

the Cayman Spirit



Cayman Islands Government Information Services

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Port Initiatives Implemented: Light at the end of the Tunnel

By Lynsay Brown

The Port Authority is well on the way to implementing fully the eight key initiatives announced in December by the Leader of Government Business and Chairman of the Port Authority, the Hon. McKeeva Bush. The initiatives are designed to accelerate distribution and collection of post-Ivan cargo.

Since December, the volume of containers processed by the port exceeds 74,000 tons, almost 100% in excess of pre-Ivan figures, placing an overwhelming pressure on the port, said Port Director Paul Hurlston.

Identification of an off-site location near to the industrial park for the storage of light cargo was number one on the new initiative list. With the lease of 4.5 acres of land behind CUC, this was achieved in late December and has provided much needed space for cars and trailers.

The second measure involved hiring additional staff to expedite collection of goods and to cover additional operational hours. Two Mr. Hurlston emphasized, however, that while progress is being made, containers are still coming in faster than they can be processed by the Port or collected by the private trucking firms that distribute them. Private brokerage firms are also having difficulty collecting goods consigned to them – as they simply cannot meet the demand for increased storage space at their premises. Already this month, 5,800 containers have arrived—an almost 100% increase over pre-Ivan figures.

Complicating those situations is the increasing number of containers carrying goods for multiple consignees. Clearance of goods under those conditions can keep two people busy for up to five to eight hours.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Hurlston concluded: “By implement-

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Agriculture Day: Launching Replanting Drive

With post-Ivan reconstruction in full swing, the need to replant trees destroyed during the storm moves to a higher priority. To launch this drive, Agriculture Day on Ash Wednesday (9 February) will offer an opportunity for residents to purchase replacement plants and trees and even some vegetable seedlings for backyard grow boxes.

The theme for this year's special day is *The Spirit is Alive: Replanting and Re-growing*. Several plant nurseries and organizations such as the National Trust will be exhibiting and offering suitable plants and trees for sale.

Chief Agricultural and Veterinary Officer Dr. Alfred Benjamin said that Agriculture Day will signal the launch of a national replanting drive that he anticipates will take root in time for the rainy season, commencing in May: “Timing is an important consideration,” he said. “With rains expected then, we want to capitalize on getting help from nature.”

Dr. Benjamin added that in support of that goal he anticipated shortly assembling a government/private sector national tree-planting group to lead the drive. To that end, considerable behind-the-scenes planning has already taken place to source plants and trees, an initiative that is less simple than it might appear; he explained that local plant health protocols require visits to countries to evaluate fitness of particular plants and trees before importation is allowed.

Such precautions are critical, Dr. Benjamin emphasized, as we must continue to protect the Islands from inadvertent importation of plant pests. For example, to ensure local protection from the pink hibiscus mealy bug which infests at epidemic levels in some parts of the region, the Cayman Islands has

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Editorial

CIRO: Make Your Housing Needs Known

Several initiatives are addressing the insurance gap that has added to the vulnerability of a sizeable segment of our population. So far, excluding efforts by the churches and other NGOs, joint initiatives have aided almost 400 homeowners, to the tune of about \$4.5 million—and the figure continues to rise...

This week's *Spirit* also notes today's handing over of keys to the first occupants of temporary trailer homes. (For those wondering if a trailer home might be the right solution, you may gain some resolution by attending today's handing-over ceremony at the Ed Bush Sports Field in West Bay—see story inside). Note that Government is extending provision enabling import of trailer homes to private sector employers, who may wish to consider this option as part of their employer/employer contract where necessary.

These initiatives notwithstanding, if you are still unable to access the type of help you need, you are strongly encouraged to bring your case to the attention of the authorities as soon as possible. *Spirit* recommends that you register your concerns with either the Cayman Islands Development Bank (*see contact info below) or the National Recovery Fund (see story inside) as soon as possible. You may also wish to drop in at the National Housing and Community Development Trust (**contact info below).

Now is the time for everyone with housing needs that have not been addressed to come forward. And, if all else fails, You may wish to consider discussing your situation with your MLA.

Spirit further encourages wealthy persons with business interests in the Cayman Islands to join in the recovery effort in one of the most meaningful possible ways—lend a helping hand by donating to one of the schemes mentioned above.

