GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Remarks by Premier, Hon. Dr. Natalio Wheatley, on the Launch of the Road Town Partnership at FSC Conference Room

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Remarks by Premier, Hon. Dr. Natalio Wheatley, on the Launch of the Road Town Partnership

at FSC Conference Room on 04 April 2025,

Good morning!

1. I recognize the protocol already established but I would like to recognize the presence of my Government members (list), Members of the Road Town Partnership Committee, and the members of the media. I welcome you all here today for what I will call a day of new beginnings for our beloved capital, Road Town.
2. For decades, as far back as when I was in high school, we have sought to develop Road Town into a capital that reflected our aspiration as a people, and our place in the world. We have always aspired to feel the pride one feels when you hosting visitors at a high standard. Whether it is a friend, a business colleague, family from abroad or the thousands of visitors that traverse the capital, we all want to feel proud of our capital and watch our guests delight in its experience.
3. We recognize that our capital needs more love. Over the years, we have not kept up with the needs of our capital. It is the centre of government, commerce, our thriving financial service sector, tourism and where we all must visit at some point. We have recognized the need to urgently address issues such as sidewalks, walkways, green areas, pick up and drop off areas, traffic safety, cross walks, sitting areas, trash receptacles, drains, roads, parking lots, landscaping, trees and gardens, coastal water quality improvements, restrooms, seating, signage, painting, demolition and removal of condemned structures, urban renewal, historic preservation, restoration of historic buildings/sites, a vibrant Main Street and an endless list of developments to raise the standard of the experience in our capital.
4. How will we address the challenges our capital has experienced over the years?
5. The answer is through Focus and Partnership!

6. There are so many different Ministries, departments and agencies with responsibilities for Road Town that their resources, energy and actions are not always coordinated and therefore the impact is not always as strong it could be. The role of the district representative and the community also has not been properly defined. The private sector also did not have an appropriate avenue to assist. These are the challenges that must be resolved for Road Town to reach its full potential.
7. Today, I am pleased to share with you a plan to FOCUS on Road Town! It is called the Road Town Partnership, RTP for short. It uses a tried and tested model that we have used to build a globally competitive and successful financial services sector. One where we engaged the private sector for their expertise, ideas and resources and Government facilitated and brought to bear its position as the guardian of the public interest. Today, we want to apply that public sector-private sector partnership model to the development and maintenance of Road Town. But, we want to add the most important partner, and that is the community. Today, I am pleased to launch the Road Town Partnership, a public-private partnership (PPP) where Government, Business and the Community work TOGETHER for a better Road Town!
8. One of the major lessons we learnt having just completed the COI, is that our processes and institutions must be developed and strengthened. We are applying that lesson to the development of Road Town through RTP. When fully constituted, RTP will be a legal partnership where the partners will have decision making rights, responsibilities, risk and benefits. Working together, the partners will develop the vision and plan for Road Town and identify the legal structure, capability and resources to transform and maintain its infrastructure, appearance, ambiance, and user-friendliness. The work of RTP will span the commercial and civic area from the Prospect Reef roundabout to the Purcell roundabout and will touch parts of districts 3, 4, 5 and 6.
9. The legal structure for RTP will have an independent Board consisting of eleven (11) members from the government, business and the community. It will be co-chaired by a private sector representative and a Government representative. It will be charged with developing the Road Town Development Plan (RTDP) in collaboration with government, private sector and community stakeholders. The members will ensure that the business

community and residents are engaged, consulted and heard as they develop the Plan. They will also be charged with making decisions that benefit Road Town, its businesses, its residents, its visitors and the wider Territory.

10. The RTP Board will be led by my Junior Minister of Tourism and representative of the 4th district, Hon. Luce Hodge-Smith, on behalf of the Government of the Virgin Islands. Other members on the Government side include the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development under the leadership of PS Joseph Smith-Abbott; the Ministry of Communication and Works under the leadership of PS Mrs. Elvia Smith-Maduro; Chair of the RDA under the leadership of Chairman Mr. Jerry Samuels; the BVI Tourist Board under the leadership of Chair Mrs. Delma Maduro representing the tourism sector and my Chief Adviser, Mr. Kedrick Malone who will represent the Premier as the sponsor of RTP. I am taking a personal interest in this initiative in my capacities as Premier, Minister of Tourism and Minister of Finance.
11. The Private sector board members are Ms. Lorna Christopher, one of the owners of Marias by the Sea Hotel who will serve as the private sector co-chair and represent the hotel sector. Mr. Jeffrey Kirk, Managing Partner of Appleby, who will serve as Finance and Fundraising Chair and represent the financial services sector. Mrs. Nona Vanterpool-Burnelli of Vanterpool Pharmacy who will serve as a Member and represent the retail sector. The banking sector is represented. Ms. Joanna Vass (VP Bank), Mr Fabian Devonish (CIBC Bank) and Mr Amory Jarvis (First Bank) will be representing the Association at today's launch. Mr. Russell Harrigan, Director at Village Cay Hotel and Marina representing the yachting sector on behalf of the BVI Yachting, Hospitality and Hotel Association.
12. The Board will be supported by a fifteen member advisory panel consisting of the Government Ministries, Departments and agencies with responsibility for the development, maintenance and functioning of Road Town. This includes: Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change to be represented by Ms. Angela Burnet-Penn, an Environmental specialist; Public Works Department, represented by Director Mr. Jeremy Hodge; Town and Country Planning Department, represented by Chief Planner Mr. Greg Adams; RDA represented by CEO Mr. Anthony McMaster; Office of the City Manager, represented by Manager Mrs. Janice Braithwaite-Edwards; Ministry of Health

