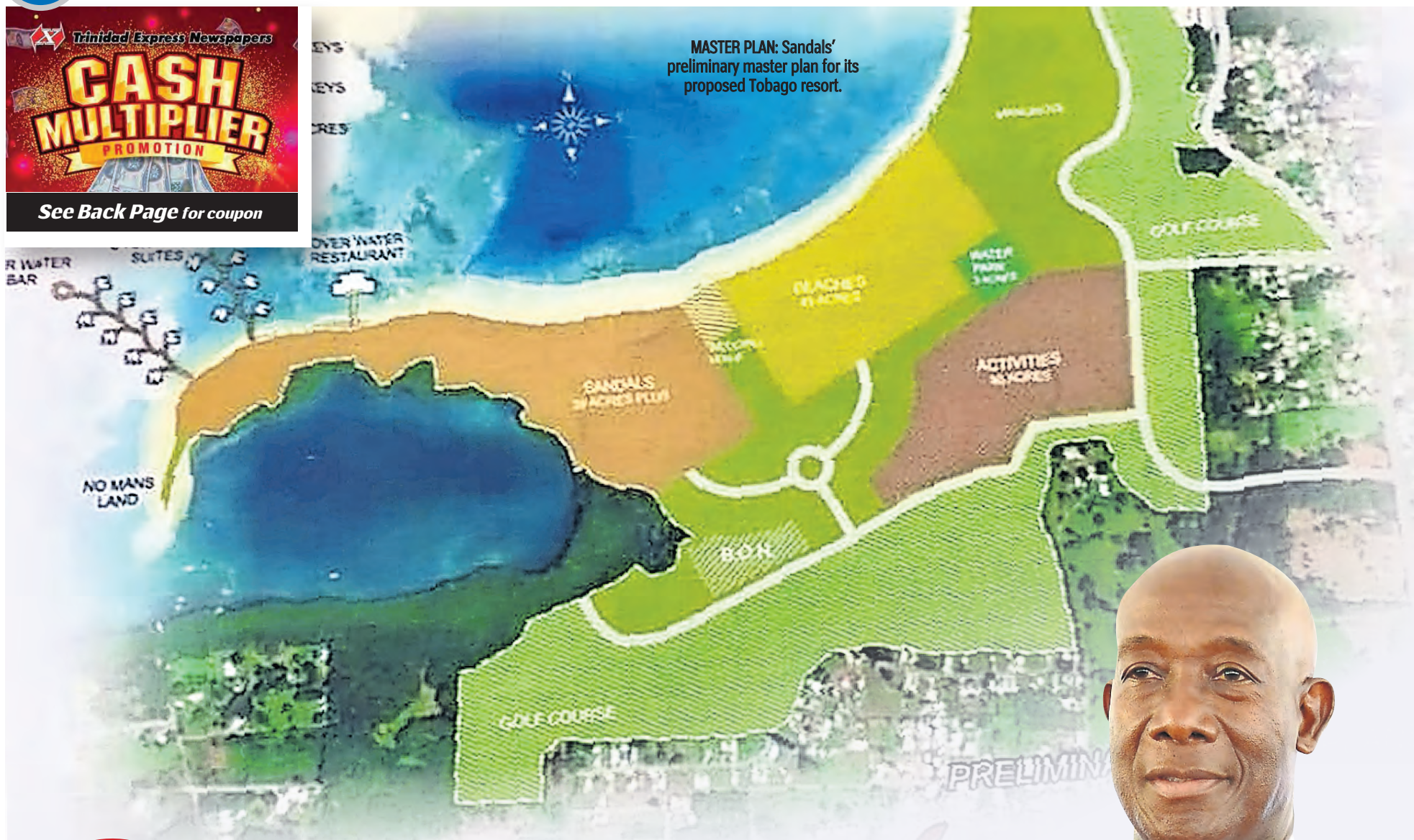


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EXCLUSIVE

■ Will environmental concerns spoil Sandals' score?

ROWLEY'S BOGEY

EMA writes 14-page letter to Govt seeking extensive info on CEC for Tobago resort

Story by Mark Meredith on Pages 4 & 5



Prime Minister
Dr Keith Rowley

Sandals’ secrets revealed

IN 2003, in a series of features for the *Sunday Express* titled “Angostura’s Buccoo Cocktail”, freelance journalist Mark Meredith wrote about Angostura’s plans for an integrated resort in Buccoo’s Golden Grove Estate in Tobago. Fast-forward 15 years, and he reveals a raft of comprehensive environmental detail demanded by the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) of Buccoo’s new suitor, Sandals, and the Government in order to move their resort project forward in their chosen location of an internationally protected ecosystem.

News analysis
by Mark Meredith

PART I

THE huge resort planned for the Buccoo/Golden Grove Estate by Sandals All-Inclusive Resorts has the Government falling over itself in its eagerness to welcome the luxury purveyor of luxurious hide-aways to sleepy Tobago.

It believes the resort to be the Viagra Tobago needs to kick-start a new lease of life for its ailing tourism industry—and it is willing to pay, or have the taxpayer pay, every last cent (estimated TT\$2.720 billion) needed to make its dream a reality.

Prime Minister Keith Rowley is the man leading the charge to land the biggest fish in Caribbean hospitality on Tobago’s shores. Or, to mix a metaphor, to be the first man on the tee of Tobago’s proposed third golf course at Sandals, driver in hand, looking for a hole in one. The trouble for Mr Rowley is that in his eagerness and excitement, his drive is likely to end up in deep rough, even a lost ball.

As he should know, golf is a tactical game demanding limitless patience and self-control, not least because of the hazards deliberately designed to spoil your day. And the most difficult hazards in Mr Rowley’s quest to bring such an ambitious, large-scale resort to Buccoo are the environmental barriers his Government will have to face in terms of domestic and international law. It will be like trying to play out of a bunker 20 feet deep.

In order to build his resort for Sandals—nobody knows who will build it yet, just that it won’t be Sandals, which seems very trusting in this regard—the applicant, Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd, the Government’s “special purpose company” which “holds the land”, must obtain a Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC).

In order to get the precious golden key to start its project—a



LEADING THE CHARGE:
Prime Minister Keith Rowley.



SANDALS FOUNDER:
Jamaican hotelier Butch Stewart.

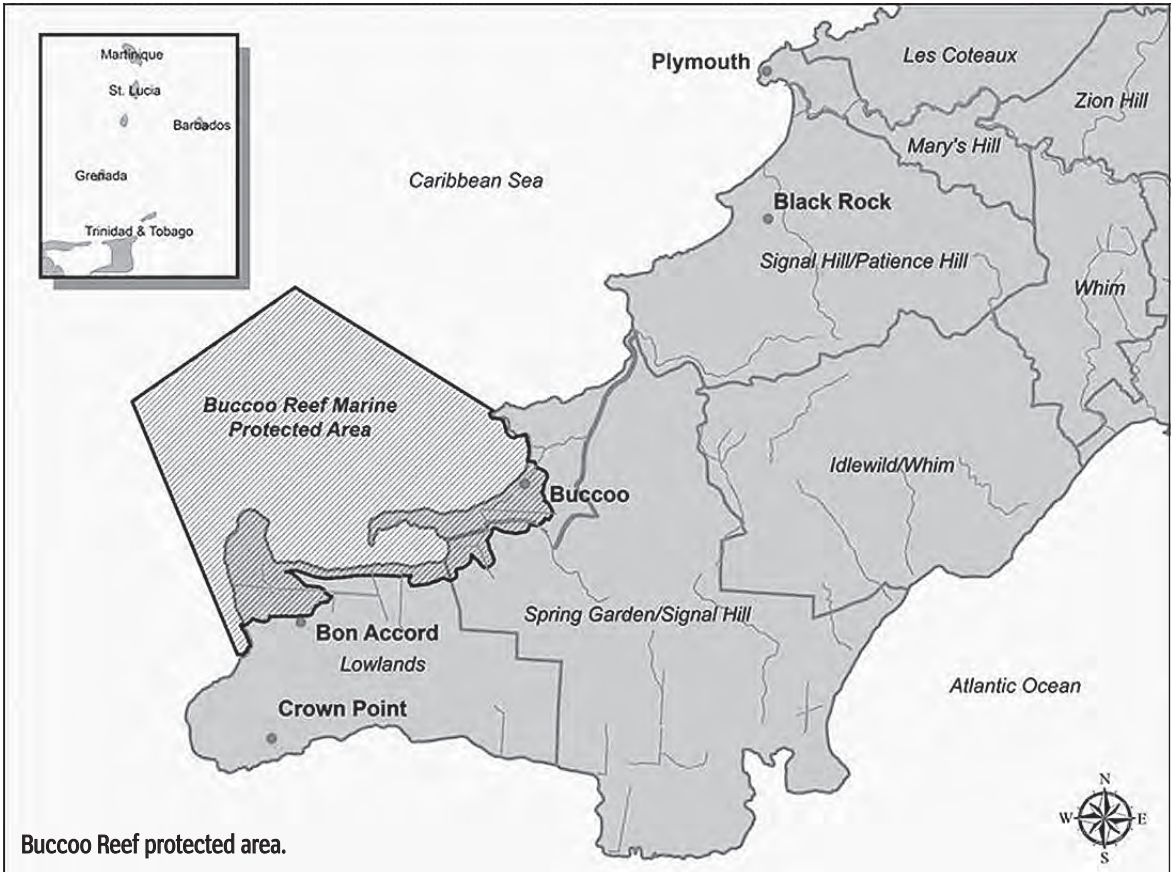
CEC—it must, in all inevitability given the immense scale of the project, produce an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). As the EMA itself states: “An EIA is required if a project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental impacts.”

