



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Trust Opposes National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2026

29 September 2026 – The National Trust for the Cayman Islands (the “National Trust”) opposes the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposed by the Hon. Christopher Saunders, MP for Bodden Town West, and urges Members of Parliament on both sides of the House to reject it.

The National Trust is represented on the National Conservation Council (the “NCC”), and the Trust’s views are consistent with the NCC’s statement issued on 21 September 2026.

Endangering Cayman’s endemic wildlife

This Bill seeks to redefine “alien species” so that any species present for 100 years would no longer count as alien. This contradicts the accepted scientific definition, which categorises any species introduced by people outside its natural range as alien, regardless of when said species was introduced. If the Bill were to pass, cats, rats, logwood and other introduced animals and plants would automatically fall outside the Act’s alien species provisions, thus undermining the legal basis for programmes that protect critically endangered wildlife endemic and essential to the Cayman Islands.

Introduced invasive plants and animals that have been introduced to habitats outside their natural range have caused widespread devastation globally, and governments and non-profits have spent billions of dollars trying to correct the balance. One only needs to look around the Caribbean where Burmese pythons, raccoons, mongoose and other animals are a serious threat to the environment and domestic pets. The Cayman Islands have also experienced significant impacts that introduced species can have on native wildlife and ecosystems. The passage of time does not transform an introduced species into a native one or eliminate the ecological harm it may cause.

The introduction of this proposed definition of “alien species” is likely to have the effect of permanently undermining longstanding conservation efforts that have sought to protect and recover endangered native species of our islands and goes directly against one of the key statutory mandates of the National Trust, which is to protect our native flora and fauna.



Undermining the Council's access to expertise

The current delegation framework of the National Conservation Act (the "Act") is the backbone of the efficient functioning of the NCC and its ability to effectively carry out its statutory mandate. Its responsibilities are vast and require the technical expertise of the scientists at the Department of Environment and the administrative support of its staff, given that the NCC is a lay board that meets every three weeks in working group sessions to consider broad policy issues, and once a quarter it holds general meetings open to the public where its decision making takes place.

Against this backdrop, the scope of the NCC's delegation powers has already been carefully considered by Parliament and is set out in section 3(13) of the Act. This power already limits the NCC's powers of delegation in so far as, whilst it may delegate a broad range of technical and administrative functions to the Director or to any committee or subcommittee of its members, the making of orders and the issuing of directives remain reserved to the Council.

The proposer of this legislation has not adequately justified the mischief that this new amendment seeks to address and therefore the National Trust can only conclude that such further limits on the NCC's power to delegate are unnecessary and unreasonable. The National Trust therefore considers that further limits on the NCC's power to delegate risks introducing additional delays and impairing the NCC's ability to discharge its statutory duties efficiently and effectively in the national interest.

It is also noted that this proposed change appears to be inconsistent with the spirit of this government's own Cayman Forward initiative, which seeks to remove similar roadblocks around delegation of powers in other government agencies and therefore this proposed legislation appears to be a retrograde step.

No piecemeal changes

The Government is undertaking the Cayman Forward Initiative to look at planning and environmental reform as a whole. This amendment pre-empts the conclusion of a more comprehensive process already underway.

The Trust's position is unchanged

The National Trust maintains that the National Conservation Act should be strengthened, not eroded. Cayman's native flora and fauna are an irreplaceable part of our natural heritage. Changes to the legislation designed to protect them should be evidenced based and considered through a transparent



and consultative process, particularly while broader planning and environmental reform is already underway.

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT

Frank Roulstone / Executive Director
National Trust for the Cayman Islands
Tel: 345 927 6766 Email: director@nationaltrust.org.ky

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.

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.