And, neither those who share nor those who benefit should shy away from getting involved: "Charity never humiliated him who profited from it, nor ever bound him by the chains of gratitude, since it was not to him but to God that the gift was made" (ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY, 1900-1944, from *Flight to Arras*, ch. 23, 1942).

Contact information:

*The Cayman Islands Development Bank: Cayman Financial Centre [formerly British American Centre], 36B Dr. Roy's Drive, Telephone: 949-7511 Fax: 949-6168.

**The National Housing and Community Development Trust (permanent location), Elizabethan Square, Unit 1 (above the Thai Restaurant), Telephone: 945-7649, Fax 945-767.]

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ing these initiatives with the support of the Chairman of the Port Authority, we are beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel."

He asked for continued patience, however: While the Port is instituting radical changes, "People must understand at the same time that life has changed since the hurricane. "

The Port Director, however, ended on an upbeat note, though with a continued appeal to the public: "We are currently working towards the goal of a one-week only delay from arrival to collection — but we also need the public to help us by collecting their goods in a timely manner."

Sand Restoration Continues

By Ruth Smith

Processing of sand displaced by Hurricane Ivan continues, with approximately 21,000 cubic yards sifted island wide. Approximately 3,000 cubic yards have so far been returned to beaches.

The sifting and movement of sand is undertaken by MC restoration, with assistance from work crews drawn from areas in which the work is undertaken. The Department of the Environment (DoE) is responsible for reallocation of sand to beaches.

Workers are now concentrating on the Bodden Town district, where approximately 12,000 cubic yards, dumped in the vicinity of the district's Civic Centre, have so far been sifted.

Current efforts are concentrating on recovering, sifting and returning sand from private property to nearby beaches.

On DoE's direction, sand from the Civic Centre and private property is to be relocated to beaches near the Presbyterian manse (Manse Road), behind both gas stations, at the Coe-Wood Public Beach, and along the beach of the former Edge Restaurant.

At Colliers, in East End, some sand has been replaced in the two areas which suffered severe washout. As in Bodden Town, sand will be sifted prior to being returned to designated beaches.

Experts Advise on Remediation

By Angelique Crowther

Representatives from the National Spill Control School (NSCS) of Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas, will visit next week to advise on any further measures necessary to complete remediation of the now-contained oil spill at the landfill.

Director of NSCS Dave Jensen and Instructor and University Safety Officer Roy Coons will work with the Environmental Health (DEH) and Environment (DoE) departments during phases three and four of the remediation operation.

For phase three, the NSCS representatives will explore options for further remediation and advise on preventing future incidents. For phase four, they will share their expertise for long-term monitoring relative to potential impact on the environment and public health.

For the past ten years, the internationally recognized Spill Control School has trained individuals in several government departments in Cayman in handling hazardous materials. There are currently 30 civil servants trained by the school.

The National Spill Control School provides advice to governments worldwide. The school was referenced in the US Government's Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as a training and research resource for the US National Response Team.

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adopted a strict plant protocol governing imports from Florida. This approach is designed to ensure that the Islands remain free from this pest as long as possible.

The Department of Agriculture's regime of onsite assessment of potential live plant import sources is therefore now a matter of routine. When Cuba was identified pre-Ivan as a potential source for certain plant imports, that island was visited to arrange clearance for specific flora. For post-Ivan needs, plans are now underway for another visit, with a view to expanding the range of plants and trees sourced there.

Neighbours Help Neighbours Cope

By Angelique Crowther

The Ministry of Health hosted a ceremony last week (Tuesday, 18 January) to launch the *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* Community-based Support Programme, the first two support groups of which are scheduled to begin meeting this week.

Developed by the Ministry of Health Services, under the guidance of locally based clinical psychologist, Dr. Karen Dunbar, the programme is designed to provide emotional and social support to persons within the community who are experiencing post-Ivan difficulties.

Commenting, Dr. Kiran Kumar, who is part of the multi-agency team spearheading

the project, said: "While community members have been supporting and assisting each other in the aftermath of Ivan, this is a structured programme led by trained facilitators." Facilitators were selected from related professions, such as social work and the clergy, receiving intensive training and orientation over a full weekend in December, under the guidance of Dr. Dunbar. Since then they have been working as peer counsellors throughout Grand Cayman.

So far, 30 persons have signed up as participants in the two support groups in the *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* programme scheduled to start this week Wednesday (26 January) and Saturday (29 January), respectively. Led by the experienced and trained

facilitators, participants will receive information, learn stress management skills and share strategies for coping with difficult situations in a supportive environment in the six week programme (one session per week).