So complex and extensive are the EMA’s requests for further information in the CEC application from the would-be developers (one seasoned observer told me “the request for information is more extensive than I have ever seen”) that they will have to play an absolute blinder in order to move the process forward. And this is before they can even carry out an EIA.

‘Nothing will
stop Sandals’

But Mr Rowley has said “nothing will stop Sandals”, whipping up his supporters in Tobago with promises of “soon, soon”. We are told the project is to start in January 2019, according to the CEC application. What has Mr Rowley told Sandals? That his super-smooth swing will carry the process through to a triumphant conclusion? Even the most confident golfers go off the rails. Just ask Tiger Woods.

The omens for a sub-par round for Mr Rowley and Sandals do not bode well if the application to the EMA for a CEC is anything to go by. So vague, lacking in detail and, according to environmental watchdog Environment Tobago,



plain inaccurate are areas of the application by Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd that the EMA has responded with a 14-page letter detailing areas that require further information and clarification. It is as if the would-be developers have teed off their round with just one golf ball on a course designed to maximise missteps with punitively harsh obstacles.

Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd which, let us remember, will be responsible for having the construction carried out on the latest jewel in the Sandals crown—two resorts with a total of 925 rooms, 25 restaurants, four jetties, an 18-hole golf course, as well as constructed roads, car parks, swimming pools, playing fields, over-water suites, over-water chapel, lakes, board walks, equestrian trails—can’t even get the information right in its CEC application on what land its palace will be built upon. They think it’s clay. It’s really coralline limestone, which is significant in terms of hydrology, the water table and incursion of salt water, says Environment Tobago.

One would be tempted to think that a 261.7-hectare development, of which 44.48 hectares (excluding the golf course) will be cleared of vegetation for paved areas and covered space, would have an impact on the physical characteristics of the area. The EMA asks: “Will the project have adverse effects on the aesthetics of the area where it is located), ie, result in radical changes of the landscape, such as scarring/mass vegetation removal?”

No, says Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd.

Actually, it answers “no”, “not applicable”, or “to be identified/developed during detailed planning” to a surprising number of questions; the vast majority, in fact. In response, the EMA’s list



Tobago

of demands for further information is so long and detailed that the casual observer would really have to wonder how much preparation for this ambitiously vast project has actually taken place for a start date planned for a couple of months from now.

Lack of transparency

To give you a flavour of the detail required, in one of the CEC application questions Gold-

en Grove-Buccoo Ltd actually did answer, the EMA wants to know the daily consumption rate of potable water. The would-be developers reply that it will be 2,000m³. But the EMA wants to find out whether that consumption rate includes the proposed golf course, the water park, and the 25 restaurants on site, and what the consumption rate of water will be in each of those 25 restaurants outfitted with a kitchen.

This level of detailed requests

Today’s Weather

Partly cloudy and breezy, with light to moderate showers. Low chance some of these showers could become heavy and/or thundery in the early afternoon. Adverse Weather & Hazardous Seas Alerts (Yellow Level #1) in effect.

Seas:	Moderate; occas Rough	Cumulative:	54.2 mm (Piarco)	Port of Spain Tides:	
Waves:	Up to 2.5m/3m in open waters; Below 1m in sheltered areas.	Maximum Temp:	31°C (Piarco)	High:	10.15 a.m. 9.41 p.m.
Rainfall:	22.3 mm (Piarco; to 2pm Wednesday)	Minimum Temp:	24°C (Piarco)	Low:	3.27 a.m. 3.39 p.m.
		Sunrise:	6.00 a.m.	Scarborough Tides:	
		Sunset:	5.39 p.m.	High:	10.44 a.m. 9.57 p.m.
				Low:	3.40 a.m. 4.12 p.m.

Sandals environmental process time-line:

- The applicant, Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd, has until February 1 to supply the EMA with "further information" (see sidebar at right), and this includes stakeholder consultations. It can request an extension if required.
- The "Designated Activities" for which a CEC is required for the Sandals development are numbers: 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 31, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42. (The definitions are online at www.ema.co.tt.)
- Because of the number of CEC designated activities the 261.7-hectare development

- requires, and because of the sheer scale and ambition of the project and "significant adverse environmental impacts" that would arise in such an ecologically sensitive area, it would be extraordinary and unprecedented if the EMA were not to demand an EIA.
- For the EIA, the EMA would prepare a Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) within 21 working days of notification by the EMA of the requirement for the EIA.
- The applicant has 28 days in which it must

- engage in consultations with stakeholders based on the draft TOR and make any representations for amendments to the draft TOR.
- At the end of that 28-day period, the EMA has a further ten working days to issue the final TOR which will guide the EIA.
- The applicant then has 80 days to produce an EIA. The EMA may require further information before it can make a judgment on whether to award a CEC. Or it can award one, or refuse one.

(see sidebar at right) also includes important instructions regarding consultations that must be undertaken with stakeholders, which include those communities affected by the development: Buccoo, Golden Grove, Canaan, Bon Accord, as well as NGOs, community groups, and a raft of Government ministries, departments and statutory authorities.

This will go some way to addressing the most common complaint about the Sandals saga so far: the lack of transparency by the Government and its failure to disclose details of the MoU it has signed with Sandals.

Afra Raymond, a chartered surveyor and former president of the Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Industry, has been granted leave to file for judicial review to obtain documents related to the Government's deal with the Sandals resort in Tobago.

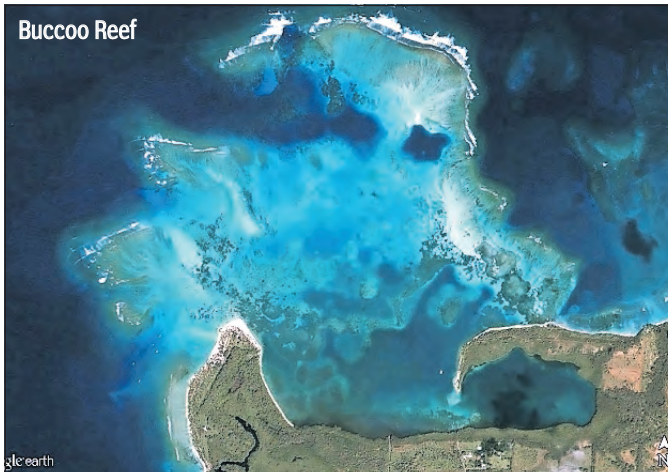
That case goes to court on November 29. Unless Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd starts holding stakeholder meetings before that date, none of us will be any the wiser as to the details of the agreement or what the resort will actually look like. Until then, all we really have to go on to get a visual impression of the Sandals footprint in Tobago is the vague graphic already in the public domain, suspiciously similar to Angostura's in 2003.

What the letter from the EMA to Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd illustrates more than anything is how seriously it views this project, and how difficult it is going to be for Sandals' and Mr Rowley's designers and builders to accommodate the environmental conditions and requirements needed for a CEC, especially in the time-frame the PM is looking at.

After all, you can't just bring in an army of



Buccoo Reef



Chinese labourers, as Mr Rowley has suggested, and have them build it faster than you can say Birds Nest Stadium. In an environmentally sensitive area and protected RAMSAR-listed wetland like this, you need to tread delicately. Or, to put it in golfing parlance, this is a championship resort you want to build, not a pitch-and-putt course.

—Tomorrow: In Part II, Mark Meredith looks at why Sandals is so keen to put its resort in Golden Grove Buccoo, the sorry state of Tobago tourism, and the disconnect between the Tobago Tourist Agency's branding with Keith Rowley's actions and hopes for golf tourism.

SOME of the information not given by the applicants for the CEC, but asked for by the EMA in its 14-page letter, are questions relating to:

- proof of ownership of the land;
- proof of permission for use of coastal/marine areas;
- total area of development;
- areas of reclamation and fill;
- coastal stabilisation/alteration;
- mitigation of invasive species, pests, contaminated materials;
- design drawings for breakwaters, groynes, stabilisation structures;
- watercourse management and diversions;
- number of roads and dimensions;
- power generation and utilities;
- potable water and water supply;
- waste disposal, solid waste disposal, earthworks disposal;
- many questions regarding wastewater, sewage disposal and management, and the ability of WASA Tobago to deal with it;
- dust and noise impacts during construction; chemicals storage and dispersal;
- detailed map of development and ecosystems;
- Buccoo wetland, Buccoo Reef, Bon Accord Lagoon, forested areas—this is "critical";
- locations of drainage systems, storm water, sewage, built structures, golf course, etc;
- storm water management plan;
- sediment and erosion plan;
- beach profiles and hydrodynamics;
- settling ponds;
- comprehensive description of terrestrial, coastal, marine flora, fauna and sensitive ecosystems, including sensitive and endangered species according to international treaties;
- mitigation measures relating to protection and conservation of sensitive ecosystems and flora and fauna.

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Sandals adamant...

Nowhere but beautiful Buccoo

SANDALS didn't want to come to Tobago, according to a well-placed source the *Express* has spoken to. But when it was persuaded to do so, it was adamant no location other than Golden Grove/Buccoo would do for its 925-room resort and 18-hole golf course.

"It's like comparing a pretty woman with an ugly one, and they're picking the prettiest one."

In Part II of this Sandals news analysis, freelance journalist Mark Meredith looks at the disconnect between Tobago's marketing and the prime minister's pursuit of something very different.

News analysis
by Mark Meredith

PART II

THE Tobago Tourism Agency (TTA) has a new brand and a glossy brochure cover featuring a snorkeller gliding over pristine coral reefs. Called "Tobago Beyond", it's "distilled" its "thinking into the three pillars of our new brand: unspoilt, untouched, undiscovered".

It says DINKYs (Dual-Income No Kids Yet) and SuperBoomers, the over-50s, are the key to success. These groups, it says, are looking for "something different, somewhere that feels off the beaten track, somewhere that gives them the feeling of discovering a place for the first time".

