



Foreign, Commonwealth
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PREMIER DR NATALIO WHEATLEY
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VIRGIN ISLANDS

22 September 2025

Dear Premier Wheatley,

Thank you for travelling to London in July to discuss progress made in delivering your Government's Framework for Implementation of Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry Report, and other issues.

Commission of Inquiry (COI) Recommendations

I know that this has been a personal priority for you, and that drafting the Framework was one of your first priorities as Premier. I particularly thank all of those in your team and the public service across the Virgin Islands, as well as the Governor and his team, for their personal efforts on this, while dealing with significant day to day issues and recovery from the legacy of the major challenges of the pandemic and the 2017 hurricanes.

The objectives of your government's approach are as relevant now as they were then – to deliver justice where wrongdoing is found; to engender a new culture in Government in the handling of the public's business; and to ensure the effective functioning of the Government institutions and systems that support good governance.

You have agreed with me in our many conversations that implementing the key COI recommendations in the formal sense will alone not be good enough.

Fundamental and sustained change in the spirit and practice of governance, public and political life and administration in the Virgin Islands, will be the only true safeguard against backsliding. It equally provides the foundation for the progressive and sustainable future we all seek for the people, and our relationship, in the future.

Demonstrating sustained and tangible progress will also be crucial in rehabilitating damage done to the reputation of the Virgin Islands and addressing the concerns you have regularly expressed to me about negative public narratives.

During my visit in November last year, I made a commitment to review progress with an open mind and to consider public consultations, a final report from the Governor, reviews by my department, and a self-assessment by your government. I have read all of these in close detail.

It is clear to me that your government, working closely with the Governor and the public service, has made important and significant progress and that some of my earlier concerns have been addressed. While that progress has been slower than initially envisaged, many significant pieces of legislation have been passed, and the agreed Framework actioned.

Given the progress made, while a number of important concerns remain about the implementation of the measures delivered, the Foreign Secretary, on my advice, has concluded that an Interim Administration will however not be required and has therefore issued instruction to “lift” the draft Order in Council (through revocation) that would have provided for an Interim Administration. This will take some months practically to take effect, and my officials will discuss the details with you in due course.

As we discussed in London, ensuring continued implementation of these reforms is vital. We must work together to build on these foundations, to secure good governance that is sustainable in the long term and delivers for the people of the Virgin Islands.

To that end, I have instructed the Governor to establish a monitoring mechanism, consisting of the publication of six-monthly reviews of good governance, in line with the quarterly reviews conducted since 2022. To ensure transparency I have asked that the Governor make these public, to keep the people of the Virgin Islands informed of progress.

I am also keen to continue to hear directly the views of the people and would suggest that we agree to conduct a joint annual survey on implementation, and wider good governance to be made public.

Policing, customs and security

In our meeting, we also discussed our shared concerns over the security situation in the Territory and the findings of the comprehensive review of law enforcement agencies conducted by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

I remain deeply concerned about a number of issues identified in policing and customs, some of which I noted during my visit, and we discussed the critical importance of urgent completion of vetting processes among many other changes that are required to keep the people of the Virgin Islands safe and to combat serious and organised crime that also impacts on the United Kingdom, the region and our partners. I will remain particularly focused on these concerns and stand ready to work with you, the Governor and my colleagues in relevant UK Ministries and agencies in that endeavour.

I appreciate the positive approach you and the Governor have taken to discussions around its recommendations and the more collegial tone engendered during discussions with Members of the House of Assembly. I again emphasise that it is vitally important that law enforcement agencies are properly funded through the annual budget process, to ensure they are given the proper tools and resources to do their job.

Other issues

Finally, we also discussed a range of separate concerns related to tackling illicit finance and ensuring financial transparency. I promised you that I would consider these separately from the specific scope of the COI and its implementation, but I would again emphasise the importance of urgent progress in this area before we next meet.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address recent media coverage in the UK and the Virgin Islands concerning the constitutional relationship. There is no change to the UK's long-standing position in this regard.

This UK government will continue to engage with your government, and indeed other Overseas Territories, in the spirit of the openness and principles I set out when we took office. The Virgin Islands are a valued part of our global British family and we are committed to work with you in a mutually respectful relationship based on our respective responsibilities.

I sincerely hope that we are now entering a new chapter for the Virgin Islands and our relationship. You will understand of course we reserve the right to take any appropriate actions necessary in future, to work with you to uphold good governance, security and the rule of law, in line with our respective constitutional responsibilities and, most importantly, the mutual interests of the people of the Virgin Islands and the United Kingdom.

I am grateful to you for your continued partnership and look forward to seeing you in London for the Joint Ministerial Council in November.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Stephen Doughty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Doughty MP
Minister of State for Europe, North America and UK Overseas Territories