



MINISTRY OF
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION,
TOURISM & TRANSPORT
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

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For Immediate Release

Baird Report Counts Coral Relocation Mitigation Costs

Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands (1 October, 2015) The Ministry of Tourism has released the latest report from Baird outlining the potential costs for mitigating the environmental impact of the proposed cruise berthing facility.

The report analyses a variety of options identified in the Environmental Statement (ES) including mitigation for natural hazards, turbidity and sedimentation, air quality, marine ecology and cruise and cargo operations among others.

In the report, a coral relocation programme, which remains a contentious subject of discussion particularly for opponents of the project, was reviewed in detail and key tasks regarding the recommended approach were outlined.

In Baird's summary of the possible mitigation methods, the probability of success for each of the methods were ranked as being high, mid or low, and estimated costs were provided for each. Coral relocation was separated into three levels with associated costs starting at \$8-10M rising to a maximum of \$20-25M for level 3. According to Baird, the probability of success for all levels of coral relocation was rated as mid, which is the same rating given to turbidity barriers or silt curtains.

Commenting on the report's release, Hon. Moses Kirkconnell, Minister for Tourism explained "The original EIA conducted by Baird included a desktop study of the proposed dredging footprint whereas the Benthic Habitat study went significantly further by surveying the seabed and precisely quantifying the marine habitat in that area. Having this actual data has enabled Baird to more accurately assess the scope of the relocation programme in terms of the actual number and size of corals that can be harvested and relocated.

More importantly, it has enabled Baird to provide an opinion on how successful such an effort could be.”

The EIA included an estimate of \$9M for a coral translocation programme, but having the benefit of the Benthic study, Baird have now also been able to provide a more comprehensive breakdown of the additional ‘soft costs’ that would be incurred for planning and designing the coral relocation plan, as well as monitoring the programme during the implementation phase and for a period of 5 years post construction. These soft costs are estimated to range between \$510K and \$655K.

“It is critical that Government is provided with accurate information and scientific data so that informed decisions are made regarding the construction of the cruise piers, the Minister stated. “There is no point in commissioning experts with years of experience in their respective fields to provide us with scientifically based analyses and recommendations only to subjectively reject what they are saying. In this instance, Baird, who conducted the EIA and CSA who undertook the Benthic Habitat Survey have both assessed coral relocation as being a viable mitigation option. Baird are internationally recognized experts in coastal and marine science while CSA began doing coral reattachment during the infancy of this technique and have been instrumental in refining coral reattachment procedures as a means of accelerating habitat recovery.”

In terms of a timeline, the report recommends that the planning and design of the coral relocation programme should be considered immediately. However Chief Officer Stran Bodden confirmed that a coral relocation programme as defined in the report would be reviewed following a formal decision by Cabinet to proceed.

Although Cabinet is still to formally decide on the berthing facility, Premier Alden McLaughlin yesterday announced that government is broadly agreed on the merits of building a cruise port and an enhanced cargo port. As such, the project has been given the green light to proceed to the next stage which involves discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth office and cruise lines.

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