"The core appeal of Tobago," says the TTA, "lies in its lack of commercialism. It is truly unspoilt, much less developed... it is how the Caribbean used to be."

Furthermore, says the TTA, it has discovered that the things it thought were holding Tobago back "were really the island's greatest assets: lack of development, accommodation inventory, relatively low levels of commercialism".

So the glaring question arises: are these tourists going to find any of those things at a Sandals all-inclusive resort? "One of Sandals' biggest," says Sandals.

Will they find at a ubiquitous palace of all-inclusive pleasure that "Tobago is naturally unspoilt



Serene scene
at Buccoo Bay.

and untouched, with a vibrant, authentic Caribbean culture just waiting to be discovered?"

Did anybody from the TTA tell Dr Keith Rowley about its winning formula for Tobago before he telephoned Butch Stewart and invited him to open one of the biggest resorts in the entire Caribbean in "untouched" Tobago's most important ecosystem?

Does anybody in the Trinidad Government ever talk to their counterparts in Tobago about tourism strategy, and the latter's marketing direction?

Many believe the Trinidad Government's attitude to tourism over the years is best described in the lyrics of rockers Led Zeppelin—"dazed and confused". Tourism ministers, plans, policy and strategy have all changed with dizzying regularity.

Mixed messages

But the most damaging of these policy changes, says tourism consultant Kevin Kenny, the man behind Angostura's Buccoo resort

project, was the confusion and mixed messages the Government sent to investors with the 2007 Foreign Investment Act, which required a land licence for foreign investors in Tobago to acquire land.

The reason the Angostura project was stopped, he says, is because Orville London and the Tobago House of Assembly, with support from former prime minister Patrick Manning, passed a regulation effectively preventing foreign investors from owning land in Tobago. This policy continues to this day, he said.

Kenny says Tobago is desperate for new investment and that this law needs to be altered, and investor areas freed up. He illustrates the dire situation by quoting figures for Tobago's foreign visitor arrivals. In 2017 they totalled 18,000, down from 96,000 in 2005. He thinks it will be even worse this year, while the rest of the Caribbean is seeing arrivals grow and construction projects continue apace.

To become an economically viable tourism destination, says Kenny, you need to be of a certain size, and he thinks the island is short some 3,000 to 5,000 rooms. He says he welcomes Sandals and any other new hotel or resort project that will push the room stock in that direction.

So it's hardly surprising, given successive governments' pathological inability to coordinate a strategic tourism approach to Tobago, that Dr Rowley decided he'd like to kick-start tourism all on his own

by inviting Sandals to the island, completely contrary to Tobago Tourism's "unspoiled, untouched, undiscovered" approach.

'We are different'

But Sandals didn't want to come to Tobago, according to a well-connected source. It didn't trust the Government's historic inability to follow through on agreements, the chopping and changing and dithering. But hey, when your suitor tells you they will pay for everything, and please just come, why argue?

What many people want to know is why the Sandals palace cannot be put elsewhere, and why it should be in Tobago at all. Reading the Tobago Tourist Agency's concepts, it's clear the "naturally unspoilt and untouched, with a vibrant authentic Caribbean culture just waiting to be discovered" dynamic it wishes to promote is already alive and kicking in areas like Castara.

In Castara, with its 15-plus properties attracting 60 per cent repeat bookings and rave reviews on social media, it's clear its simple strategy of selling a uniquely Tobago experience in a truly unspoilt location is paying dividends for all concerned, and at the same time lending some credence to the TTA's marketing strategy.

Regina Dumas, the owner/manager of Cuffie River Nature Retreat—typical of the type of holiday experience the TTA is seeking to promote—wrote to me, expressing her "horror" at the type



'GOVT SENT MIXED MESSAGES':
Tourism consultant Kevin Kenny.



'NO CONSULTATION': Regina Dumas,
owner/manager of Cuffie River Nature
Retreat.

of development envisioned by Dr Rowley and Sandals.

She said there had been "no effort made on the part of the Government to consult with stakeholders in the industry".

Dumas, who has run the Cuffie Retreat for 20 years and "has lived or worked in every country or island in the region", said Tobago was not a beach-based sand, sea, sun destination, but one appealing to lovers of nature: "those looking for something different, the culture, the history, the wildlife, the reefs, waterfalls, forests, wetlands".

She believes a Sandals "of this magnitude is very much out of the question. This can only have a seriously negative impact on Tobago in more ways than one".

Dumas wants to see small to medium-sized operations of not more than 60 rooms. "We are different—let's explore and reflect that difference in our tourism product."

'Ugly woman' Magdalena

But tourism initiatives like that aren't going to lift the gloom overnight and bring the ray of sunshine that 3,000 to 5,000 extra beds might achieve, which is the argument behind inviting Sandals. So the TTA might as well rip up its new brochure and start over because Dr Rowley is in a rush.

What are the alternative locations for Sandals? A list of candidates has been suggested, including Magdalena Grand, Canoe Bay, Bacolet Estate, Plymouth, Arnos Vale and the Speyside area.

The most obvious of those candidates might be Magdalena Grand—Government-owned, losing money, ready-made 18-hole golf course, infrastructure in place, next to the highway, shops and airport. Something would need to be done with the beach, maybe a breakwater like that at

Today's Weather



Early-morning showers will give way to a partly cloudy and breezy day, despite a few light to moderate showers during the day, and the small chance of the thunder-storm affecting South Trinidad.

Adverse Weather Alert—Yellow Level | Hazardous Seas Alert—Yellow Level | Riverine Flood Alert—Orange Level

Seas: Moderate, occas Rough	Cumulative: 122.8 mm (Piarco)	Port of Spain Tides:
Waves: 2.5m, occas. up to 3m, in open waters; Less than 1m in sheltered areas.	Maximum Temp: 28°C (Piarco)	High: 11.26 a.m. 11.02 p.m.
Rainfall: 68.6mm (Piarco)	Minimum Temp: 24°C (Piarco)	Low: 4.30 a.m. 4.59 p.m.
	Sunrise: 6.01 a.m.	Scarborough Tides:
	Sunset: 5.39 p.m.	High: 11.41 a.m. 10.20 p.m.
		Low: 4.51 a.m. 5.28 p.m.

Coco Reef, and there is the sea blast, but I was told that could be fixed. So how about it?

It was a question, among many others, that was sent to Sandals CEO Adam Stewart and to the Government's Communications Minister, Stuart Young. Neither has acknowledged the e-mails.

My source told me the reason Sandals didn't want Magdalena was because it's the "ugly woman, Golden Grove the beautiful woman". He went on to say Sandals was not interested in any site too far from the airport. That would rule out "three of the only four-star sites in Tobago": Pirates Bay, Blue Waters and Arnos Vale, leaving only Golden Grove.

What Sandals is looking for, he said, is a Blue Flag beach (good luck with that); 100 to 300 acres for resort development; all rooms must have a sea view; be close to airport; have calm sea for water craft activities; good access to water, electricity and sewage; near a large labour pool; good public transport. "Only one of these has all of things," he said—except of course for the water quality. (*See Part III tomorrow.*)

He said the Golden Grove site, situated well above sea level, was a perfect place for a hotel. But Sandals is splitting its resort into two parts—the all-inclusive fun palace on the Golden Grove site, and the family-themed Beaches resort in the Buccoo/Bon Accord Lagoon section where wetland and mangroves will need to be removed and filled in.

He said he was against the development of the Beaches resort in that area for environmental reasons, and that in fact the Beaches resort could be put in any number of locations, even Pigeon Point.

So the question Sandals should answer is that if you refuse to put a resort of these dimensions anywhere else, why can't you compromise in the manner suggested and split them up—putting Beaches elsewhere, away from the Ramsar-listed wetland?

Golfing destination?

Which brings us to the golf course, and whether Tobago really needs a third one when it can't manage what it's got already.

When Kevin Kenny was planning Angostura's resort, he was told a golf course must be included as part of any five-star resort. Having been through a painstaking design process, he does not believe a golf course in the area suggested poses an environmental threat through vegetation removal. He also says it could be irrigated using grey water from treated sewage.

I have been told the golf course will require 150 million gallons of stored water a day. And that fertilisers and weed killers would have damaging effects on the wetland ecosystem and Buccoo Reef.

Dr Rowley, who



GOLF TOURISM?: Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley enjoys a round of golf at the inaugural Tobago Hospitality & Tourism Institute (THTI) Golf Classic Tournament at the Tobago Plantations Golf Club on Saturday, July 16, 2018. —Photo: THA

rightly touts golf as a great game, wants to use Sandals' course to kick-start Tobago's entry into the golf tourism market. But from what I've been told, it's my understanding that overseas golf tourists and visitors would not be welcome at any Sandals golf course as it is part of the exclusive, all-inclusive package for Sandals' guests only. Therefore it could play no part in the prime minister's fantasy.

Anyway, is Tobago really ready for golf tourism? Before my entry into journalism, I was in the golf industry. I trained as a professional, sold upmarket golf holidays and marketed the UK's largest private/public golf course development on England's south coast. I can speak from experience.

When I was selling tailor-made

golf packages in the booming golf holiday years of the mid-1980s, I persuaded my employers to let me put a Trinidad and Tobago twin destination golf package together featuring Mt Irvine and Moka. Mt Irvine was then in the top 100 courses in the world. I even took my wedding party there. Yet we sold about three packages only. T&T simply could not compete with Jamaica or the Dominican Republic.

In 2003, writing for a British golf magazine on T&T's golf attractions, I went to Mt Irvine again and found more grass in the bunkers than on the greens. Today's TripAdvisor reviews are shocking: "What a crying

shame... dreadful, disappointing, dismal... where not to play golf... hard to describe the golf course as a golf course anymore, a tragedy".

