



CAYMAN FORWARD INITIATIVE

# Planning & Environment Policy Dialogue

Post-Summit Report

JULY 2026



Cayman Islands  
Government

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## PART 1

# 1 Introduction

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This report forms part of the fourth and final phase of the Cayman Forward Initiative, a structured policy dialogue led by The Office of the Premier to address a longstanding governance challenge between the planning and environmental legislative frameworks. In this report we synthesise our findings from the Summit on 5 June 2026 and what we found in the previous consultation phase of the Initiative.<sup>1</sup> This report goes further than a simple summary. It presents our recommendations and key findings (Parts 2 and 3) and an actions list with clear pathways to implementation (Part 4).

This report cannot deliver a shared decision framework in its final form, instead it lays the groundwork to deliver a shared decision framework. The Cayman Islands' needs, and the specific subject matter pertaining to the framework, are best understood by the people who work on these issues every day. Despite the considerable and detailed legal and policy input that has aided the development of this final report, the facilitators are not subject matter experts on planning or environmental issues pertaining to the Cayman Islands. However, they are subject matter experts in facilitating shared dialogue and consultation processes to deliver tangible policy and legislative change. The outcomes from this Initiative will empower the Cayman Islands Government and the wider system, to deliver the change it needs via an impartial perspective. The Cayman Islands Government will have ownership of the recommendations (Part 2) and the onus to see them through to full delivery.

We acknowledge that the positions we witnessed throughout this process come from a genuine belief from colleagues on all sides of the debate that their positions are valid. This is as much a philosophical issue as it is a legal one. The recommendations and key findings in this report will not overcome these entrenched positions overnight. However, we invite you to leave old arguments aside while reading this report because the old ways of working have not delivered for the Cayman Islands. Importantly, we think current positions should be reconsidered by all sides because change can deliver mutual benefit in many areas. For example, delivering on some of these recommendations, and eventually a shared framework, might help secure Little Cayman World Heritage Status. The mutual benefit here is a potential net positive economic and environmental return for the whole of the island, for example in terms of economic growth (e.g. via tourism revenue and attractiveness as an investment destination) and environmental protections (e.g. of reef ecosystems).

**We wish to encourage you to not look at these pre-existing systemic issues in the language of “us” and “them”, only a collective “we”.**

We further acknowledge that one side or a particular colleague may feel a recommendation or key finding is wrong from a subjective perspective. Where this is the case, we urge colleagues to take some time to reflect and be as open as they can be to embracing change due to the reasons described in the previous paragraph. No person or organisation will get everything they want, but the alternative is worse: no change is made and the status quo continues. While a recommendation may feel uncomfortable, you may also be able to view it as a staging post along the route to a more positive change for you and your organisation. The future is inherently uncertain and systems and processes are inherently complex. What might initially feel like a less than satisfactory outcome may prove to be the opposite. Where there are errors in fact, we highlight again that we are not subject matter experts on planning or environmental issues pertaining to the Cayman Islands.

Some of the report is phrased in broad terms. Where this is the case it is because either we believe specificity is in some places unhelpful, as it risks being overly prescriptive when a degree of flexibility is needed, or it is because we did not have additional background required to be more specific. In other places it is more detailed because the opposite is true. Overall, the report is not about granular points of law, but matters of law are mentioned, including additional legal detail that was captured during the consultation phase and the Summit on 5 June.<sup>2,3</sup>

In summary, the report is about facilitating the kind of thinking you need to develop long-term durable solutions to agree a shared decision framework. We invite readers of this report to read it with an open mind. We wish to encourage you to not look at these pre-existing systemic issues in the language of “us” and “them”, only a collective “we”. The decision makers entrusted by the people of the Cayman Islands to deliver in their best interests.



## PART 2

# 2 Recommendations

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The report's recommendations have been developed from several sources: (i) agreements reached at the Summit on 5 June, (ii) stakeholder input during the consultation phase of the Cayman Forward Initiative, and (iii) the facilitator's experience and expertise in facilitating and delivering similar complex, high-stakes projects. In line with the scoping question<sup>4</sup> that has guided each phase of the initiative, our recommendations are grouped thematically into legislative, regulatory, policy and procedural recommendations.

An overarching strategic outcome from this report will be the consideration of Development Plans for each of the islands, replacing the last development plan from 1997. We recommend that these plans should prescribe projects that are of 'national importance' and be things that every National Conservation Council (NCC) and Central Planning Authority (CPA) decision references i.e. does this decision align or contravene with the island's overarching development plan. Environmental designations, protected areas and critical habitats all need to be reflected in each of the islands' plans. However, given the size and complexity of this challenge, many of the steps to deliver a solution are reserved for future work (see 'Next Steps'). Instead, the recommendations below deal with the immediate actions to bring a sense of renewed urgency to this process.

Several of these recommendations will require additional operational expenditure (OpEx) (e.g. R10 and R13), one in particular will require additional capital expenditure (CapEx) (R11). We believe that given the cost of legal proceedings to date incurred by the Cayman Islands Government, the investment provides value for money but further analysis should be undertaken as needed. Finally, several of the recommendations do not require either OpEx or CapEx (e.g. R4 and R9). Instead, these require motivation, an open mindset and a belief in the importance of change to deliver an alternative to the status quo.

