



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**10 January 2025**

**National Trust for the Cayman Islands opposes changes proposed by National Conservation (Amendment) Bill 2024**

As a voting member of the National Conservation Council, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands is alarmed to learn the nature and scale of the changes proposed by the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill published on 31 December 2024 without any consultation with Council members.

The National Conservation Act is the primary legislation protecting our natural and cultural heritage. The protection of the environment of the Cayman Islands has never been more important than in this era of climate change and rapid population growth, when access to our beaches, sea and green spaces is disappearing before our eyes.

The National Trust's remit, enshrined in law, includes the provision of advice, information and assistance to government on matters that affect our natural and built heritage. The National Trust therefore considers it our duty to express our deep concern that these proposed amendments, if approved, would undermine the careful balance between economic, social and environmental interests that the National Conservation Act seeks to achieve.

By removing scientific expertise from the Council and stripping the Council of its authority to prevent actions that could damage critical habitats, the proposed amendments would have the effect of reducing the National Conservation Council to little more than an advisory board whose recommendations could be too easily ignored. Such a shift sets a dangerous precedent, enabling this and future administrations to prioritise discretionary actions over scientific expertise, thus weakening the integrity of Cayman's conservation laws.

The Government has a constitutional obligation to protect the environment. The National Conservation Act, which was passed in 2013 after many years of thoughtful consideration and consultation, currently provides some guardrails for development. The danger of removing these guardrails, as the proposed amendments intend, is in allowing the short-term interests of the few to take precedence over the long-term interests of the many: the people of the Cayman Islands.



The National Trust is not in support of the Amendments as proposed in this current Bill. Understandably, regardless of the outcome of this Bill in the upcoming Parliament sitting, we remain concerned that amendments of this nature could be brought by future administrations, without their consulting with those qualified professionals and technocrats who possess the most relevant knowledge and expertise and who have direct responsibility for the environment, and also more broadly, with the general public whose future wellbeing and prosperity would be affected by the current or similar future version of such an Amending Bill.

**ENDS**

#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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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) includes the preservation of the historic, natural and maritime heritage of the Cayman Islands for present and future generations.

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### **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 includes 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.