GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE FIFTH SITTING OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTH HOA OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS WEDNESDAY, 21ST OCTOBER, 2026 THE LONG LOOK SOCIAL HOME COMPLEX, EAST END

Release Date: 27 October, 2026

Madam Speaker, I rise to update this Honourable House, and through it the public, on the Long Look Social Home Complex currently under construction in East End.

Madam Speaker, this facility sits on ground with deep meaning for the Long Look community. It was in 1776 that Samuel Nottingham freed twenty-five enslaved persons and granted them fifty acres of this same land, to be cultivated for the common good one of the earliest acts of its kind anywhere in this hemisphere. For generations afterward, that same ground hosted the Long Look Alms House, where this Territory cared for its poor and its indigent, until it was lost to Hurricane Irma in 2017. What is being built today is a restoration of that tradition of care, updated, modernised, and brought into the twenty-first century.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak plainly to the concerns that have been raised in the community, because Government has a duty to be honest when its own communication has fallen short. The Ministry acknowledges that engagement with

the Long Look and East End community ahead of construction was not what it should have been, and that uncertainty about the facility's purpose was allowed to grow in that gap, and I take this opportunity to say so directly.

Let me therefore be clear about what this facility is. It is a small, Government-managed social home complex for vulnerable families and individuals from our community who are facing housing instability, through no fault of their own, but through economic hardship, displacement, or family breakdown. It will operate as structured, affordable accommodation, paired with support to help residents get back on their feet and move on into independent housing of their own.

Madam Speaker, I also want to be equally clear about what this facility is not, because I know this is where fear has taken root. This is not a homeless shelter. It is not a rehabilitation or detoxification facility. It is not a psychiatric or clinical care facility. Persons whose primary need is unmanaged substance dependency, active homelessness as a standalone issue, or acute mental illness requiring clinical supervision will not be accommodated here and this is written into the governing policy for this facility. Every person accommodated at this Complex will be assessed and admitted through the same rigorous, established public assistance framework that this Ministry already uses through the Social Development Department.

Madam Speaker, Government does not intend to impose this facility on the Long Look community and walk away. We are committed to keeping the community informed as the project progresses.

Madam Speaker, for the information of this House, construction commenced in early 2026 under a contract with Island Concrete Limited valued at one million, seven hundred and twenty-two thousand, three hundred and ninety-six dollars and thirty-six cents ($1,722,396.36), and completion is targeted for December 2026.

The Ministry intends to bring the governance policy for the facility before Cabinet for its consideration, and I will update this House further as that process concludes.

I want the people of Long Look and East End, and indeed the wider public, to know that this Government hears their concerns, and that this facility is being built with care, with accountability, and with the dignity of some of our most vulnerable residents in mind.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

For Additional Information Contact:

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