**Recommendation 1: Establish a Strategic Taskforce for Action, Reform and Transformation (START) led by the Office of the Premier to oversee delivery of the reform programme.**

The Cayman Islands Government should establish START, led by the Office of the Premier, as the overarching body responsible for coordinating and driving the delivery of the reforms in this report, including the recommendations described below. The acronym START speaks to the idea that this taskforce is leading this new initiative. START would bring the workstreams outlined below under one umbrella, with central oversight to improve accountability, the speed of decision-making and delivery. The following sub-groups would sit under START:

- A technical working group, composed of government lawyers, representatives of the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Department of Planning (DoP) to analyse the Development and Planning Act (DPA) and the National Conservation Act (NCA), with the objective of providing legal direction regarding the interaction between Section 7 of the DPA and Section 41 of the NCA (where the courts have judged there is no conflict in law). This legal direction from government lawyers needs to be communicated in a way which civil servants can easily interpret in order to carry out their work on a day-to-day basis. This is partly why there needs to be representatives of the DoE and DoP in the room, so they can feed in their needs and uncertainties about the law into the establishment of the legal direction and have ‘buy in’ on the legal advice that is created. In practical terms, this legal direction could consist of a short advisory note from government lawyers, drafted where possible in non-legal practical terms. Note that this guidance will likely draw on previous court decisions, but should be framed in way that civil servants can easily understand.

In addition to this legal guidance, the group would also consider the longer-term statutory change on delegation to professional planning officers mentioned in Recommendation 2, for which Recommendation 9 is a procedural stepping stone. Any substantive legislative reforms that need to be made would require an additional dialogue process, after the other recommendations have been considered, and follow required parliamentary procedures.

- A taskforce composed of representatives from the DoE, NCC, DoP and CPA to break down the siloes between the two departments and undertake several primary functions:
  - Giving civil servants assurance on the "good faith" application of the NCA. The route to making good-faith standard usable is not just textual, it is institutional. This taskforce would work through the NCC guidance notes together, in a collaborative manner, including with regards to the application of 'adverse effect', and convene to discuss specific cases of implementation that either side finds challenging. By mutually discussing such cases, all civil servants would get assurance on their work, including the need that a good-faith decision not to refer is justified. This recommendation should also be read together with the proposal for an internal assessment tool (see Recommendation 3).
  - Providing a new CPA-NCC dispute resolution and escalation pathway that sits before the courts and the Cabinet, so contested applications are resolved through a defined mechanism rather than litigation. Essentially, this taskforce would also act as a conflict resolution mechanism, surfacing problems with early face-to-face conversation before they escalate further.
  - Allowing both teams to 'upskill' each other. This upskilling might include 'teach-ins' from responsible civil servants regarding areas such as the NCC guidance notes, the DPA and the NCA, practical issues faced by the DoE and DoP during the planning process and current ministerial priorities. We encourage both departments to develop engaging, accessible and collaborative upskilling sessions, drawing on Cayman Islands Government civil service learning and development best practice.

The most significant benefit of this taskforce may be the least immediately tangible, i.e. the fostering of better working relationships between officials from the two departments and the CPA and NCC. The Summit was an exceptional occurrence of 'getting everyone in the room' but it should be the norm, not the exception. In the UK Government different departments and their ministers often have very different policy aims, even though they are bound by collective cabinet responsibility. To resolve these differences, taskforces and working groups like the one proposed here, are commonly used for more effective working across the UK Government, often taking in stakeholders from multiple different departments.

- A further working group should be established with the purpose of reviewing and codifying Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) timing and triggers across the planning process. EIAs involve a number of different stages, including screening, scoping, terms of reference, public consultation, preparation of the assessment itself, review by the Environmental Assessment Board and subsequent consideration by the NCC. The impact of this, even where mitigation is possible, is often a delay in timelines and uncertainty.

An additional responsibility of the taskforce will be bringing a sense of renewed urgency to the delivery of a new Development Plan. START should engage with the DoP and the Development Plan Appeals Tribunal tasked with delivering the new Development Plan. Further detail on this engagement is provided in the 'Next Steps' part of this report.

## LEGISLATIVE

### **Recommendation 2: Legislation to authorise delegation to professional planning officers.**

The Cayman Islands Government should consider legislation to authorise delegation to professional planning officers below Director level, as in the UK, with a published scheme of delegation. Legislative change, that builds on Recommendation 9 (see below), might define categories, set conditions, require published delegation schemes, and pair delegation with a statutory permission in principle mechanism. In this respect, Recommendation 9 could best be understood as an interim, administrative solution: delegation to the Director and Deputy Directors now, under the existing Act, while a longer-term statutory version would be prepared by the taskforce in our next recommendation.