and Social Development, represented by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronald Georges; Department of Waste Management, represented by Director Mr. Marcus Solomon; Virgin Island Fire and Rescue Services, represented by Chief Fire Officer Mr. Zebelon McLean; Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, represented by Commissioner Jackie Vanterpool; BVI Ports Authority, represented by Director Mr. Akeem Pickering; National Parks Trust, represented by Director Dr. Cassandra O'Neal; BVI Chamber of Commerce, represented by Chair Mrs. Shaina Smith-Archer; Marine Association of the BVI, represented by Ms. Janet Oliver and Mr. Raul "Juogo" Sprauve, representing civil society.

13. I would like to thank each of the members of the RTP, both board and advisory members, for their willingness to serve.
14. There is much work to be done, and I want to assure the private sector members, especially, because time is money, that we recognize the value of your time and will ensure that you are fully supported so that your meeting time is productive and efficient. We have therefore established an RTP Secretariat which will be housed at the RDA. It will consist of a representative from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Communications and Works, the City Manager's Office, Town Planning, Government Information Services and RDA staff. They will be responsible for carrying out the approved directions of the Board, engaging with the Advisory stakeholders, Government departments and Ministries and preparing for Board meetings so they are effective and efficient.
15. I would also like to thank some key people who helped to get us to this day.
16. Firstly Hon. Luce Hodge-Smith whose drive, passion and vision for improving the capital has been unwavering and has kept it on the agenda of the Government. Through her drive, plans for the Pedestrian Mall from Vanterpools to the Cutlass building and improvements to the Roundabout and the sidewalks on Decastro Drive have moved from ideas to concept drawings and to the early stages of formulating plans. These will be among the first projects the Board will be tasked with moving forward.
17. I also want to thank Mr. Greg Adams who has worked closely with Honourable Luce Hodge Smith in the beginning stages of this Road Town resurgence. I acknowledge him for his hard work and dedication to keeping the vision and

plans for Road Town alive. Mr. Adams has brought forward all the ideas and work dating back to the Road Town Charette in the 1990s and has added his professional eye to creating a Master Plan for Road Town. That plan is what will inform the way forward after input from the RTP board, advisors, businesses and the public.

18. I also thank Mr. Kedrick Malone for supporting the efforts of myself and Hon. Luce Hodge Smith in helping to bring this vision alive. Mr. Malone, given his wealth of knowledge, vision, and ideas helped to structure the RDP. His vast experience in Government, including working with the Road Town Development Committee in the 1990's in the then Chief Minister's Office and his passion for organizational development and finding ways to get things done has given us a structure that is relevant to the Virgin Islands and that has set us up for success.

I want to thank them for the key roles they have played in getting the Territory on track to creating the capital of which we can all be proud.

1. So, there you have it, a new beginning for Road Town. A new FOCUS on Road Town. The focus will require all of us to work together: the private sector driving ideas, innovating and resourcing; Government facilitating and regulating and the community engaged and constructively participating.
2. In the Virgin Islands we say talk is cheap, but money buy land. It is going to cost money to make Road Town the capital the Virgin Islands deserve. As I have said, Government can't do it all and can't do it alone. That is why we are using partnerships as a building block in the development of the Virgin Islands.
3. In the spirit of shared prosperity, I am calling on our local and global business community, as well as the Virgin Islands community here and abroad, to make your contribution to the work of the RTP. Whether you live in Road Town, visit Road Town, do business in Road Town, shop in Road Town, dine in Road Town or work in Road Town, let us work TOGETHER to make Road Town a capital that makes this and future generations proud and a place that reflects who we are today and our aspirations for the future of the Virgin Islands.

Thank you!

Gallery



