**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NATIONAL TRUST STATEMENT ON THE CRUISE BERTHING FACILITY PROPOSAL**

**October 19, 2018** The National Trust for the Cayman Islands is a non-governmental organisation whose mandate under the National Trust Law includes the preservation of the historic, natural and maritime heritage of the Cayman Islands.

In October 2015, the National Trust issued a [position statement](http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f10996_8a6c96c740824b3d85bd755dc1a8e6e2.pdf) on the proposed Cruise Berthing Facility in George Town. Three years later, this issue remains a divisive topic for many Cayman residents. Statements questioning the proposed project have been issued by numerous organisations and groups, including the Central Caribbean Marine Institute, ‘Save Cayman’ and most recently by internationally-renowned marine environmentalist Jean-Michel Cousteau. There is growing attention to this contentious major infrastructure project and the concerns highlight the ever-increasing apprehension surrounding the protection of Grand Cayman’s fragile marine and terrestrial environment.

The National Trust understands the Government’s desire to improve the cruise passenger experience and derive further revenue. The Trust was encouraged by the opportunity to learn more about the proposed project at the Public Forum held on 26th September 2018. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, the Honourable Moses Kirkconnell, gave a comprehensive overview of the history and the reasoning behind the proposed development. An eloquent and respectful presentation of the Cruise Berthing Facility as it is envisaged was provided. However, the National Trust is of the opinion that several critical questions remain unanswered and it is also felt there is a lack of research and data to support the assumptions made in the Outline Business Case. As a result, it is difficult to make an informed decision on the impact the proposed Cruise Berthing Facility would potentially have on Grand Cayman’s environment and its economy.

The National Trust supports a fully updated independent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a prerequisite before any work is approved. Failing to secure an updated independent EIA would inevitably raise questions of conflict and accuracy. This could in turn result in long term damage to our precious marine environment given the extensive dredging and other submarine works which are forecast to be required in connection with the project. The National Trust would request that Cabinet then follow recommendations made by the National Conservation Council (NCC), as it is the NCC’s responsibility to act as an independent watchdog to safeguard our environment.

Due consideration must be given, and every measure taken, to ensure that the potential for damage to both the Grand Cayman’s environment and historically-significant sites can be properly and accurately ascertained before any aspect of the project proceeds. Similarly, acceptable and effective plans for mitigation of environmental damage must also be identified and agreed upon before the project is permitted to proceed.

The Trust has an obligation to remind the Cayman Islands community that the value of our irreplaceable marine ecosystem, our areas of historic significance in George Town and our environmentally-sensitive Seven Mile Beach should never be underestimated or disregarded. The National Trust has been protecting the future of Cayman's heritage since its inception in 1987 and we will continue to do our best for the benefit of our membership and the entire Cayman Islands.

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