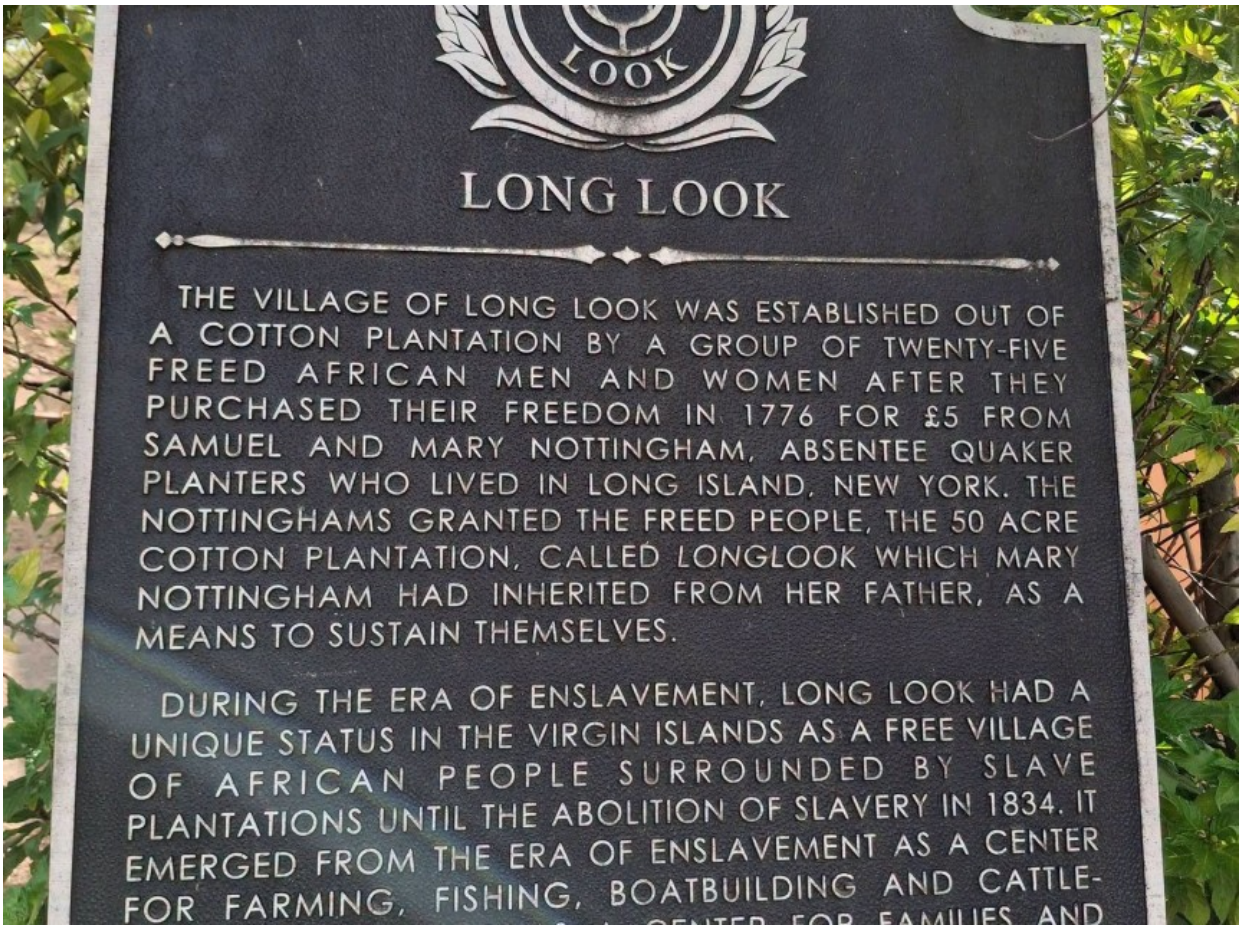
GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Premier Announces Plans to Make Long Look Epicentre of Heritage Tourism in The Virgin Islands

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Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, has announced Government's intention to establish Long Look as the epicentre of heritage tourism in The Virgin Islands, describing the community as a living testament to freedom, resilience and self-determination.

The announcement was made during his keynote address at the Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of Freedom at Nottingham Estate, Long Look, held on Sunday, 28 June, at the Stickit in Long Look.

The Premier said the story of the Long Look Free People would no longer be a little-known chapter of Virgin Islands history, but would be preserved, celebrated and integrated into the Territory's national identity and tourism product.

"Long Look will become an epicentre of heritage tourism in The Virgin Islands," the Premier declared. "Not as a museum village frozen in the past, but as a living community walking boldly into the future. A Long Look that is socially vibrant. Economically vibrant. Culturally confident. Historically grounded. Spiritually awake. And united."

Honourable Wheatley said heritage tourism presents an opportunity not only to preserve history, but also to generate education, entrepreneurship, community pride, and economic opportunity for the people of Long Look.

He said the story of the Long Look Free People would be taught in schools, preserved in archives, honoured through monuments and carried forward by historians, artists, churches, culture bearers, families and young people.

Addressing residents, descendants and visitors gathered for the historic observance, the Premier described the commemoration as more than a reflection on the past. "Today is not only a commemoration. It is a divine appointment. Today is not only an anniversary. It is a summons. Today is not only about what happened 250 years ago. It is about what must happen now," he said.

The Premier reflected on the extraordinary achievement of the 25 Africans who secured their freedom through self-manumission in 1776, describing their actions as a powerful demonstration of faith, courage and collective responsibility. He

noted that while others were declaring liberty in words, the Long Look Free People demonstrated liberty through action by building homes, cultivating the land, establishing businesses, raising families and creating a thriving free community.

Honourable Wheatley, who is also the Elected Representative for District 7 where Long Look is located, also drew parallels between the courage of the Long Look Free People and The Virgin Islands' ongoing constitutional journey, noting that both are rooted in the universal aspiration for freedom, dignity and self-governance.

He said the Territory's pursuit of greater autonomy should be approached with wisdom, unity and responsibility, adding that the constitutional process represents not only a legal exercise but also the continued maturation of the Virgin Islands as a self-governing people.

Premier Wheatley encouraged Virgin Islanders, members of the diaspora and visitors to participate in the week's commemorative activities, such as the Heritage Parade and the Love Fest Concert on Tuesday 30 June which has been declared a public holiday, and the lecture panel discussion on 2 July at the Eileene L. Parsons Auditorium, H Lavity Stoutt Community College in Paraquita Bay. The other event, a grand gala, is by invitation only.

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About:

The Government of The Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier's Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of The Virgin Islands.

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Additional Documents or Media

- premier_long_look_heritage_tourism.pdf