Tobago Plantations was overpriced back then—the only alternative course but a good one in a lovely environment. Today I am told, under the Government's Magdalena brand, maintenance is a struggle due to broken-down equipment. The golf manager, Ricky Campbell, told me "as it's the rainy season we are having a little challenge, but it's playable", which hardly fills me with confidence.

The golf destination market is incredibly competitive, and to succeed today you have to be at the

absolute top of your game, competing with vastly experienced players who have been doing it for decades; competitors armed with superlative courses worldwide in safe, secure, stunning and efficient locations.

Sorry, Dr Rowley—Tobago may be stunning, but as a golfing destination your ambition is likely to remain firmly stuck in the rough. And Sandals won't get you to the green.

—*Tomorrow: In Part III, Mark Meredith examines the most controversial aspect of the Sandals mega project, its location in the Ramsar-listed Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord ecosystem and the country's only Marine Protected Area.*

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Sandals in Tobago: Progress or pain?

IN Part III of this "Sandals' Secrets Revealed" series, freelance journalist Mark Meredith looks at why many believe the Sandals project is bad for Buccoo's environment and eco-tourism, one of the fastest-growing sectors of the worldwide tourism industry, worth US\$77 billion. He shows why it contradicts international and domestic policy and goals, and reveals how a crucial conflict of interest in the regulatory process could throw a spanner in the works.

News analysis
by Mark Meredith

PART III

CONTRARY to Trinidad and Tobago's international obligations, and contrary to its own National Environmental Policy, Sandals will build its all-inclusive Shangri-La within the Ramsar-listed Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord ecosystem and the country's only Marine Protected Area, with the Government's blessing.

Does that bother Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley? Apparently not. "No hairy-leg crab is going to stand in the way of progress!" he promised.

Is it really progress or, as some believe, the inevitable end of biodiversity at Bon Accord Lagoon and Buccoo Reef as we know it? And that in an age of climate change and rising sea levels.

But that doesn't seem to bother the Government or Sandals.

According to a well-placed source, both are "fully aware" of the environmental issues and legislation governing wetlands, and the restrictions on clearing this wetland area in terms of law, as well as the negative impacts of its removal, not to mention the pollution issues that currently exist in the lagoon and Buccoo Bay.

The graphic of Sandals' project planned for the area shows that a large area of mangrove and wetland at Bon Accord Lagoon will disappear under built structures for its family Beaches resort. The Sandals' all-inclusive pleasure dome will be built on Golden Grove's land.

The Beaches resort in the Bon Accord/Buccoo heartland sits just

four to six feet above sea level. Is Sandals going to build its hotel on stilts? It might be a good idea. With hurricane activity intensifying, becoming more violent as the planet warms, storm surges can be mitigated by coral reefs and wetlands, saving many millions of dollars in damage; the very areas critics say Sandals' resort will destroy.

The Golden Grove site, on 30 acres, sits between 15 feet and 20 feet above sea level, while some land around it sits lower, being part of an old reef, killed by pollution discharges, sits off the frontage of the Sandals proposed site, as it does off the No Man's Land sands pit. The entire beach front, all the way to No Man's Land, is an area subject to erosion, which should cause concern, I was told. Remove vegetation for development and, well...

The planned Sandals over-water suites/villas—which will cost US\$1.7 million each to build and set you back US\$1,700 to \$2,000 per night—and an over-water bar, over-water restaurant, even an over-water chapel will be built off this eroding peninsula.

These structures and the jetties to service them are of much concern to NGO Environment Tobago—its list of other concerns runs to pages—because they will be built on unstable land and border the Ramsar site. They worry that access to No Man's Land will be compromised by the over-water structures and that these will also hamper local fishermen.

But I was told the disappearance of No Man's Land and areas of Shearbirds Point through erosion could actually be lessened as the piles used to hold the structures would act like groynes, slowing down near-shore currents.

Buccoo's pollution blues

The next time you swim off No Man's Land, that small, fragile, sandy spit, keep your mouth shut. It's not as idyllic as you think.

Buccoo is the most polluted bay on the island, a result of neglect from decades of malfunctioning sewage systems, untreated sewage, grey water, soakaways and septic



POLLUTION ISSUES: This drain contributes to the otherwise idyllic Buccoo Bay being one of Tobago's most polluted, and has led (partly) to the demise of nearby Buccoo Reef. —Photo: MARK MEREDITH

systems over a wide area. It was so bad in 2000 when Environment Tobago tested the water that it advised the then-secretary of Tourism, Stanley Baird, to close down the beach for swimming. He declined to do so.

Former director of the Buccoo Reef Trust Dr Owen Day told me the Bon Accord Lagoon (which abuts No Man's Land) was very polluted, anoxic (no oxygen) in many places at night, and the inshore reefs off Buccoo were very degraded, suffering from bad eutrophication.

He thought it would be in the interest of any large developer to try to restore the environment on Buccoo Reef and make it an asset for their business and for Tobago.

But it may not need a large developer like Sandals to fix Tobago's age-old sewage problem. Kevin Kenny, the former executive manager in charge of Angostura's land development business, had Angostura build a sewage plant under his direction. He told me it was "the final solution to Tobago's sewage pollution problem".

He said "what we provided was a facility that could handle sewage, that could be expanded as WASA collected the system. We built the plant, all the sewage lines to collect sewage in Samaan Grove (behind Golden Grove) and three lift stations to pump the sewage into the plant".

The sewage plant was sold to WASA, he said, which is now expanding the ponds system to take the waste. It is WASA which is laying the lines and is responsible for collecting the waste.

Kenny said South West Tobago was "being sewered" as we speak, and the "extent of the sewer system should include areas from Mount Irvine all the way to Crown Point. Everyone will be connected to it".

Kenny guessed it would take the reef ten years to recover, but added the caveat that it depended on how long it took South West Tobago to be sewered; to get each

SOME OF Trinidad and Tobago's environmental obligations and objectives relating to The Buccoo and Bon Accord complex:

International

• Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance—T&T signed in 1993.

The Buccoo and Bon Accord Wetlands were added to the list 2005. Ramsar is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

The Ramsar List on T&T notes that the Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord complex has "endangered and vulnerable species, various types of coral, as well as the critically endangered Hawksbill turtle, and at least 119 fish species".

• Convention on Biological Diversity—T&T signed in 1992.

"The conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources."

• SPAW Protocol—signed and ratified by T&T in 1990.

Constitutes "a legal commitment by

these countries to protect, and manage their common coastal and marine resources individually, jointly, and in a sustainable manner".

Domestic

• National Environmental Policy—"to protect, manage and restore wetlands in order to sustain their ecological and socio-economic values and functions for current and future generations".

A restricted area referred to in Section 2 of the Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) Act.

• Environmental Management Act—Water Pollution Rules 2001.

In the process of being designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area—EM Act.

• The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan—"to plan for the conservation and sustainable use of the country's biodiversity".

The draft Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy.

• National Protected Area Systems Plan for T&T—prepared for the Government of T&T by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

house hooked up. Scarborough, he said, was "sewered years ago, but only ten per cent of businesses were connected".

Death knell of Buccoo Reef

Lauretta Burke, a senior associate at the World Resources Institute, who wrote an article titled "A History of Untreated Sewage Sours Tobago's Waters", told me if a resort was being built, they'd need a sewage plant "even more".

Asked how long it would take to clean the waters of Buccoo, she said it would depend on the flushing rate. "The solution to pollution is dilution," she emphasised.

Even if this area of Tobago, and a resort, is eventually connected to a sewage system, it's not going to help the situation if Sandals, as appears to be the case, removes mangrove areas of the Bon

Accord wetland and marsh for development.

Marine scientist Dr Anjani Ganase is vehemently opposed to Sandals' plans. She says it will further degrade the water quality of the lagoon area with the addition of sediment and nutrient run-off.

"Construction and the removal of the mangrove will add and relocate the terrestrial silt that was trapped by the mangroves, especially after rainfall, into the surrounding marine areas. Not sure how that would look on a postcard."

Ganase believes the resort will be the death knell of Buccoo Reef and much more. "The connectivity between our mangroves, lagoon and reef ecosystem is fundamental to the life cycle of very important fish species—groupers, snapper, sharks, even shrimp and lobster. Even though Buccoo Reef is working in a degraded capacity, it is doing its job—providing habitat

Today's Weather



Early-morning showers in a few areas. Mostly a sunny, hazy and breezy morning. Light to moderate showers in a few areas in the afternoon. Low to medium chance of a heavy shower or thunder-storm in the afternoon. Gusty winds, flooding possible.

Seas: Moderate to Rough	Cumulative: 157.5 mm (Piarco)	Port of Spain Tides:
Waves: 2.5m to 3m in open waters; 1m and, at times, Choppy in sheltered areas.	Maximum Temp: 31°C (Piarco)	High: *** 12.23 p.m.
Rainfall: 34.7mm (Piarco)	Minimum Temp: 24°C (Piarco)	Low: 5.30 a.m. 6.12 p.m.
	Sunrise: 6.01 a.m.	Scarborough Tides:
	Sunset: 5.39 p.m.	High: *** 12.16 p.m.
		Low: 5.45 a.m. 6.15 p.m.

for our fish communities and many more ecologically important marine organisms, and shelter to the lagoon. It's the reason why we have Bon Accord Lagoon in the first place."

Buccoo birding hotspot

Bon Accord Lagoon and Buccoo Marsh are important areas for many birds, and have been on the itinerary of birding tours for decades. Recently a flock of scarlet ibis was photographed by the lagoon, and pictures posted on Facebook. Talk to any birder and they will go into raptures at the richness of bird life to be seen there. Many of the birds that inhabit that area are not Tobagonian residents, but migratory birds leaving or returning home to the Americas.

