Planning

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The Virgin Islands is on the verge of approving its first National Tourism Policy, a major milestone that will provide long-term direction for the development and sustainable growth of the Territory's tourism industry.

Premier and Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley made the announcement while delivering remarks at the opening of The Virgin Islands Tourism Summit 2026 held at Peter Island Resort on 10th June.

The Premier said the policy was developed through extensive stakeholder consultations and informed by discussions held during the inaugural Tourism Summit in 2025, as well as a series of meetings with representatives from key sectors of the tourism industry. The policy and supporting documents, were also made available on the Government's website.

"The information from the tourism summit was extremely useful in developing the tourism policy…the feedback along with stakeholder consultations. We had quite a number of industry meetings, theme-specific meetings, whether cruise, overnight, entertainment. And all of that information was collated in our tourism policy, which was heavily consulted on," the Premier said.

Honourable Wheatley added that the policy is now ready for approval. "That tourism policy, as I said in my State of the Territory Address, is actually ready to be passed," he stated.

The Premier explained that the policy addresses several important issues facing the tourism sector, including carrying capacity, sustainable development, visitor management and ensuring that growth benefits the people of The Virgin Islands. He also announced that Government has already selected a firm to develop the National Tourism Development Strategy, which will guide implementation of the policy.

"We also have selected a tenderer for the tourism strategy. So, I think it's important for us to continue these conversations. That strategy is shaped by where we want to take this initiative so that we don't just allow things to happen by chance or erratically or without direction, but we actually direct the tourism

industry,” the Tourism Minister said.

The National Tourism Policy and National Tourism Development Strategy will serve complementary purposes. The policy establishes the long-term vision and direction for tourism development, while the strategy will provide the roadmap for achieving that vision through specific actions, timelines and priorities.

The Premier said the Government is also pursuing greater centralisation and coordination of tourism planning and development functions to ensure a more strategic and unified approach to managing the industry.

President of the BVI Yachting, Hotel and Tourism Association, Mrs. Sharon Flax-Brutus, underscored the importance of moving from discussion to implementation. She said: “Summits do not transform destinations. Informed policies do. Strategies do. Investment does.”

Chair of the BVI Tourist Board, Mrs. Delma Maduro, welcomed the progress being made and noted that the policy and accompanying strategy will strengthen the framework guiding the sector. “These combined with the upcoming tourism policy and the anticipated national tourism development strategy will provide a much stronger framework to guide future growth and development,” Mrs. Maduro said.

The Virgin Islands Tourism Summit 2026 was held under the theme, “Shaping the Future of Tourism in The Virgin Islands: Partnership, Investment & Direction” and brought together tourism stakeholders, government officials and industry partners to discuss the future of the Territory’s tourism sector.

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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.

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