**Recommendation 3: Develop an internal assessment tool that enables DoP to better understand if ‘adverse effect’ is triggered.**

The Cayman Islands Government should co-develop a tool between the DoE and DoP that enables the DoP to better understand when an assessment is needed. This would be a practical internal instrument that the environment and planning sides would build together. This would move the judgement on whether the adverse-effect trigger bites to the point of decision, inside the DoP, rather than sending everything to the NCC. While the domain is different and it is public facing in nature, inspiration could be taken from the UK’s Gov.uk Check Employment Status for Tax (CEST) tool<sup>5</sup>. In the CEST tool, HMRC give a guarantee that if the information is accurately supplied to the tool, it will “stand by all results” given in this important assessment. A similar ‘good faith’ test could be applied to DoP officials using the tool for planning applications.

**Recommendation 4: Update NCC and CPA governance processes with clear and binding timelines.**

The Cayman Islands Government should ensure both the NCC and CPA update their governance processes with clear timelines and processes for decision making, response and appeal. Where possible, timelines need to be mutually binding on both the CPA and the NCC. This would ensure that both bodies would be governed under a more standardised process and the public would have clear and predictable timelines with regard to planning applications.

**Recommendation 5: Publish all NCC, CPA and DCB minutes, decisions and voting records.**

The Cayman Islands Government should assess a requirement for publication of all NCC, CPA and Development Control Board (DCB) minutes, decisions and voting records within 30 days of the relevant meetings occurring. This might allow both bodies’ reasoning and justification, including outcomes and appeal processes and voting record, to be transparent for all of civic society to see. This may also help enforce a higher standard of decision-making and make things clearer for all people who live in the Cayman Islands as to why decisions were made.

**Recommendation 6: Incorporate international best practice into Cayman’s planning framework.**

Drawing upon what has worked best in other similar-sized Common Law jurisdictions, the Cayman Islands Government should consider how commonalities in each of these systems might apply to Cayman’s planning framework. For example in the jurisdictions examined we found that:

- Environmental protection is achieved through national development plans that guide decision-making (e.g. when an EIA is undertaken).
- There is high delegation of planning decisions to officers (e.g. more than 95% of applications are decided by officers in Guernsey). In some cases committees, either elected or appointed, will decide on the rare contested applications. The Cayman Islands Government should consider whether this committee model, as the ultimate decision-making authority, is something that could be applied to the Cayman context.
- Permission in principle is common with more staged detail resolved later (e.g. Isle of Man and Bermuda have the principle as part of their formal statutory frameworks).

As part of this consideration, we recommend the Cayman Islands Government goes on fact-finding missions to one or more of these Common Law jurisdictions, with a balanced delegation of government ministers and officials drawn from attendees at the Summit.

**Recommendation 7: Accelerate the delivery of the Development Plan.**

The delivery of a new Development Plan under the Development Plan review process is at an advanced stage, with a Planning Statement on track to be tabled in Parliament in September 2026. This report recommends accelerating delivery of this Development Plan through, for example, START’s engagement with the Development Plan Appeals Tribunal (see Recommendation 1) and consideration of how the Plan might take inspiration from the ‘Local Plan’ approach used in England. For example, the Government might draw on the two-stage public consultation approach and its granular, evidence-based site allocations and policies map, which the 1997 Development Plan may lack. In doing so, it would be worth examining (a) the process an English local planning authority goes through to create a Local Plan, (b) what it produces, and (c) what in Cayman law may need to be changed to replicate it. Note that the ‘Local Plan’ approach is currently subject to ongoing reform in the UK.

### **Recommendation 8: Ensure the public understands the rationale behind planning decisions and environmental considerations.**

The Cayman Islands Government should ensure it proactively explains environmental decisions. This might include the publication of planning officer’s analysis and the statutory consultees’ responses before the objection deadline, and clarifications on who may object. Some stakeholders commented at the Summit that this might be important as you must own land within 500 feet of a development to object to a development, and more broadly, that there is a lot of misinformation and public misunderstanding. Transparency is important for several reasons. For example, when someone submits an application for planning, they should be made aware that the process might be slower as environmental assessment may be required. This builds on Recommendation 5 regarding the publication of minutes, decisions and voting records.

#### **PROCEDURAL**

### **Recommendation 9: CPA to delegate functions under the DPA to speed up the planning application process.**

The CPA should seek approval from the Cabinet to delegate functions under the DPA. This power already exists, under Section 5(3) of the DPA, which provides that the Authority “may, with the approval of the Cabinet, by written instrument, delegate any of its functions under this Act (other than this power of delegation)”. The scope of this change is potentially far reaching as it covers “any ... functions” under the Act. For example, it could cover deciding defined categories of application or resolving reserved details after an in-principle grant. It does not require additional legislation.

**Update:** following agreement at the Summit, on 10 June 2026 the CPA resolved to seek Cabinet’s approval on this measure.