I contacted a number of birding tour leaders for their opinions of siting Sandals' mega resort in Buccoo. The response was unanimous. All are diametrically opposed.

Birdwatching guide Faraaz Abdol worried that construction was slated for January 2019, "a month during which the mangroves actually have peak activity with migratory songbirds that are fattening up for their northward migration come March/April". He added: "Hundreds of migratory shorebirds use the Bon Accord Lagoon and surrounding wetlands as a critical stopover site; many of these birds are banded at their breeding grounds in the high Arctic or during their migration at specific locations in the US and Canada. Habitat preservation is the key to species preservation."

Abdol said aside from the birding, tours "that offer viewing of one of nature's true magical scenes—bioluminescence—would be no more, at least for many years, until the specific conditions return".

This was corroborated by England-based tour operator Motmot Travel, that operates bioluminescence tours to the area. Gilbert Bastyra said: "I have also lived in Tobago for a number of years, and I firmly



JAMAICAN SITE: Sandals' over-water suites at Montego Bay, Jamaica.

believe that a 925-bedroom hotel would be a disaster for Tobago. It would destroy a very sensitive environment."

Tobago tour leader Newton George said he was "amazed at the birdlife... birds not seen in other areas for a long time". He says Sandals would be good for Tobago, but not in that location.

Birding tour leader and environmentalist Matt Kelly in Tobago said: "Granted, most people will never set foot in the Buccoo Marsh or Buccoo Mangrove Swamp, but this area is a super-sensitive environmental ecosystem which should be preserved. Once gone, you will not get it back. It is quite ironic that Tobago bills itself as a 'natural destination', but is willing to wipe out a huge swathe of its environmental heritage to lure tourists to come and experience Tobago's (dwindling) nature."

Jared Clarke of Eagle-Eye Tours, a Canadian company based in British Columbia, leads annual tours to T&T. Some years they visit the ponds and lagoon at Bon Accord. He said: "Many birders

and nature enthusiasts do visit each and every year, and have reported more than 150 species of birds in the area.

"I would be very worried about the impact this Sandals development will have on any already-pressured ecosystem. There would be dramatic clearing of forest and changes to the wetland ecosystems. There seems to be no attempt to keep any natural spaces within this development. The impact on natural systems would unacceptable," he said.

"I would suggest they consider an eco-lodge that is developed with the integrity of natural environments and ecotourism at its core. Tobago could use more of that!"

The conflict of interest

One of the regulatory bodies this project will have to get through is the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA). A damaging conflict of interest is apparent there, as a top official is the same person who conducted the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for

Angostura's resort project—an EIA that a senior member of his current staff has been on record as being "scathing" about.

I am told the IMA was "against the Angostura project", so one must wonder what they make of the Sandals project. They must also wonder how a transparent process can possibly take place now when the top official who has been a protagonist for development of the Buccoo site, and whose previous EIA for that area, has been heavily criticised by his own institute.

Since the IMA, as a Government research institution under the Ministry of Planning, has an important advisory role on EIAs, and its ethos is "to promote the utilisation and conservation of the marine resources for the economic and social benefit of Trinidad and Tobago" and to "promote a public understanding of and appreciation for all aspects of the marine and related environment", it could be argued that this official advising on any Sandals EIA is putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.

There is commentary that suggests the Government can "dust

off" Angostura's old, criticised EIA, done by the top official. That under the Environmental Management Act the Minister of Planning and Development can direct the EMA and basically say "use this old one, nuh, and approve de project". The same ministry that appoints the IMA board that appointed the official who wrote the same EIA.

How murky do you like your water?

Will the EMA show its backbone? It's worth recalling that the last time a Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) applicant wanted to conduct a CEC-proscribed activity in a Ramsar-listed site in Trinidad, Nariva Swamp, the EMA refused them. The result was that in 2002, Talisman Ltd appealed the decision before the Environmental Court and won.

The CEO of the EMA, Hayden Romano, told me "the EMA's major learning from that is that we must give the applicant the opportunity to propose mitigation measures before making a determination".

They had better be very good ones.

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Sandals in Tobago:

‘Cost can reach \$8b’

ACCOMMODATING Sandals in Tobago is going to come with a heftier price tag than anyone imagined, freelance journalist Mark Meredith is discovering. Meanwhile, the list of questions is getting ever longer as evident in this Sandals Secrets revealed series.

News analysis by
Mark Meredith

PART IV

THE projected cost of the Sandals resort at Golden Grove/Buccoo could be at least three times more than the \$2.7 billion indicated in the CEC application to the Environmental Management Authority (EMA).

Executive chairman of construction giant NH International (Caribbean) Ltd, Emile Elias, contacted me to say he was “of the view that the budget for 925 rooms is going to be approximately \$7 billion to \$8 billion, or at least three times” what has previously been reported.

He was concerned that this “material fact should be in the public domain”.

After all, it is the Trinidad and Tobago taxpayer who will be picking up the bill for Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley’s pursuit of the Sandals brand in Tobago.

Is it possible the Government and their special purpose company, Golden Grove/Buccoo Ltd, got their figures hopelessly out of kilter?

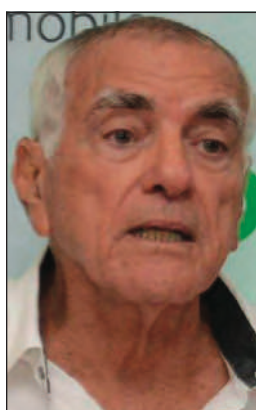
It has been suggested to me that the \$2.7 billion figure given by the Government is for the resort rooms only, and that even that is underestimated.

In the end, the cost of each hotel room depends on the final designs of those rooms that Sandals comes up with.

There are other costs to bear in mind, I’ve been informed.

These include the pod rooms over the sea at US\$1.7 million each.

Then there’s the cost of building the championship golf course, and



CONCERNED:
Emile Elias

the fee to Greg Norman for designing it—when Angostura was planning its course the fee to Ernie Els in 2003 for design was US\$1 million, considered cheap, tourism consultant Kevin Kenny previously told me.

Add to this the cost of 25 restaurants, one of them over the sea; infrastructural work on a greenfield site—very expensive; staff quarters for perhaps 200 people; breakwaters; and sewerage over and above what is already being spent.

I am told everything in Tobago costs 20 per cent more, so add \$200 million to the cost of each billion.

Then there are the airport expansion costs, which I’ve been informed could be upwards of \$800 million, and the promised road improvements on top of that.

The Government has already been in the process of acquiring land at Crown Point for the airport, part of the deal with Sandals being a better terminal to bring in the anticipated hordes that are going to flock to the island.

It seems strange that the Government should be acquiring land for the airport before any approvals have been given for the Sandals project.

Shouldn’t it be the other way around?

Do they know something we don’t?

The Government could reply that it’s nothing to do with Sandals, and acquiring land is merely part of some new initiative to expand tourism.

But how could that be feasible, or make any



FISHING GROUNDS: A fish vendor prepares his catch at Mt Irvine Bay, Tobago.

sense, when visitor numbers to Tobago could plummet this year to below 17,000, and the only tourism initiative for Tobago is the one formulated by the Tobago Tourism Agency which is looking to attract a low-impact, specialised market for their “untouched” brand?

Questions, questions

So much of the Sandals saga makes so little sense, say Environment Tobago and others, not least in terms of Tobago’s capacity to build, accommodate and service such a huge undertaking.

NGO Environment Tobago (ET) gave me some food for thought.

They are at pains to point out that they are not anti-development, even if they are perceived as such, and that all they have ever strived for is development that is transparent, consultative, and treats the environment of Tobago in a responsible and sustainable manner.

The Sandals mega palace is going to require vast reserves of water.

Where is it coming from?

ET told me that “in the last five years the largest problem faced by tourism-related accommodations and residents in the area has been a lack of potable water”.

In 2016/17, the water shortages were so bad in southwest Tobago, they said, that visitors and tourists were checking out of hotels and leaving the island, cancelling bookings, because there was no water for toilets and showers.

“Rationing and truck-borne supplies became the norm because maintenance of the Courland and Hillsborough reservoirs has been a low priority,” one observer said.

“The holding capacities of both areas have been compromised by siltation in times of heavy rainfall. No corrective de-siltation has taken place to increase the holding capacity of these dams for greater output, despite the awareness of the problem.”

In southeast Tobago, underground aquifers have been reduced to approximately 21 metres below surface (normal-

ly just over 7.5 metres below ground) due to excessive pumping and lack of recharge rainfall, they say.

This opens the aquifers to saltwater intrusion.

The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) believes the solution is a desalination plant at Cove Industrial Estate, “at huge cost”, said ET.

Desalination plants are notoriously unfriendly to the environment.

ET say that to put one in such an area would have a significant impact on “pristine offshore reefs, vital for fisheries, biodiversity, coastal protection and tourism”.

This is because of the brine/salt produced in the process of desalination, which is returned to the sea under increased temperatures (part of the process). This will be a death sentence to the reefs, ET said.

ET believe that, as matter of policy, rooftop rainwater catchment systems for hotels and residents must be employed and encouraged.

They wonder what Sandals will do. What will

they indeed, with 925 rooms at full occupancy, baths and showers and spas running, a three-acre waterpark, pools, a golf course, and 25 restaurants?

Power outages and blackouts are part of everyday life in Tobago, or occur at least biweekly, I was told.

ET said “the effect has been catastrophic for businesses, tourism plants and citizens, with huge losses in machinery and equipment in all areas”.

They wanted to know what Sandals will do: build their own plant, use solar power—which would tie in with Sandals’ self-proclaimed environmental ethos—or put added strain on the existing grid?

