

JOINT STATEMENT BY UK AND ANGUILLA CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM NEGOTIATION TEAMS

At the invitation of the Government of Anguilla, a UK delegation travelled to Anguilla to engage in negotiations on updating Anguilla's constitution.

The Anguillian team comprised the Honourable Premier Victor Banks, Honourable Cora Richardson Hodge (Minister of Home Affairs), Hon Evalie Bradley (Special Ministerial Assistant to the Minister of Home Affairs), Hon Leader of the Opposition Ms Palmavon Webster, Mr Don Mitchell CBE QC (Past Chairman of the Constitutional and Electoral Reform Committee), Hon Dwight Horsford (Attorney General), Mr Thomas Astaphan QC and Mr Carlyle Rogers representing the Anguilla Bar Association, Mr Stanley Reid (former member of the Constitutional and Electoral Reform Committee), Dr Ellis Lorenzo Webster (Leader of the APM), Pastor Philip Gumbs and Reverend Dr Wycherley Gumbs representing the Evangelical Association and Christian Council respectively and Mrs Chanelle Petty Barrett (Permanent Secretary Home Affairs). Chairing the proceedings was the Hon Jose Vanterpool (First Nominated Member of the House of Assembly). Also attending as observers were His Excellency the Governor and the Hon Deputy Governor.

The UK Team was represented by officials from the FCO including Mr Adam Pile (Head of Caribbean and Southern Oceans Department), Mr Ian Hendry (Constitutional Adviser to the FCO), Mr Greg Reisman (Assistant Legal Adviser) and Ms Kirstie Nash (Desk Officer for Anguilla).

The starting point for the discussions was the 2017 report of the Anguilla Constitutional and Electoral Reform Committee, and the subsequent amendments made by the Committee of the Whole House. The UK delegation welcomed these proposals and noted the excellent work undertaken on a cross-party basis in Anguilla.

Over the course of the week, the two teams had constructive and robust discussions, working through the detail of the draft proposals from Anguilla. Good progress was made; there are a lot of areas where the two delegations were in agreement, areas where the respective legal teams will need to work together to refine the drafting, and other areas where divergent views remain. At this stage, nothing has been finally agreed. The UK team will need to consult with their Ministers, and the Anguillian team will need to consider their joint position.

Whilst there had been some concerns in Anguilla about separating the electoral and constitutional reforms, the UK and Anguillian teams unanimously agreed that this process should not be rushed, nor brought to a conclusion before the forthcoming Anguilla general election. It is anticipated that the UK team will return to Anguilla for the next round of discussions and public consultations after the election. Both teams note the voices in the community who would expect a referendum.

In addition to the negotiations, the UK delegation met various stakeholder groups, including youth groups, independent candidates, the Bar Association, and people from across the community in Anguilla, to listen to their views on the proposals.

Both teams are working towards a new Constitution which will stand the test of time, entrench the democratic process, devolve further powers to the elected Government of Anguilla and create the bedrock for a prosperous and successful Anguilla.

In the interests of transparency, both teams have agreed to publish the two papers containing proposals on some elements of the draft Constitution that the UK team sent in advance of the negotiations, some of which are still under discussion.

26th November 2019