**Recommendation 10: Consider whether current levels of planning officers and environmental officials are sufficient.**

The Cayman Islands Government should review the number of planning officers it has to work on cases. Part of this work could include a benchmark analysis of the full-time equivalent (FTE) in other similar sized jurisdictions. Our estimate is that a normal planning service for a Cayman-sized, high-growth jurisdiction is about 18 to 25 professional planning staff plus 5 to 8 support, a service of roughly 25 to 33, sitting alongside a building control function of similar size. However, given the demand on the Cayman Islands planning system, this estimate should not be used as part of this benchmark analysis. In addition, we believe the Cayman Islands Government should also consider extending the FTE/resourcing benchmark analysis beyond planning officers to the DoE (and potentially the NCC), so it can discharge its responsibilities in a manner that ensures it can deliver commensurately with any FTE changes that emerge from the benchmark analysis of planning FTE. Ultimately, any changes in FTE anywhere in the Cayman Islands Government needs to be entirely consistent with the level of work required and the responsibilities placed on that specific department or body.

**Recommendation 11: Modernise information technology (IT) systems to ensure the online planning system is fit-for-purpose.**

At the moment the DoE and DoP don't share data well enough and need to integrate better. This could mean a shared online planning platform between the DoE and DoP, allowing the seamless sharing of data and on, for example, (i) planning permission stages and (ii) existing planning permissions. Better, more integrated IT systems also enhance several of our other recommendations (e.g. in terms of transparency of the planning application process and introducing more certainty for applicants).

**Recommendation 12: Earlier engagement between the NCC and CPA and subject matter experts.**

The Cayman Islands Government should ensure both the NCC and CPA undertake more early engagement with subject matter experts from outside the Cayman Islands Government and from other jurisdictions to involve expert opinion in the process as a core requirement of development decisions proceeding for both sides. In addition, the Cayman Islands Government should also think about cross-membership (an NCC member sitting on the CPA and vice versa) to build mutual understanding. This would build on the current ex-officio representation of the Director of Planning on the NCC. The planning and environment taskforce under Recommendation 1 could be a forum for facilitating this conversation.

**Recommendation 13: Additional capacity for Cabinet to consider appeals.**

The Cayman Islands Government should consider how Cabinet can gain extra capacity to consider appeals, for example with additional FTE. The Cayman Islands Government should also consider the sign off process to fast-track appeals and an intermediate appeal tier to reduce workload. The Cayman Islands Government should also consider how the public knows Cabinet are acting in the national interest with decisions they make, for example with regards to environmental decisions (see Recommendation 8).

An alternative to additional capacity would be whether Cabinet could be absolved of decision-making authority on appeals, and instead this authority would move to an elected or appointed committee modelled on examples from other similar-sized Common Law jurisdictions.



## PART 3

# 3 Key findings

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The key findings below represent the main areas of discussion at the Summit on 5 June 2026. These findings arose during the three sessions conducted during the day (see Part 5, Methodology), with each session itself based on findings from the consultation phase of the Initiative.

These findings included: (i) areas of proposed agreement, (ii) drivers, categorised under the PESTLE framework that may smooth the process of delivering change (see Table 2) and (iii) reform levers, categorised as legislative, policy, procedural or regulatory, that are potential changes that colleagues and institutions are prepared to make.

### **Key finding 1: General agreement that the CPA should ask for Cabinet’s approval to delegate authority to the DoP to forward to NCC referrals under Section 41(3) and (4) of the NCA.**

This would occur at the departmental level, and not the CPA level. Attendees also raised that this approach would need to include all commenting agencies. This could be a stopgap to longer-term legislative reform which would see a combination of Section 4 and Section 41 referrals (see Recommendation 9 above).

### **Key finding 2: General agreement on the ‘must haves’ and ‘should haves’ of a shared decision framework.**

These ‘must haves’ were:

- Establishing an alternative to judicial review (JR) for commenting agencies, potentially through the newly created tribunal body, with appeal to Cabinet only as final escalation.
- Improving digital public access to planning data, environmental assessments, variance histories and agency consultation records.
- Strengthening or clarifying public participation procedures.
- Clarifying when CPA zoning and code compliance is sufficient for approval.
- Establishing clearer triggers for environmental review and strategic environmental assessments.
- Including Little Cayman and Cayman Brac (and DCB) in a shared decision framework.

The 'should haves' were:

- Membership of CPA and DCB broadened to include non planning related sectors in line with the Office of the Auditor General's recommendation.
- Establishing a formal dispute resolution mechanism between CPA and NCC.
- Clarifying when CPA zoning and code compliance is sufficient for approval (see Session #2 in Part 5 for why this also appeared among the 'must haves').
- Allow applicants to apply mitigation measures in response to NCC submissions and for this to be considered within a single submission rather than resubmission.
- Reform to protect wetlands and natural drainage and require watershed-scale stormwater assessments where development could worsen flood risk.

The process for arriving at this general agreement can be found at the methodology part of this report which describes how the summit was facilitated in detail (see Part 6).

**Key finding 3: General agreement that the CPA should be focusing on policy, while simultaneously delegating applications to the civil servants.**

This would mirror to some extent when the NCC delegates to the DoE for technical support. Attendees at the Summit believed that this might free up CPA time, but that this change could be “problematic” without legislative amendment.