There’s a lot of concrete to be poured in Buccoo. Where the aggregate is coming from is a puzzle.

Parts of Trinidad and Tobago already look like the cratered surface of a distant planet.

There simply comes a time when the amount of land that can be carved up on the hillsides and forests of such small islands reaches its limit and needs to be scaled back.

ET says the Division of Infrastructure and Quarries under Secretary Kwesi Des Vignes seems to be making some effort to increase aggregate production at Studley Park, but aggregate may have to come from Trinidad and/or Guyana.

Where, ask ET, in their comments on the Government’s CEC application to the EMA, will the solid waste, 100 metric tonnes a year, be put when the Studley Park landfill is already at full capacity?

There is widespread scepticism that, despite Sandals’ promises of stocking their 25 restaurants with Tobago-grown produce, thus revitalising the island’s stagnant agricultural sector, it simply isn’t possible.

ET’s Pat Turpin told me that unless there was “huge attention immediately paid to agriculture training, funding, and

land issues to be sorted out”, she didn’t see how it was possible.

“Sandals might have to import from Trinidad and from overseas. I don’t see a change. The Tobago markets are full of vegetables brought over from Trinidad on the boat.”

Many concerns about the social impacts of a five-star luxury all-inclusive resort in Buccoo catering to well-heeled tourists, who could number in the thousands, have been put to me. There are worries about those who use the Buccoo area already: the fishermen, hunters and food gatherers (crabs, etc); its use for science classes; that it is a public beach which may turn private; the impact on watersports; and the use of the wetlands by locals and high-paying birders from abroad.

Lack of transport

Pat Turpin told me that the “impact would be enormous”.

She said the island “can barely handle the cruise ship season without people getting angry about the lack of transport available for locals when the ships come in. Buses and maxi taxis are co-opted for the ships”.

There are questions relating to training (Sandals have said they will train, and you would certainly hope so), and the labour pool; whether local tour operators will be squeezed out by the all-inclusive mantra of booking everything at the hotel through Sandals-vetted operators; whether, in the grand scheme of things, “all-inclusive” will apply to the all-inclusive benefits to all of Tobago?

Despite the sales pitch of chairman Butch Stewart in his recent media conference in Barbados, and the promises of his new compadre, Dr Rowley, people want assurances, if not concrete evidence, of the economic benefits of Sandals’ arrival in Tobago—especially now that the projected cost could top TT\$8 billion.

Young warns Sandals critics: 'Careful who you listen to'

News analysis by Mark Meredith

RESPONDING to public pressure and media attention, the Government hastily convened a news conference last week announcing they had decided to take the "unusual" step of releasing the much sought after Sandals MOU.

At the news conference was Minister Stuart Young and Sandals deputy chairman Adam Stewart and CEO Gebhard Rainer.

The news conference consisted of a sales pitch by Adam Stewart of Sandals, environmental assurances, and included a series of allegations made by Young, in particular, regarding information published in this newspaper, and general aspersions aimed at critics of their plans.

Foremost of these was their assertion that the graphic depicted on the front page of the *Express* showing the footprint of the Sandals resort in Buccoo was "false", and "100 per cent fictitious", according to Stewart.

Young said: "Sandals has just told us (at the news conference) someone created a fictitious document, a completely false drawing that is in no way condoned or associated with the Government or Sandals."

That graphic in fact forms part of the CEC application file to the EMA by the Government's special purpose company Golden Grove-Buccoo Ltd. Their "Preliminary Master Plan Study" graphic is on the last page of their CEC file and forms page three of a letter dated September 13, 2018 to the EMA.

That CEC application and letter with the graphic were sent to this journalist by the CEO of the EMA, Hayden Romano, at my request. It is in the public domain of the EMA library.

Immediately after that news conference, Sandals and Young were contacted by the *Express* and told that in fact the "fictitious" drawing was from their own CEC application file. Sandals' response was swift, unlike all previous attempts at eliciting any comment at all.

In a press release Sandals said it "wishes to reiterate that the document which was highlighted during the press conference was not part of the original package of drawings presented to the Executive team for submission to the Environmental Management Agency (EMA)".

"Following the press conference we received a message from Mr Mark Meredith that he was given a copy of said document from the EMA itself, and what we have since discovered is that this was an incomplete template which was never meant to be part of the final submission to the EMA, and which was never seen nor presented to the executive team nor the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

"We are grateful that since the press briefing, it has now been brought to our attention that this drawing, which is in essence an in-



AUTHENTIC: This "real" graphic was sent to the *Express* by Sandals CEO Gebhard Rainer. He stressed that all drawings at this stage are conceptual.

complete sketch, was somehow included in the submissions to the EMA."

Sandals wanted to emphasise "that ALL drawings at this stage are not to be taken as factual documents; they are all conceptual documents which will be informed and guided by the EIA, which will then inform and guide all final designs as to what is appropriate for the particular site".

They could not explain how a document bearing the logos of Sandals and Beaches and called a Preliminary Master Plan Study had found its way into the CEC application. Nor did they explain how such a "drawing" had been drawn up at all, given it was so inaccurate.

In fact, there is another graphic of Sandals Buccoo resort that Sandals wheeled out at the end of the conference which they have sent me. They say it's the "real" plan, one of the first impressions created to illustrate space allocation. It features a "Future Sunset Bar & Grill" plonked right at the end of No Man's Land. Sandals, however, has denied anything will be built on No Man's Land except a toilet.

Minister Young has labelled critics with genuine concerns about the Sandals project in Buccoo as "naysayers", and "noisemakers and national nuisances who want to provide the public with false information and distorted reality", and warns, "be very careful where you get your information from".

He is absolutely right about being careful who citizens should listen to, as the fiasco regarding the Sandals graphic illustrates so well.

Both Mr Stewart and Mr Young said they had not been given a chance to comment and have their say. This is also untrue.

An extensive e-mail of questions about the Sandals project was sent to Adam Stewart and Stuart Young on November 12. A further e-mail was sent on November 13 to Stewart to see if he had received it, along with a supplementary e-mail on that day with questions regarding sewage and the Buccoo Reef.

No response from either ever materialised.

At the news conference, Young went on to say he "was in complete shock" when he saw that the project cost was estimated at \$8 billion, as reported in the *Express*. That the news-

paper was reporting that that figure was tied in with the airport expansion, and he gave it as an example of a deliberate distortion of the truth. In fact, the newspaper report gave the airport expansion figure as an additional cost. No mention was made of a marina, contrary to what he said.

What was actually reported was that "\$7-\$8 billion, or at least three times that figure" was the amount estimated for the cost of the resort by Emile Elias, chairman of one of the largest construction companies in the country.

The *Express* reported that, according to

Sandals' CEO Gebhard Rainer made the following comments about some other issues raised:

Beach access: The public would have access to No Man's Land and the peninsula, all the way down Buccoo Beach to the village. "There are no private beaches in Tobago," he said.

Over-water suites and access to the Nylon Pool: The final decision on where they would be situated, and whether they would exist at all, was still to be confirmed.

Golf course: Sandals waters its courses with grey water. The course did not necessarily have to be exclusive; it could be open to guests and could be nine or 18 holes.

Magdalena Grand: They were not offered the option by the Government of taking over the loss-making establishment.

Staff recruitment: No, they would not poach top staff from existing Tobago hotels and accommodation establishments; they have a "non-poach policy" wherever they set up. Training of T&T nationals would be provided.

Food supply: Made aware of Tobago's food dependency, and Trinidad's flood-impacted agricultural sector and policy of turning arable land to built development, he stressed it was an evolutionary process that had worked in Jamaica and given time it would do so here.



NEWS CONFERENCE: Adam Stewart, left, deputy chairman of Sandals Resorts International and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister Stuart Young, display a copy of the MOU for the Sandals Resort in Tobago during Wednesday's press conference at The Office of the Prime Minister in St Clair. At right is Gebhard Rainer, chief executive officer, Sandals Resorts International. —Photo: CURTIS CHASE

our sources' estimates, the figure of \$2.7b quoted by the government's own special purpose company for the resort cost in their CEC application would cover construction of the rooms only. All the other resort costs would be on top of that, hence the \$7-\$8 billion figure.

Young and Stewart also professed to have no idea where the figure of 925 rooms came from. They need to look in their own CEC application and they'll find it.

The MOU states 820 rooms.

Let us remember too that no input on this project has been offered to Tobagonians but they will get their chance, after the fact, with the EIA consultations.

Stewart and Young did not address the varied and real concerns that comprised most of the four-part *Express* series. These were from those people contacted in Tobago and around the world. They included marine scientists from three continents, tour operators in Tobago, Canada, the US and UK, tourism professionals and hotel owners, tour guides, birders, and those concerned about building a resort in a Ramsar-listed wetland and marine-protected area.

Nothing was heard about respecting Trinidad and Tobago's national and international obligations, the treaties signed, the Ramsar Convention, or the country's own National Environmental Policy, and the National Wetland Policy that states "no net loss".

Instead, what we see on page three of the MOU is this paragraph: "Secure the expeditious processing of all approvals as may be required by Sandals for the development and operation of the Resorts."

In a subsequent telephone conversation with the *Express*, Sandals' CEO Gebhard Rainer said: "Everything is dependent on environmental approvals and following the laws of the land. We are very transparent and will be guided by the EIA. Full stop." He added that no time limit was set on securing the approvals. If it took two years it took two years, which he acknowledged it could.

The EMA previously refused Angostura permission to build on the peninsula, and disallowed the removal of mangrove, with setbacks enforced 30 metres from both sides of the peninsula, which left Angostura with no land to build on. How is Sandals, with its far more extensive proposal, expected to succeed where their predecessors failed?

