



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(National Trust for the Cayman Islands Regarding EW Arterial Private Members Motion)

May 5, 2023 – The National Trust for the Cayman Islands exists to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Islands for the people of Cayman in perpetuity. In keeping with this mandate, the organization has taken a clear position that large infrastructure projects that have the potential to permanently alter the islands' environment should be done in the right way. The recent private members motion in Parliament regarding the East-West Arterial Extension is concerning for its desire to contravene the National Conservation Act (NCA). On a project of the scale of the East-West Arterial Extension it is an international best practice to do an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to better understand the implications of the project before commencing. An EIA looks not just at how the project will impact the natural world but how those impacts will affect the people living nearby. This allows those building the road to have the best information available to mitigate potential problems caused by the road to the community and the natural environment. Without a proper assessment, there is the risk of impacts from the disruption of any number of natural processes. The risks include potential catastrophic flooding of communities south of the road, the slow drying out of the mangroves to the north of the road, impacts to the freshwater lens, and other effects that cannot be foreseen without proper study. An EIA also looks at the holistic impact of development surrounding a project, meaning the more information included in the assessment the more likely it is to accurately predict potential impacts. Studies include costs, methods and materials (such as the source of aggregate needed), and other tangential issues that otherwise might be obscured from the public's knowledge prior to construction. This section of the road would directly pass through land that the National Trust holds for the people of Cayman and has the further potential to impact several of our historic and environmental sites through indirect and cumulative impacts.

Given the National Trust's mandate, we must advocate for sustainable development that looks to reduce the impact of projects on the environment and our community. For this reason, we believe that it is a mistake to begin construction on this road without completing an Environmental Impact Assessment. Rushing this process risks imparting permanent negative impacts on the people of Cayman without giving them the opportunity to weigh them against the potential benefits. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands understands the frustration of the people sitting in traffic daily and has never been categorically opposed to this road. However, it is unclear that this project will improve traffic in the short or long term. There are things that can be done to ease traffic more immediately and without major construction, including bussing for all schools (public and private), adjustments to the traffic regime at key bottlenecks, staggered start times for businesses and schools, incentives to travel via mass transit, motorbike, or carpool, and other solutions which have been proven effective in other jurisdictions.

An additional concern is that the National Conservation Council, prescribed in the National Conservation Act to direct the environmental monitoring and protection on our islands, is being effectively disbanded with no members appointed or reappointed at the end of their terms. As an organisation with an obligation to nominate a member to the Council, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands asks the Cabinet to do their duty and appoint the members of the Council. The NCA is an historic piece of legislation which brought the Cayman Islands in line with international best practices on a number of environmental issues, and the lack of an active NCC is to the detriment of the people and environment of the Cayman Islands. Environmental legislation has been key to protecting people around the world from the unintended, unforeseen, and irreversible impacts resulting from the actions of others; impacts which can lead to severe decreases in quality of life and even mortality if left unchecked. The Cayman Islands Government has a duty to follow the National Conservation Act to protect its environment and its people, present and future.

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About the National Trust for the Cayman Islands

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands is a non-governmental organization whose mandate under the National Trust Law (2010 Revision) iNCAudes the preservation of the historic, natural and maritime heritage of the Cayman Islands for present and future generations.

About the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme

The Blue Iguana Recovery Programme began in 1990 with only 30 dedicated Blue Iguanas and the primary goal to restore the wild population to 1,000 Blue Iguanas, encouraging viable population in the long-term. Having met its primary goal in 2018, the initiative formally transitioned to the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme in 2019 with a new focus of sustainably conserving the native species of Grand Cayman.

About the National Trust's Environmental Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' environmental programme was founded on the concept that the protection of native plants and animals is best achieved by protecting the natural areas in which they depend.

About the National Trust Conservation Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' conservation programme strives to protect Cayman's native species and the habitats in which they live, and iNCAudes the endemic Blue Iguana of Grand Cayman, the Sister Islands Rock Iguana and Cayman's native bat species.

About the National Trust Historic Preservation Programme

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands introduced the launching of its *Historic Preservation Fund* at its Annual General Meeting in September 2021 for the purpose of inviting increased support of its continuing efforts to encourage the preservation and protection of historic homes and buildings for present and future generations of the Cayman Islands.