**Key finding 4: Disagreement about Part 2 of the NCA and the definition of ‘adverse effect’.**

Some colleagues thought the definition was clear in its drafting, but others thought that the list was not exhaustive which left room for argument and created uncertainty. For those that thought it was not exhaustive, they believed a safer approach was to send all applications to the NCC so they didn’t fall foul of the NCA. This approach has implications for NCC resourcing. More broadly, there was general agreement during the consultation phase that there needs to be clearer advice on the referral triggers to the NCC.

**Key finding 5: Desire for clarification on the amount of decision-making discretion available to all entities in the planning application process.**

Attendees believed it would be helpful to set out a clear list of the discretion available to decision-makers, so every entity knows what it may decide for itself and what it should refer to when assessing ‘adverse effect’. Some attendees commented that as long as someone looks at the guidance notes produced by the NCC, and as long as that decision is taken in good faith, and decides not to refer, then it is abiding by NCA.

**Key finding 6: Positivity around developing a shared understanding between NCC and CPA.**

Participants were positive about the potential direction of travel for a better shared understanding. For example, in 2016 and 2017 the NCC ran consultations on how the consultation duty is triggered. After the judicial reviews, there is now an improved shared understanding of when the duty applies under Section 41. But many attendees believe this could be improved still further with collaboration between the DoE and DoP.

**Key finding 7: Stakes on planning officers getting a decision wrong may be lower than assumed.**

Some believed that the stakes on planning officers of getting an individual decision wrong or going to the CPA are low. Overturning a decision is not a legal or burdensome process. If planning officers' judgement turns out to be wrong, this does not automatically require a judicial review. Good faith tests as described in the recommendations and key findings above are important.

**The status quo cannot continue — a shared decision framework must be based on collaboration and mutual respect.**

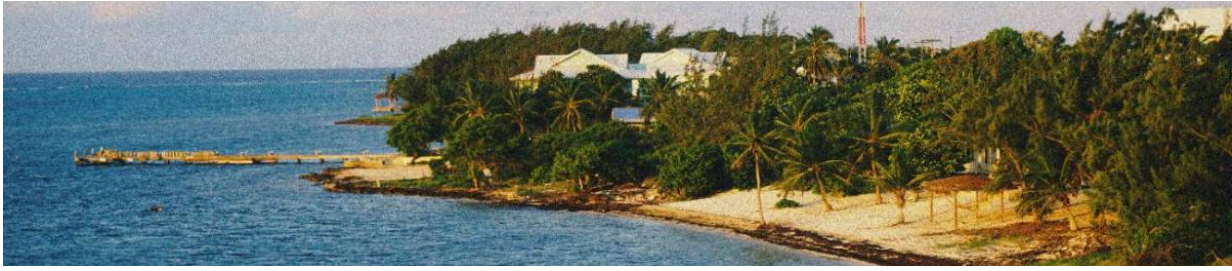
KEY FINDING 9

**Key finding 8: General agreement that an up-to-date statutory Development Plan is seen across the divide as the foundational fix.**

Stakeholders who agree on little else named the missing/outdated plan as the single biggest structural cause of conflict (see 'Next Steps').

**Key finding 9: A clear and shared sense that the status quo cannot continue and that a shared decision framework must be based on collaboration and mutual respect.**

This was echoed by wider Caymanian society during the consultation phase of the Initiative and from decision-makers present at the Summit.



## PART 4

# 4 Prioritised actions and recommended owners

From the recommendations (Part 2) and key findings (Part 3), here we present a prioritised list of actions with recommended owners to aid implementation (see Table 1 below). Delivery is particularly important for the next phase of the Initiative, as during the stakeholder consultation there was scepticism from non-government stakeholders about whether reforms would be carried through. Our list includes our proposed timeframe to implement the actions across 0 to 30 days, 30 to 90 days, 90 to 180 days and beyond, as well as the key dependencies on which the prioritised action relies.

In line with Recommendation 1, START led by the Office of the Premier will have overarching oversight of the implementation of these recommendations and their owners. While the list of recommended owners is kept at entity level (e.g. CPA, NCC, DoE and DoP) where possible specific named individuals should be identified within these entities to drive the action. These individuals would be responsible for implementing the recommended actions with START ultimately accountable for implementation. START may also choose to delegate responsibilities of this role e.g. to the planning and environment taskforce mentioned in our recommendations, or an additional standalone technical working group.

### HOW TO READ TABLE 1

Actions are grouped by implementation timeframe:

0 to 30 days

30 to 90 days

90 to 180 days

Beyond 180 days

Each action carries a category, drawn from the scoping question:

