FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Youth Advisory Committee support for the National Trust's statement on the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2026

19 November, 2026 - Further to the National Trust for the Cayman Islands' (the "National Trust") statement of 29 September 2026, the National Trust's Youth Advisory Committee writes to express its strong support for the Trust's position opposing the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and to urge Members of Parliament on both sides of the House to reject it as it returns before the House this week. The Trust's position is unchanged, and so is ours: the National Conservation Act should be strengthened, not eroded.

Endangering Cayman's endemic wildlife.

The Bill would redefine "alien species" as a species whose natural range "for the preceding 100-year period" does not include the Islands. As the Trust has said, this contradicts the accepted scientific definition, which treats any species introduced by people outside its natural range as alien, regardless of when it was introduced. The passage of time does not transform an introduced species into a native one or eliminate the ecological harm it may cause. If the Bill passes, cats, rats, logwood and other introduced animals and plants would fall outside the Act's alien species provisions, undermining the legal basis for programmes that protect critically endangered wildlife endemic and essential to the Cayman Islands.

The harm is real and ongoing. Roaming cats have contributed to the extinction of at least 33 species worldwide. In Cayman, they directly threaten the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana, the Sister Islands Rock Iguana and our nesting seabirds, none of which evolved with predators like these. The current programmes are promising. The Trust's Blue Iguana Recovery Programme began in 1990 with just 30 Blue Iguanas and restored the wild population to 1,000 by 2018. On the Sister Islands, since feral cat control began in 2022, the Sister Islands Rock Iguana population has grown from around 1,000 to around 3,500 in 2025, higher than any estimate since surveys began in 2014. The Little Cayman community has also achieved 100% registration of pet cats, with every one microchipped, vaccinated and spayed or neutered. This Bill would put decades of such progress at risk.

Protecting the Council's access to expertise.

The Bill describes itself as "confirming the constitutional authority of Cabinet." Clause 3 would prohibit the National Conservation Council (NCC) from delegating any of its powers without "specific written consent of the Cabinet," and would allow Cabinet to revoke that consent and direct the Council to withdraw delegated powers "as it sees fit."

As the Trust has explained, the NCC is a lay board whose vast responsibilities rely on the technical expertise of the scientists at the Department of Environment. Parliament has already carefully considered the scope of the NCC's delegation powers in section 3(13) of the National Conservation Act (the "Act"), which reserves the making of orders and the issuing of directives to the Council. Further limits risk additional delays and impair the NCC's ability to discharge its statutory duties efficiently and effectively in the national interest. This could delay important conservation decisions and make routine technical functions more dependent on Cabinet approval. This is also inconsistent with the spirit of Government's own Cayman Forward initiative, which seeks to remove similar roadblocks elsewhere.

No incremental adjustments.

We agree that changes to the Act should be evidence-based and made through a transparent, consultative process, particularly while the Cayman Forward review of planning and environmental reform is under way.

We support humane, science-based solutions to the feral cat issue; but animal welfare should be addressed on its own merits, not used to change how our environment is governed.

As young Caymanians, we are particularly concerned about the long-term consequences of weakening environmental protections. Decisions made today will shape the natural heritage that our generation and those who follow will inherit. The Youth Advisory Committee stands with the National Trust in maintaining that the National Conservation Act should be strengthened, not eroded.

Respectfully,

The Youth Advisory Committee, National Trust for the Cayman Islands

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.