

SMUGGLERS COVE AND BEACH REPORT by JOHN BERRY

FEBRUARY 2025

Following are some comments on the situation at Smugglers Cove and Beach, made at the AGM of the Belmont Home Owners Association, February 22, 2025

At last years AGM, od the Belmont HOA, I reported on the deteriorating situation at Smugglers Cove and Beach

I agreed to follow up on this situation, and now report at this years meeting

I have done so by writing to District 1 member of the HOA, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, and by visiting Long Bay Beef Island and Smugglers beach almost daily

The following correspondence provides some information:

From: **Ronald Smith-Berkeley** <RSmith-Berkeley@gov.vg>
Date: Fri, 3 Jan 2025 at 13:04
Subject: Re: Smugglers Beach, Cove and lands.
To: John Berry <elderberrys@gmail.com>, karl dawson <dr.karldawson@gmail.com>
Cc: Louann Hodge <LHodge@gov.vg>, Jennifer V. Hodge <JHodge-Penn@gov.vg>, Tessa Smith <TeSmith@gov.vg>

Thank you sir for your email and attachment. MENRCC will look into this matter with a view to correcting the issues raised.

Regards,

Ronald Smith Berkeley, PhD

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

Government of the Virgin Islands

#44 Pusser's Building | Lower Estate | Road Town | Tortola, VG1110

Tel: (284) 468-2148 | Mobile: (284) 468-9898

Email: RSmith-Berkeley@gov.vg

From: John Berry <elderberrys@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, January 3, 2025 9:50 AM

To: Ronald Smith-Berkeley <RSmith-Berkeley@gov.vg>; karl dawson <dr.karldawson@gmail.com>

Subject: Smugglers Beach, Cove and lands.

You don't often get email from elderberrys@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Mr Ronald Smith Berkeley

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of the Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

Dear Mr. Smith-Berkeley,

Some months ago, I wrote to you about the situation at Smugglers Beach, Cove and lands. The document I sent to you then is attached for your reference.

I have recently written to Karl Dawson raising the same issues with him in his capacity as District 1 representative. I paste this recent correspondence below.

I am following his advice to write to you about the urgent need to deal with these issues; this is because the situation at Smugglers has deteriorated in recent weeks.

In addition to the issues already raised, the parking lots are now frequently full, with cars parked on the access roads. This limits the possibility of emergency vehicles gaining access to the beach in a timely manner.

And the number of power boats has increased; they now come inside the swimming and snorkeling areas, creating a safety hazard for those in the water.

The plan for Long Bay Beef Island appears to me to be a good model for dealing with the situation at Smugglers. In particular, keeping the vendor(s), chaises and parking lots back from the beach will allow for more people to use the actual sandy area.

Using this model would mean that planning from scratch can be avoided, and changes can be implemented rather quickly.

I trust that you will be able to deal with these issues soon.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, John Berry
Belmont, West End

From Karl Dawson

Thanks for taking the time to present your concerns. While the desired progress has not been made, they have not been ignored. We intend to use the Long Bay, Beef Island model, at Smugglers and other beaches in the BVI. We must try to ensure that we are high on the agenda. To that end, I would be grateful if you would write to the relevant Permanent Secretary advocating for urgency on the matter. This will add to my advocacy. Feel free to copy me should you choose to write.

The other issues are still on the agenda.

Mr Ronald Smith Berkeley
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of the Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change
Government of the Virgin Islands

rsmith-berkeley@gov.vg

MESSAGE TO

**Mr Ronald Smith Berkeley
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of the Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change
Government of the Virgin Islands**

FROM JOHN BERRY, DECEMBER 2024

Smuggler's Beach and Cove Issues Requiring Attention by the Government of the BVI

The situation at Smuggler's Beach and Cove has deteriorated in recent years and urgently requires some action to correct and improve the situation.

There are three issues:

1. At present about two-thirds of the length of the beach are occupied by two vendors, who sell drinks and food, and who place chaises and umbrellas on the sand.

The BVI Beach Policy clearly states that such vendors require, and need to display a trade license, a liquor license and have a food handlers' certificate: *"All permission for vending and commercial activities should be displayed or be made available for inspection by an officer of any agency responsible for implementing the policy. "*

These places also require running water, restrooms and waste/sewerage disposal. There is no evidence on display of any of these.

We request that these structures be removed in accordance with your Beach Policy

2. The policy also states that no chaises may be placed on the beach unless a customer requests them, and that they need to be removed after use:

*"No equipment or beach chairs should **remain** on the sandy area of the beach unless they are **in** use. All items not in use must be **immediately removed from the sandy area and not stored.**"*

In recent days as many as 30 chaises and 20 umbrellas are on the beach at one time, most of them not in actual use.

We request that these chaises and umbrellas be removed in accordance with your Beach Policy

3. Boats, both power and sail, have been coming into the cove with increasing frequency. They anchor on the reef and close to the beach, sometimes so close that they are among the swimmers that are already present. This endangers both

snorkelers and swimmers, and creates water and air pollution. This entry of boats is also contrary to beach policy that prohibits such activity in established swimming areas:

“Boats are not allowed in the established swim zones. Boats should not be dragged onto the sand for docking purposes or to drop passengers. “

We request that the Marine Protected area that was proposed a few years ago be established, prohibiting boats from passing any closer to the beach than a line between the two land points at the entrance to the Cove.

We further request that the Ministry of the Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change designate Smuggler’s Cove and Beach Crown Land areas as National and Marine Parks. This will enable these regulations to promote the enjoyment of the beach and cove for everyone by establishing a clean beach, safe swimming area, and protection of the reef.

Documents

1. Virgin Islands Beach Policy Use, (no date). Ministry of Natural Resources, BVI Government
2. Smugglers Cove /Belmont Pond Draft Management Strategy, (2005)
3. Smuggler’s Cove and Belmont estate Protected Area to be Classified as a National/Marine Park (no date). BVI Government.

Long Bay Beef Island

In 2024, the Premier announced that restoration of Long Bay Beef Island [LBBI] was underway.

He also commented that the plan for LBBI would serve as a model for future work at other BVI Beaches

<https://www.bvibeacon.com/600k-vending-zone-coming-to-long-bay-beef-island/>

Because of this possibility, I examined the plan for LBBI, and have visited the area many times to observe the work underway.

The plan is available at :

https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/long_bay_detailed_beach_management_plan_draft_for_publication-compressed.pdf

The main features of the plan are:

- 1 clearing of scrub growth over a large area, and replacing it with native trees
2. taking away the vending shacks now on site
3. limiting numbers of visitors to the area
4. creating a position of 'Beach Warden' who would serve as a life guard
and also have enforcement duties
5. Providing electricity and water
6. Construction of structures, placed well back from the beach front:
 - installing washrooms and showers
 - creating a 'vending zone ' with 6 units for rent
 - creating separate parking areas for jitneys, taxies and cars
 - building picnic tables and benches
 - building places to store beach chairs and umbrellas when not in use

At present:

- the clearing of the scrub and planting of native trees is mostly complete
- the washrooms and shower are complete and in operation
- some of the parking lots are complete
- the small admin building is nearly complete
- the pad for the vending zone is underway

As an individual member of Belmont HOA, I propose to continue to monitor the situation at Smugglers, and to maintain contact with Mr. Smith-Berkeley

and Dr. Dawson, who has confirmed that “We intend to use the Long Bay, Beef Island model, at Smugglers..”

I urge all members to continue to monitor the situation, and take any action you think appropriate to ameliorate the situation at Smugglers.

Thanks

John Berry