STRATEGY

LEGISLATIVE

REGULATORY

POLICY

PROCEDURAL

TABLE 1

## Prioritised actions and recommended owners

ACTION (Recommendation reference)	RECOMMENDED OWNERS	KEY DEPENDENCIES
<b>0 to 30 days: immediate actions and standing up implementation bodies</b>		
<p><b>STRATEGY</b> 0 to 30 days · ongoing</p> <p><b>(R1) Establish START taskforce.</b> Stand up the Strategic Taskforce for Action, Reform and Transformation as the overarching body for implementation and oversight of sub-taskforces and working groups.</p>	<p>Office of the Premier (lead) Government lawyers Officials from DoE, DoP, NCC and CPA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial set-up and buy-in from participating departments and lawyers</li> <li>- Resource required to centrally manage implementation</li> <li>- Agreed terms of reference for START and sub-taskforces and WGs</li> </ul>
<p><b>REGULATORY</b> 0 to 30 days</p> <p><b>(R4) Binding NCC/CPA timelines.</b> Update NCC and CPA governance processes with clear and, where possible, mutually binding timelines for decision, response and appeal.</p>	<p>NCC and CPA (jointly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination with planning and environment taskforce under START (R1)</li> <li>- May hinge on FTE levels (R10)</li> </ul>
<p><b>REGULATORY</b> 0 to 30 days</p> <p><b>(R5) Publish NCC, CPA and DCB records.</b> Commit to routine publication of all minutes, decisions and voting records within 30 days.</p>	<p>NCC, CPA and DCB (joint)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Admin and IT capacity</li> <li>- Data-protection checks</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b> 0 to 30 days (underway)</p> <p><b>(R9) CPA delegation under the DPA.</b> CPA to seek Cabinet approval to delegate functions under Section 5(3) DPA, with a published scheme of delegation, to speed routine decisions and forward NCC referrals at departmental level.</p>	<p>CPA (lead)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires Cabinet approval</li> <li>- An interim step that R2 is dependent on</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b> 0 to 30 days</p> <p><b>(R13) Cabinet appeals capacity.</b> Add capacity and a fast-track sign-off for Cabinet appeals. Consider an intermediate appeal tier. START to consider moving appeal authority to a committee or tribunal as an alternative.</p>	<p>Cabinet Office (lead) START (structural reform)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May require additional staffing resource (for intermediate tier)</li> <li>- START to be established to consider new appeal mechanism</li> </ul>

ACTION (Recommendation reference)	RECOMMENDED OWNERS	KEY DEPENDENCIES
<b>30 to 90 days: process, transparency and resourcing</b>		
<p><b>POLICY</b> 30 to 90 days · ongoing</p> <p><b>(R8) Transparency of decisions.</b></p> <p>A more proactive posture on explaining planning and environmental decisions, including publishing officer analysis and consultee responses before objection deadlines.</p>	<p>DoP and DoE (leads)</p> <p>Central comms from Cabinet</p>	<p>- Linked to publication of minutes, voting, etc (R5) and modernised IT systems (R11)</p>
<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b> 30 to 90 days</p> <p><b>(R10) Review planning and environment staffing.</b></p> <p>Benchmark FTE for planning officers and environmental officials against comparable jurisdictions and assess if current levels are sufficient.</p>	<p>DoP and DoE (leads)</p> <p>Cabinet authority over budget</p>	<p>- Benchmarking data</p> <p>- Budget</p>
<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b> 30 to 90 days</p> <p><b>(R12) Earlier expert engagement.</b></p> <p>Require structured, early, pre-decision engagement between NCC, CPA and subject-matter experts with further cross-membership of the two bodies.</p>	<p>NCC and CPA (jointly)</p>	<p>- Coordination with planning and environment taskforce under START (R1)</p>

ACTION (Recommendation reference)	RECOMMENDED OWNERS	KEY DEPENDENCIES
<b>90 to 180 days: policy direction, systems and appeals capacity</b>		
<p><b>REGULATORY</b> 90 to 180 days</p> <p><b>(R3) Adverse-effect assessment tool.</b> Co-develop an internal government tool to help planning officials determine when an environmental assessment or NCC referral is triggered.</p>	<p>DoE and DoP (jointly) NCC in guidance role</p>	<p>- In-house IT capability</p>
<p><b>POLICY</b> 90 to 180 days</p> <p><b>(R6) International best practice.</b> Draw on comparable Common Law jurisdictions and undertake fact-finding missions.</p>	<p>START (lead) (see Part 6, Next Steps)</p>	<p>- Budget for fact-finding missions</p>
<p><b>POLICY</b> 90 to 180 days</p> <p><b>(R7) Accelerate delivery of the Development Plan.</b> Consider use of the two-stage consultation, evidence-based site allocations and policies map to inform a shared framework. START engagement with Development Plan Appeals Tribunal (see R1).</p>	<p>DoP (lead) (see Part 6, Next Steps)</p>	<p>- Requires legal gap analysis</p>
<b>Beyond 180 days</b>		
<p><b>LEGISLATIVE</b> Beyond 180 days</p> <p><b>(R2) Primary legislation on delegation.</b> Authorise delegation to professional planning officers below Director level, with a published scheme and a statutory permission in principle mechanism.</p>	<p>START (lead) AG office (legal drafting)</p>	<p>- Parliamentary approval - Increased planning officer capacity (R10)</p>
<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b></p> <p>Start 90 to 180 days · delivery beyond 180</p> <p><b>(R11) Modernise IT systems.</b> Develop a shared DoP/DoE online planning platform for seamless data sharing on permission stages and existing permissions.</p>	<p>DoP + DoE (advisory) Government IT and data specialists</p>	<p>- Budget - Possible procurement if IT and data specialists can't be sourced in-house</p>



## PART 5

# 5 Methodology and detailed outcomes

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This part of the report details the methodology and the outcomes from the Summit on 5 June 2026.