At last week's ceremony the Minister of Health, the Hon. Gilbert McLean, said: "The mental health response must include collaboration and liaison between many different agencies and organisations."

Mr. McLean acknowledged that during the early stages of the recovery process, Members of the Legislative Assembly, pastors, social workers, health care personnel (including mental health workers and counsellors), along with the Disaster Assistance Centres, had provided vital support. In turn, many of those same agencies were called upon to form the multi-agency Mental Health Strategic Committee which developed the *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* programme. The minister said that there are plans to promote the programme throughout Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac.

Since the initial training of group facilitators in December, several church and other community groups have already taken the initiative to develop their own peer support groups. The ministry has pledged support to these groups by way of materials and trained facilitators.

Anyone interested in further information on *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* may contact the Public Health Department on 244-2648.

First Trailer Home Occupants Receive Keys Today

The first trailer home occupants will receive their keys today (Friday, 28 January) in a ceremony taking place at 4 p.m. at the Ed Bush Sports Field in West Bay.

All 28 travel trailers that arrived in Grand Cayman last week have already been allocated, as have an additional 12 trailers which are slated to be here by weekend. These 40 trailers represent Phase One of the Cayman Islands Recovery Operation's (CIRO) Temporary Housing Project

If you are receiving one of the first 28 trailers, you will already have heard from the Housing Office. The 12 families who have been approved for the trailers coming in this weekend were notified on Wednesday (26 January).

If you have been advised that you have been approved for a trailer, but have not been notified that your trailer is here, it could either be because your site is not yet ready, or because the Housing Office has slated you for a larger trailer, 44 of which are scheduled to arrive in the next 6-8 weeks. The larger trailers will also all have been allocated by the end of the month

To date, the Temporary Housing Committee has processed 126 applications, and more are being handled. Trailers are allocated according to a priority system and thus far, all

have gone to those families deemed to be on a Priority One level of need.

Single-parent families with children under 17 years, the sick and the infirm are being treated as Priority One in the allocation process.

Location

There are three community sites:

- Nine trailers will go to the Ed Bush Sports Field in West Bay, to be handed over to the tenants on Friday (28 January), at 4:00pm. All tenants will receive their keys from the National Housing and Community Development Trust, who will be managing the three sites.

- Eighteen trailers will go to the Dr. Hortor Memorial site, on Fairbanks Road, in George Town. They will be handed over to their tenants on Friday, 5 February, at a time to be announced.

- Seven trailers will go to a site off Cumber Avenue in Bodden Town near the Old Mission House location. The handing over details are to be announced, but the expectation is for early February.

- Two trailers will be sent to an East End site, while four persons have had trailers approved for their own sites in different districts.

Express Bus Route Changes

The Express bus will not be available for the Walkers Road/South Sound morning route, from Monday (31 January). The Express apologises for any inconvenience caused to passengers on this route. Contact Annick Jackman at the Department of Tourism on 949-0623 for possible alternate arrangements.

The LoGB Outlines Post-Ivan Challenges

Last week, the Leader of Government Business, the Hon. McKeeva Bush, OBE, addressed the Business Outlook Forum, convened here in the Cayman Islands, on the challenges ahead for the Islands in this post-Ivan period.

The following are some excerpts from Mr. Bush's address:

Overall Economic Impact

"The total financial impact of the disaster on the Cayman Islands was US \$3.4 billion... equivalent to about 183% of our Gross Domestic Product.

We also predict a dip in our GDP from the pre-storm level of +2.5%, to a contraction of 2.2% after the storm. We expect a slight lift in the Consumer Price Index, up from 1.9% to 3.1%.

The amount of damage is estimated at \$75,700 per person. This figure is the highest ever encountered by ECLAC, the United Nations-backed team of economic consultants who prepared a comprehensive report on the aftermath of the hurricane.

In terms of the private-sector, the impact to the productive sector was around \$1.1 billion, or around one third of the total impact. Commerce suffered an impact of around \$556 million, and tourism experienced an impact of \$555 million.

Impact on Government Finances

Turning to the impact of Ivan on the public finances, the Government's current account has suffered a net reduction of around \$54 million, without factoring in the additional capital investments that my Government will need to make to bring our infrastructure back to pre-Ivan levels.