Rainer reiterated that everything depended on the environmental approvals. The letter of the law.

If the EMA refused permission to build the Beaches resort alongside the Bon Accord Lagoon and on the peninsula, would they still go ahead with the Sandals All-inclusive resort on the Golden Grove estate? Or was it all or nothing? Rainer said it would all depend on the commercial viability of that scenario.

TODAY'S WEATHER

Intermittent partly cloudy to cloudy spells with occasional brief light to moderate showers will interrupt cool evening and night time conditions and otherwise sunny daytime conditions tomorrow.



Seas: Moderate	Sunrise: 6.08 a.m.
Waves: Up to 2.0m in open waters; Below 1.0m in sheltered areas.	Sunset: 5.41 p.m.
Rainfall: 2.7 mm (Piarco)	Port of Spain Tides:
Cumulative: 3.0 mm (Piarco)	High: 12.59 a.m. 1.16 p.m.
Maximum Temp: 31° c	Low: 6.54 a.m. 7.39 p.m.
Minimum Temp: 22° c	Scarborough Tides:
	High: 1.00 a.m. 1.10 p.m.
	Low: 6.59 a.m. 7.38 p.m.

[illegible]

The map that sold Sandals

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However, the Commission will be aware of the need to continue to support the development of the sector, and will continue to work with the industry to ensure that the Commission's support is effective and targeted.

How do you think it might be possible to improve the quality of the information that we receive from the media?

[illegible]

the 1990s, the U.S. government has been unable to persuade the Japanese government to accept the U.S. position on the issue. The U.S. government has been unable to persuade the Japanese government to accept the U.S. position on the issue.

The issue of wages and benefits of the organized workers remains an important factor when comparing and contrasting unionized and nonunionized workers. Table 1 shows the wages of these two types of workers in their own industry.

RESEARCHER'S TAKEAWAY: "Overall, the researchers found people who believed in the 'right' way to parent the phone were more likely to use the phone responsibly."

The new home part of a large group of small mammals has been identified as all the 10 large things of interest. This includes the 10 largest and most common. There are 20 of each, and the other 10 are the 10 largest and most common. The 10 largest and most common are the 10 largest and most common. The 10 largest and most common are the 10 largest and most common.

[illegible]

These companies, and their customers, are also worried by the fact that the Internet is still in its infancy. The Internet is still a very young technology and its future is still uncertain. The Internet is still a very young technology and its future is still uncertain.

The new strategy was approved last Monday in the White House and passed the House and the Senate without a vote. The measure will have to pass the House and the Senate without a vote.

However, some courts have been divided on this. For example, the Ninth Circuit has approved, according to *Stevens*.

[illegible][illegible]

Will you be a food designer?

The Food Design Institute creates people that connect culture, food and design. They have found success in companies and are looking for people who are interested in food design.

What's more, it's not only a single story, but a story that's been told over and over again. It's a story that's been told in the words of the people who lived it, and it's a story that's been told in the words of the people who heard it. It's a story that's been told in the words of the people who lived it, and it's a story that's been told in the words of the people who heard it. It's a story that's been told in the words of the people who lived it, and it's a story that's been told in the words of the people who heard it.

They may already know, even say so.

These arguments have also been made by some New Zealanders, given the fact that the two governments may be facing two different types of problems. The Japanese have emphasized that their main concern is to get the U.S. economy on a growth and inflation-free basis again.

The United States, on the other hand, has been concerned about the fact that Japan is not doing enough to help the U.S. economy.

James and The Jax's are still out there and continue to fill the streets. But the music has had to adapt to the computerized pop that the world has. The music they create is new.

James and The Jax's are still out there and continue to fill the streets. But the music has had to adapt to the computerized pop that the world has. The music they create is new.

They are not going to fight against globalization, the free and peaceful movement of people and goods.

The authors conclude that the results of this study support the use of the proposed model for the design of a new generation of mobile devices. The authors also suggest that the model can be used to evaluate the usability of existing mobile devices.

The two-party system that has dominated the political landscape in Canada has been under fire for years in British Columbia. The *Times* (Oct. 10, 1995) ran the headline "B.C. Party System Under Fire" and the article noted that, although the two-party system has been the dominant force in Canadian politics, it is being challenged by a new breed of political parties. The article noted that the two-party system has been the dominant force in Canadian politics, but it is being challenged by a new breed of political parties.

The company's revenue rose 11% from \$1.1 billion in 2007 to \$1.2 billion in 2008, but its adjusted earnings fell 10% to \$10.5 million. The company's adjusted earnings per share fell 10% to \$0.10.

The 1991 survey, which was the first to be conducted in the United States, found that 10 percent of the population had a history of alcoholism, up from 7 percent in 1981. The survey also found that 15 percent of the population had a history of drug use, up from 12 percent in 1981.

Learning is the key and the success of Bengali is determined by how well you use it.



THE MAP THAT SOLD SANDALS

Sunday Express 16 December 2018

Special Report by MARK MEREDITH

While the government sells its vision of Sandals in Tobago, castigating the doubters, and the critics lambast the MOU signed between the two parties, many people are left wondering about one simple fact – what will Sandals and Beaches in Buccoo look like?

What physical impact will it have on what is now a wilderness? How tall will it tower over the mangroves? What size will the Sandals footprint be? How do they plan to design what is possibly their biggest-ever resort complex in an ecologically fragile area without damaging it? Is that even possible?

These specifics will eventually be answered when Golden Grove-BuSccoo Ltd reply to the Environmental Management Authority's (EMA's) 14-page letter requesting further information for their application for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC). That is due on 1 February 2019. After the EMA get that information they will put together a Terms of Reference to guide the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Until then, all we can go on is what Sandals tell us and choose to show us, or not.

The issue of maps and drawings of the proposed resorts reached farcical proportions recently when Sandals and Minister Stuart Young held a press conference denouncing the graphic in their own CEC application file as “false and fictitious”. Instead, they brandished a conceptual map they claimed to be the “real” one and posed for photographs with it.

That map forms part of a large, glossy colour brochure that was distributed to all the THA Secretaries for a meeting held with Butch Stewart in April 2016 when the Sandals boss sold them his vision of Sandals Tobago and Beaches.

The map featured on this page is from that brochure. It is an early conceptual schematic of the twin resorts designed to give a much better idea of the physical realities of the planned development than the map showing mere blocks of land use that Sandals presented at the recent press conference.

Most importantly, and most contentiously, this map illustrates the intent of the Sandals resort development to build in areas that were previously and categorically refused to Angostura. CECs and development permission were declined by the EMA, Town and Country Planning, and the National Wetlands Committee when Angostura put forward their CEC resort application. This refusal came despite an EIA process that lasted two dry and two rainy seasons.

Sandals were made fully aware of what the EMA had approved and what it had not approved, according to a source. However, as the map shows, none of this was taken into account.

The Beaches Tobago resort on the right-hand side of the map sits in the middle of the Buccoo Marsh and mangrove forest and constitutes some of the Ramsar-protected site. At the moment that area comprises thick mangrove with many mature, tall trees, and much of that will have to be cleared to accommodate 520 rooms and main buildings (up to six stories high), a conference centre, assorted restaurants, “villages”, and leisure activities ranging from a football field to a water park.

The *Express* emailed Sandals CEO Gebhard Rainer and Deputy Chairman Adam Stewart a comprehensive list of questions arising from this map. Stuart Young was copied in.

They were asked why, despite being privy to Angostura’s previous plans and reasons for the refusal of the CEC, had they nevertheless gone ahead and designed the Beaches Resort in the middle of that very area, the Ramsar site?

The same questions also applied to the 300-room Sandals Tobago resort in the Golden Grove Estate. Angostura was given a CEC for their main resort site but not for the development along the peninsula leading to Sheerbirds Point and No Mans Land. The map clearly shows some significant development in this location.

These development plans along Sheerbirds Point and by Bon Accord Lagoon ignore the fact that the area is protected under the Marine Areas (Preservation & Enhancement) Act.

In response, Rainer emphasised that “these maps *are* conceptual and *do not* represent the final design”.

Why would they go ahead and incorporate them into their design knowing those restrictions applied, as nothing has changed to warrant a reversal of those decisions?

Rainer said: “The EIA is what will guide and determine the final designs. Let me assure you that we appreciate the comments from persons who clearly have this matter close to their hearts. Trinidad and Tobago has an Environmental Management Agency, which has oversight for the EIA, and if you have concerns about the EIA then that is a matter that is best taken up with the agency that has been appointed by the government to oversee this project.

“For our part we have always adhered to the laws and guidelines of any country in which we operate, and we are adhering to what has been asked of us by the relevant authorities with respect to them conducting a proper EIA.

“We are confident that all issues, including the fact that you say areas are Ramsar-listed, will form part of the EIA.”

He was asked whether the government had given assurances to Sandals that they would be able to develop within the Ramsar site, because how else should one interpret their decision to plan a 520-room hotel and assorted other fixtures for an area previously denied development permission?

Rainer said that implied that Sandals “would engage in some sort of hidden agenda or would conspire with the government to ‘fix’ something despite existing laws and regulations. We strongly recent (sic) that, Trinidad & Tobago has an elected government and we have never engaged in any such discussions”.

Sandals have said they would replant mangrove. But experts have rubbished those claims. Comments by Dr Anjani Ganase, marine scientist, were put to them: “A super hotel and ecologically thriving marine ecosystem are mutually exclusive. They cannot co-exist.” Sandals declined to comment on that and a number of other issues.

The THA’s Secretary of Infrastructure, Quarries and the Environment, Kwesi Des Vignes, said in a TV interview this week that any mangrove removed from a Ramsar site had to be planted elsewhere within that Ramsar site.

Looking at this map and the amount of mangrove to be removed, you would have to ask – where?