The Summit methodology was designed to ensure that all sides of the debate did not start from entrenched positions. This would have made it harder to break from the status quo. The Summit focused on where all sides want to be, and required participants to reason with (i) shared evidence, (ii) shared ambition and (iii) shared action across three sessions using specific futures and policy techniques. All three sessions were facilitated using Miro Boards.

As noted below, we pivoted from our initial plan for the third session of the day following a steer from the Premier after the breakthrough achieved during the second session. For Session #3 we have therefore included both how we were originally planning to run this session and how the session was actually run on the day.

While the Summit focused on the central policy problem of the Cayman Forward Initiative, the methodology used to address it is replicable. We recommend that the methodology set out below be applied to other knotty policy problems facing the Cayman Islands.

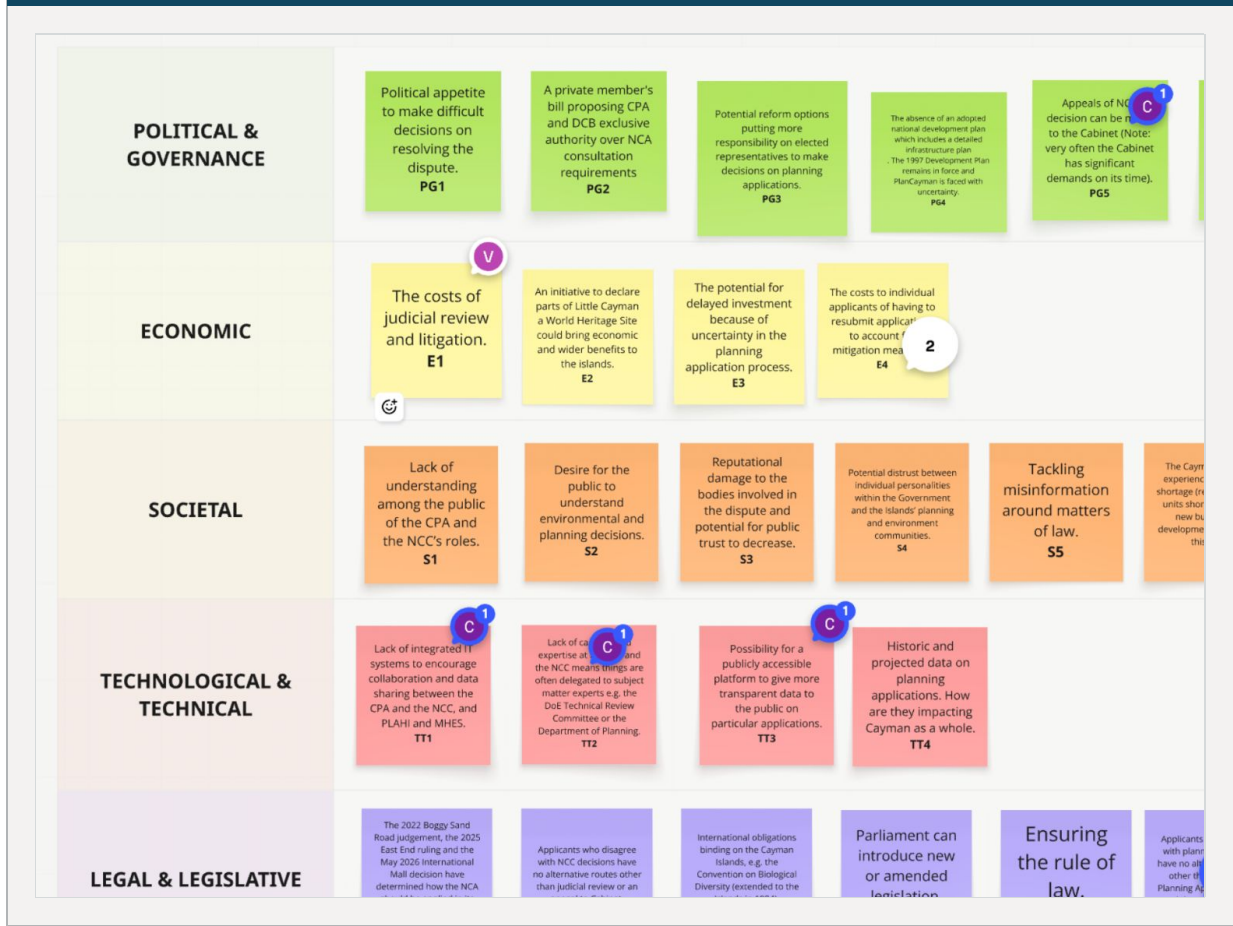
## Session #1: Shared evidence

To build a shared evidence base, this session focused on the question: *What drivers will shape a shared decision framework?* We ran this session in two steps, first using driver mapping to identify additional drivers not considered during the consultation phase, and second using an Eisenhower matrix to categorise these drivers by their impact and certainty.