The CIG has performed a critical budgetary review in order to reprioritise expenditures to facilitate the restoration of services to the public and the repair and replacement of damaged assets critical to service delivery. Consequently, Government will recognise several large and extraordinary expenses relating to relief and recovery from Ivan, amounting to approximately \$31 million. These expenses will result in Government recording an overall deficit in the 2004/5 fiscal year. Of all our public services, the public education system

was most severely affected by Ivan, with virtually all schools on Grand Cayman receiving major damage.... We have already begun to plan for two additional new high schools, one in Frank Sound and one in West Bay, which will allow us to replenish and re-develop the physical plant of our senior high school, the John Gray School.

In addition to these significant ordinary expenses, the Government's finances have been impacted by a significant change in revenue flows as a result of the Hurricane. We will be addressing these challenges shortly with a Supplementary Budget which will clearly outline the changes to the approved 2004/5 Budget.

Post Ivan outlook

I can report that business recovery has exceeded most people's expectations.

The inflow of reinsurance money and the additional spend by homeowners repairing their property has given the economy a boost. I expect the construction sector to expand, looking forward through 2005 and 2006, as the reconstruction and rehabilitation processes continue. We hope the uplift in this sector will compensate for the dampening effect of other sectors slowing down.

The commercial sector - wholesalers and retailers - continues to be affected as it suffered a loss of stock, a dip in trade and increased costs. There is scope for optimism here though. Consumer activity picked up in the final quarter of 2004 in areas such as white goods, automotive and household furniture, as people replaced damaged items.

I don't, however, pretend that there are not tourism-related businesses that are hurting at the moment - hotels, restaurants, dive operators and souvenir stores - and will continue to hurt for some time. I will address this topic shortly.

As I mentioned, Government revenues have been affected, but I am confident we have these issues under close scrutiny. We will run a larger than normal public expenditure deficit and current account deficit during 2005. The 5% downturn in current revenue caused by slower domestic growth is, as I have often said being compensated by increased revenue from import duty.

The clean up is progressing well - over 200,000 cubic yards of debris has been collected. Roads and utilities have been, and are being, repaired. We also have in place a grant scheme to assist with rebuilding houses. With this in mind, we are putting together work-crews to assist, and I call on good corporate citizens in the construction sector to get involved in this effort to improve co-ordination and efficiency.

Post Ivan opportunities

Recovering from a natural disaster of the scale of Ivan takes time. I have been heartened by the way our community has worked together to rebuild our country. We have seen that terrible events of this nature bring out the best in people.

Our recovery is well advanced, and I am confident we will come back better and stronger. We will be a better place to live, a better place to visit, and importantly, a better place to do business....

The storm has forced us to rethink our approach to planning and development. For example, I expect a call to review guidelines on minimum set back from the sea.

I also want us to look actively at an alternative site for ships, including cruise ships, to dock. We'll also examine proposals to improve the efficiency of the George Town port, as a Tourist Mecca and a new dock MUST come!

I expect there to be an increased turnover in the real estate market, without impacting negatively on price. I have been speaking to senior people in the private-sector, and they are reporting to me that the investment climate for development is the strongest they have ever seen it. Many new, as well as existing developers are seeking opportunities for commercial and residential development.

One thing is for sure, though, we won't change things that are proven to work. For example, there'll be no new taxes."

The Minister went on to address some of the initiatives in Tourism and Financial Services aimed at accelerating the rebound from Ivan and "refreshing" local products. This will be carried in the next *Spirit*.

C&W Restoration Continues

Despite Cable and Wireless' confirmed restoration of telephone landlines in several districts, customers may still be without service due to a fault occurring on their specific lines. These faults are likely related to line corrosion caused by salt water and need to be reported by calling 611.

Customers with previously logged faults should also expect calls from C&W personnel verifying faults and confirming satisfaction of service. Calls will be made from 5 pm – 9 pm weekdays, 8 am to 9 pm Saturdays, and noon to 6 pm on Sundays.