ENDS

Victory of Tobago's hairy-leg crab

COMMENTARY BY
MARK MEREDITH

CONTRARY to what Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley had promised, it is the hairy-leg crab of the Buccoo Reef Marine Park (BRMP) and Bon Accord Lagoon that has emerged as victorious in the battle with Sandals for Buccoo.

Sandals and the T&T Government—which, it seems, was willing to do or give whatever was requested of it in order to keep the purveyor of all-inclusive holidays onboard—made the wrong decisions from the start and has only itself to blame for what turned into a failure.

In 2016, Sandals' Butch and Adam Stewart were flown around Tobago in a helicopter and given the opportunity to pick the best site for the resorts. They were shown Englishman's Bay, but decided it was too far from the airport. They were not offered the loss-making, Government-owned Magdalena Grand.

The Stewarts chose Buccoo instead and were given sound advice they perhaps chose to ignore.

They were told where Angostura had been given permission to build its resort and where it had been refused. They were specifically advised against planning a Beaches resort in the Ramsar mangroves.

Perhaps they ignored that advice and produced the map featured in the *Express* story, "The map that sold Sandals".

So it is not surprising that a resort at odds with the country's National Environmental Policy, the National Wetlands Policy, in a Protected Natural Area in the Protected Areas Systems Plan for Trinidad and Tobago should be given so many hurdles to jump by the Environmental Management Authority (EMA). Hurdles that Sandals simply could not clear.

In part one of the *Express* series "Sandals Secrets Revealed", "Rowley's bogey" examined the environmental obstacles being placed in front of Sandals and the Government in the form of a 14-page letter from the EMA demanding further information for the Certificate of Environmental Clearance application.

The EMA letter highlighted the difficulties and complexities that lay ahead of the protagonists in order to get their project through to the next stage, terms of reference for the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Those answers were due on February 1, 2019. Clearly, that information, and the extreme level of detail demanded, was never going to be provided in less than two weeks' time. At the news conference, it was claimed the footprint had not even been decided.

It is not as though Sandals had not been warned about the location it had chosen by many people, environmental groups and specialists.

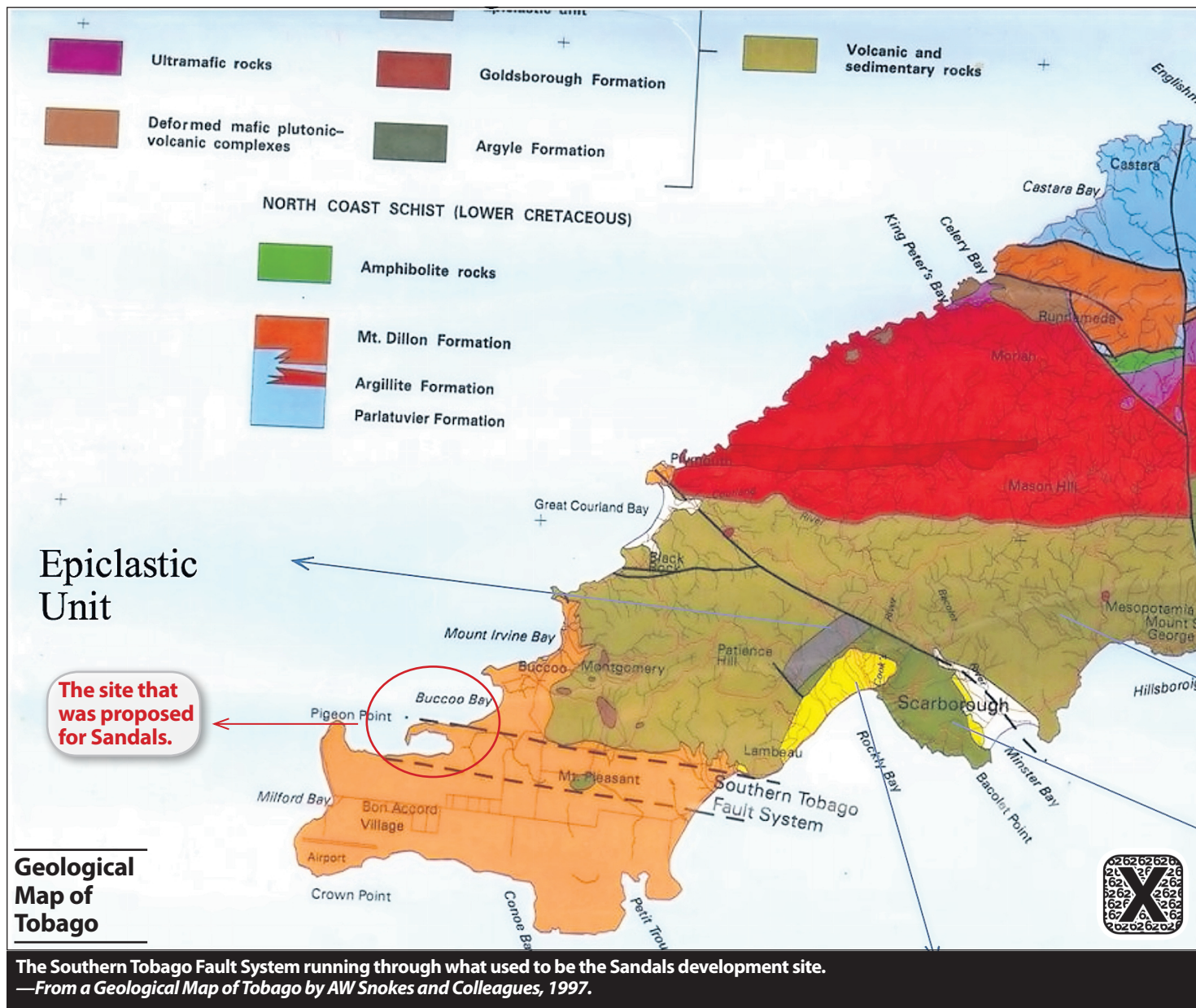
I wrote to Sandals on November 9, 2018, with a long list of questions, and concluded it by saying:

"I ask you these questions, and put forward this information, in all sincerity. It seems Sandals wants to help Tobago and sees great opportunities for itself and the people of the island.

"The trouble is that you are making these objectives much more difficult by choosing to build your resort in a protected ecosystem.

"So I ask again: surely, somewhere on beautiful Tobago, Sandals can find a better location to build something that will help the island and not endanger two of its prime ecological assets? Assets it simply cannot afford to lose."

That—like many other questions over many e-mails—was never answered. Among those



were the suitability of the most polluted bay in Tobago for the setting of its two luxury resorts.

Sandals CEO Gebhard Rainer's claims of being "badgered" about environmental responsibility are disingenuous.

If by that he means being asked in a series of e-mails from this journalist about squaring Sandals' claims of an environmental ethos being a core value of its brand with a proposed 820-room resort in the Ramsar-listed Buccoo Reef Marine Park/Bon Accord Lagoon Complex, and on top of the Buccoo Marsh, then I plead guilty.

According to Rainer, the adverse publicity the project was attracting was tainting the Sandals brand.

For a company that once sponsored the Sandals Caribbean Eco-Journalism Awards, it could not, in all seriousness, tout its environmental credibility while building in the mangroves. And, in the end, it knew it. That is what tainted the brand—the negative publicity it won't admit to.

And there is another reason that Golden Grove Buccoo was the wrong location.

The *Express* can reveal that the Sandals resort in Tobago directly straddled the Southern Tobago Fault System. The map shown above,

a Geological Map of Tobago by AW Snokes and Colleagues (1997), clearly illustrates the earthquake fault line running right through the middle of Sandals' resort in Golden Grove Buccoo.

A source told me this information "has huge implications for the build cost of the resort" because it would have to design for "very high earthquake impact".

Had the Government and Sandals factored in the extra construction costs this extra vulnerability might have necessitated? Were they even aware such a fault runs through the development site?

The info was available

Those issues were put to both parties on December 11, 2018, as part of a wider series of questions, along with a copy of the map featured here. They were asked: "Were you aware of the project sitting on this most vulnerable fault line? Has either party taken this extra vulnerability into account when factoring in seismic building code costs over and above the minimum required? In T&T there are no enforceable building codes in law."

No comment on the earthquake fault system was received from Sandals or Minister Stuart Young. Sandals was prompted again to reply to this question a few days later, but never did so.

According to UWI's Seismic Research Centre (SRC), of the three fault zones in T&T, the SW Tobago Fault System is the most vulnerable to earthquakes, with shallow depths

generally less than 15km. It says "it is the only fault with which earthquakes have been confidently associated".

On April 22, 1997, a magnitude-6.1 quake struck, causing \$18 million worth of damage to southern Tobago.

In her paper, "Eastern Caribbean Earthquakes—Past, Present and Future; Implications for Trinidad & Tobago", Dr Joan Latchman of UWI's SRC says "research into the 1982 Tobago earthquakes revealed the potential for earthquakes in the magnitude range 6.0 to 6.9. Further research has strengthened the case for even larger-magnitude earthquakes near Tobago".

Dr Latchman confirmed her "research has been on the SW Tobago Fault System and both my theses may be referenced here at the Seismic Research Centre (SRC) and the Main Library at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus. Copies are also with both disaster preparedness agencies in Trinidad and Tobago".

"Therefore," she said, "those charged with the responsibility to progress this (Sandals) development have the current, relevant science available to guide their decision-making."

But did they?

If Sandals and the Government didn't know their project lay in the middle of an earthquake fault zone—and it was my information they didn't—they were made aware by this newspaper, but declined to answer any questions about it.

The question of that fault line is more significant now that Sandals has suddenly announced it is pulling out of Tobago. It would be enlightening if it would care to comment.