C&W also wants to remind customers that they've discontinued internal wiring services for customers several years ago. Instead, C&W now works closely with the University College of Cayman Islands to institute proper certification of electricians as qualified Telecom Internal Wiring Experts. Persons requiring this service should contact one of the following companies to arrange for a certified electrician to restore your internal wiring:

Certified Electricians

Ellon Andrews	926-1052
Andro Electric	949-8000
Floyd Bodden	926-7433
Corporate Electric	916-3715
Crawfords Electrical	917-2322
Anthony Ebanks	946-1899
GE Electrical	949-0427
GMC Electrical	947-2308
Faulknor Electric	946-3160
Athol Gordon	916-1243
Island Tech	926-1068
Dexter Jaggernath	949-8198
Munroe Electrical	949-7873
Roderick Person	916-2558
Peters Electrical	916-4571
Power Up Electrical	916-7551
Carlos Powell	947-2070
Prof. Maintenance Services	946-9069
S.D.&B Electrical	916-0934
Malachi Wilson	916-2515
Jeffery Woods	916-0785

Shelter Update

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is continuing its relocation of those in need of housing, following the December closure of the last remaining shelter, the East End Civic Centre.

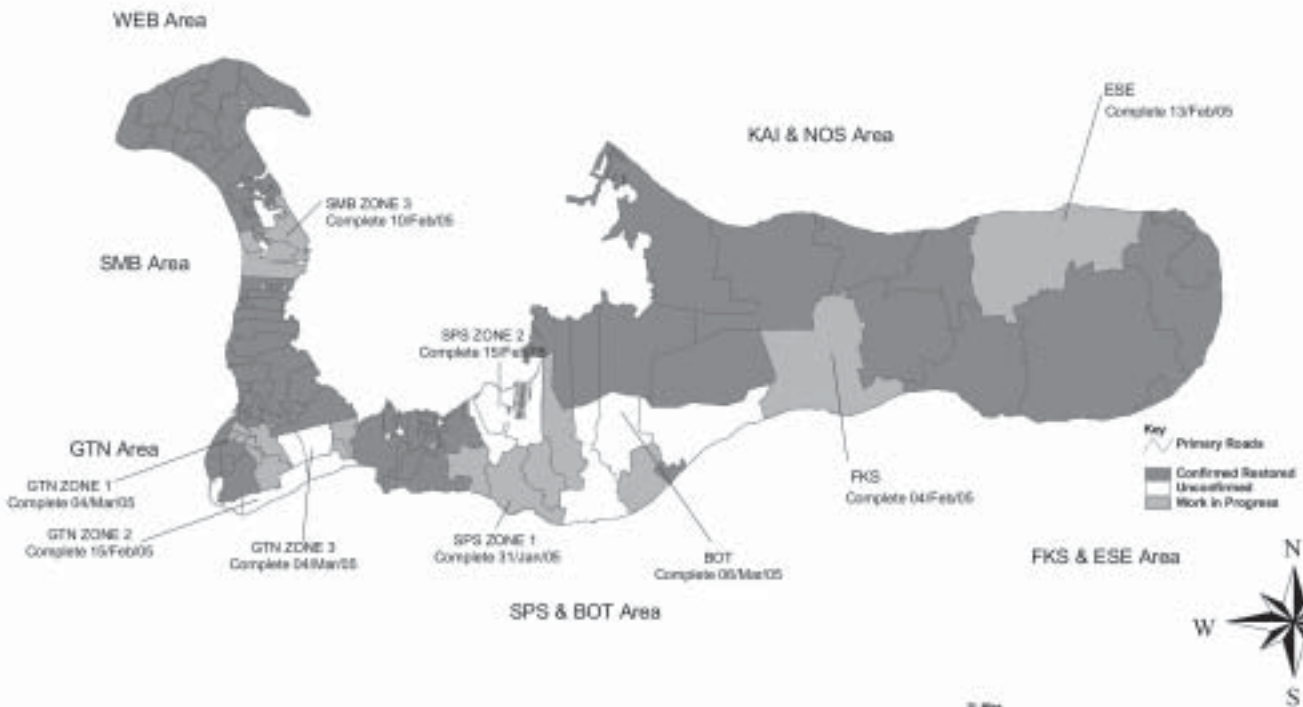
Four such families returned to their Lyndhurst apartments before Christmas. Repairs on an additional two apartments are expected to be shortly completed.

Four elderly shelter residents have now been relocated, along with their caregivers, to an affordable housing rental property in West Bay. Their care is being supervised by the DCFS's Adults Special Needs programme, which also provides oversight of administration of medication. Another four elderly residents are being cared for under the same scheme at Sammy's Airport Inn.

"We are also collaborating closely with the Temporary Housing Committee in an effort to allocate trailer homes to those who are still homeless," said DCFS Director Dianna Lookloy.

Cable & Wireless Service Restoration Map (Telephone Landlines)

January 26, 2005



School Attendance Up

By Lynsay Brown

January attendance figures for government schools in Grand Cayman indicate that student numbers are now approaching pre-Ivan levels for most schools, with numbers still expected to grow.

While all schools in Cayman Brac have gained additional students, approximately 300 of those who sought refuge there soon after the hurricane have since returned to Grand Cayman.

Chief Education Officer Nyda Flatley said that link officers from the Education Department and the Schools' Inspectorate have been closely monitoring student enrollment since the hurricane: "We use the data to track student attendance and to inform decisions about staff deployment and ongoing repairs to schools, to ensure we have adequate provision for the numbers enrolled," she explained.

The Chief Education Officer noted that although, as anticipated, the number of students attending school has continued to increase, there are still some as yet unaccounted for students.

Whilst some parents have informed the department that their children will continue school overseas for the time being or that they have been transferred to private schools, some have not made contact.

Schools and the truancy officer are therefore continuing follow up on students not yet accounted for or who are attending irregularly.

Mrs. Flatley stated that figures are being updated on a bi-weekly basis, as students continue to return or transfer. She expects to be able to publish comprehensive enrollment data in the near future.

NRF Intensifies Local Fund Raising

by Ruth Smith

The National Recovery Fund's Executive Director Angela Martins, MBE, recently intensified local fundraising efforts to continue enabling those affected by Hurricane Ivan to repair or rebuild.

Recent efforts included an appeal on 19 January to the attendees of the Fidelity Cayman Business Focus, continuing the thrust of the NRF since the early weeks of Post-Ivan recovery to garner donations towards repair and rebuilding of damaged housing.

"Overall, the fund has received donations totalling C\$3.6 million, and between last October and mid-January this year, we have awarded contracts for repair and rebuilding of 132 homes." Mrs. Martins said that the 150 projects, valued at C\$1.8 million, benefit families comprising some 528 persons. She said that less than 0.5 % of funds committed are for administrative costs.

Mrs. Martins indicated that the NRF was actively seeking donations to meet its goal of completing a grand total of 500 contracts by the end of August.

"The NRF is undertaking, as well, the identification of an international fundraiser to attract donor funds in the US and the wider international marketplace, to enable a greater outreach in the local community," Mrs. Martins said.

For more information on applying for funds from the NRF, interested persons may visit the office at Trinity Square, from 9:00am to 4:30pm, or call 943-3863. The office may also be reached via fax at 943-3864.

Potential donors may contact the NRF's office or donate via accounts at any of the retail banks.

Clean Up Crews In Your Neighbourhood

By Cornelia Olivier

Residents of George Town, Bodden Town, North Side and East End are advised that cleanup crews are collecting debris in their neighborhoods.

People can help speed up the process by sorting hurricane debris before placing it along the roadside in front of their houses. Care should be taken to avoid placing debris over water meters.

MC Restoration will be making the third and final pass through George Town and Bodden Town between next Monday (31 January) and 18 February.

Meanwhile additional labour crews will be working in Bodden Town and East End, assisting with the general clean up of the environment, including beaches, as these districts were the hardest hit, said Cayman Islands Recovery Operation (CIRO) Operations Manager Mark Scotland.

To date, approximately 200,000 cubic yards of debris has been collected island-wide

under the CIRO operation. More than 1,100 derelict vehicles have also been collected and are now being processed at the holding area behind CUC.

Beach restoration is also moving along with approximately 21,000 cubic yards already processed. Of this, more than 3,000 cubic yards of sand has been returned to beaches.

And residents can now also share one of the useful byproducts of the clean-up operation, with CIRO offering free mulch to the public. Mulch may be collected this weekend, on Saturday, 29 January, and Sunday, 30 January, from the Northwest Point debris-processing site. The site is located on Northwest Point Road, on the seaside corner past Dolphin Point Apartments and the cemetery.

A loader will be available and residents are encouraged to collect the mulch with suitable vehicles and large garbage bags. Collection is reserved for personal use only.

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Contributing Writers

GIS, Ministry of Tourism, Finance Portfolio
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Contact us: GIS

Government of the Cayman Islands

Cricket Square

Elgin Avenue

Telephone 949-8092

GIS@gov.ky

Do you have essential public information or an inspirational recovery story to tell? Give us a call or send an email.