### Step one — new drivers: what have we missed?

The Miro Board was pre-populated with drivers that had been identified during the consultation phase. A driver is defined as a PESTLE factor that might either help or hinder the delivery of a shared decision framework. Using driver mapping, a structured technique for identifying and categorising the forces acting on a system, participants were invited to discuss and add further political & governance, economic, societal, technological, legal & legislative and environmental (PESTLE) drivers that may shape a shared decision framework (see Miro Board excerpt below).

MIRO BOARD — SESSION #1, STEP ONE



**Note:** some participants chose to make contributions directly on the Miro Board rather than verbally. These are represented by small speech bubbles in the image above. These contributions are either accounted for in Table 2 or added as footnotes in this report.

Each individual driver was coded to facilitate consideration of all 42 drivers during the session. For example, an economic driver, such as ‘the costs of judicial review and litigation’ was coded as E1. A societal driver, such as ‘tackling misinformation around matters of law’ was coded as S5. Note that the numbering implies no hierarchy among the drivers.

TABLE 2

## PESTLE drivers considered at the 5 June Summit

Political and Governance		6 drivers
<b>PG1</b> Political appetite to make difficult decisions and resolve the dispute	<b>PG2</b> A private member's bill proposing CPA and DCB exclusive authority over NCA consultation requirements	
<b>PG3</b> Potential reform options putting more responsibility on elected representatives to make decisions on planning applications	<b>PG4</b> The absence of an adopted national development plan which includes a detailed infrastructure plan. The 1997 Development Plan remains in force and PlanCayman is faced with uncertainty.	
<b>PG5</b> Appeals of NCC decision can be made to the Cabinet (Note: very often the Cabinet has significant demands on its time) <sup>6</sup>	<b>PG6</b> Elections rather than consultations can offer input into planning/environmental decisions (e.g. stated policies in manifestos). Accountability in decisions that have been made at next election	
Economic		4 drivers
<b>E1</b> The costs of judicial review and litigation <sup>7</sup>	<b>E2</b> An initiative to declare parts of Little Cayman a World Heritage Site could bring economic and wider benefits to the islands	
<b>E3</b> The potential for delayed investment because of uncertainty in the planning application process	<b>E4</b> The costs to individual applicants of having to resubmit applications to account for mitigation measures <sup>8</sup>	
Societal		15 drivers
<b>S1</b> Lack of understanding among the public of the CPA and the NCC's roles	<b>S2</b> Desire for the public to understand environmental and planning decisions	
<b>S3</b> Reputational damage to the bodies involved in the dispute and potential for public trust to decrease	<b>S4</b> Potential distrust between individual personalities within the Government and the Islands' planning and environment communities	
<b>S5</b> Tackling misinformation around matters of law	<b>S6</b> The Cayman Islands is experiencing a housing shortage (reportedly 3,000 units short). <sup>9</sup> Question if new builds under development are meeting this need	
<b>S7</b> Public feeling around developments e.g. traffic implications	<b>S8</b> Hearing from the 'average' Caymanian. Are their views heard?	
<b>S9</b> Small island with challenging interpersonal relationships	<b>S10</b> Impacts on Caymanian quality of life from length of planning application process	
<b>S11</b> Development plan must look at population growth and getting accurate figures on the population	<b>S12</b> Must be a strong consultation element in any new framework or legislation	
<b>S13</b> Type of housing supply should be included in a shared decision framework <sup>10</sup>	<b>S14</b> Affordable housing an issue in the composition of new developments <sup>11</sup>	
<b>S15</b> Caymanians are passionate about development on their land		

## Technological and Technical

4 drivers

**TT1** Lack of integrated IT systems to encourage collaboration and data sharing between the CPA and the NCC, and PLAHI and MHES<sup>12</sup>

**TT3** Possibility for a publicly accessible platform to give more transparent data to the public on particular applications<sup>13</sup>

**TT2** Lack of capacity and expertise at the CPA and the NCC means things are often delegated to subject matter experts e.g. the DoE Technical Review Committee or the Department of Planning

**TT4** Historic and projected data on planning applications. How are they impacting Cayman as a whole

## Legal and Legislative

8 drivers

**LL1** The 2022 Boggy Sand Road judgement, the 2025 East End ruling and the May 2026 International Mall decision have determined how the NCA should be applied in its current form

**LL3** International obligations binding on the Cayman Islands, e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (extended to the Islands in 1994)

**LL5** Ensuring the rule of law

**LL7** Amend Development Plan — opportunity for ordinary Caymanian input

**LL2** Applicants who disagree with NCC decisions have no alternative routes other than judicial review or an appeal to Cabinet

**LL4** Parliament can introduce new or amended legislation

**LL6** Applicants who disagree with planning decisions have no alternative routes other than appeal to Planning Appeals Tribunal and then appeal of that decision<sup>14</sup>

**LL8** Shared decision-making framework must comply with Cayman's constitution and any new legislation

## Environmental and Climate

5 drivers

**EC1** Topography, climate vulnerability and drainage pressures on the island

**EC3** Potable water security and impact on Caymanian well-being

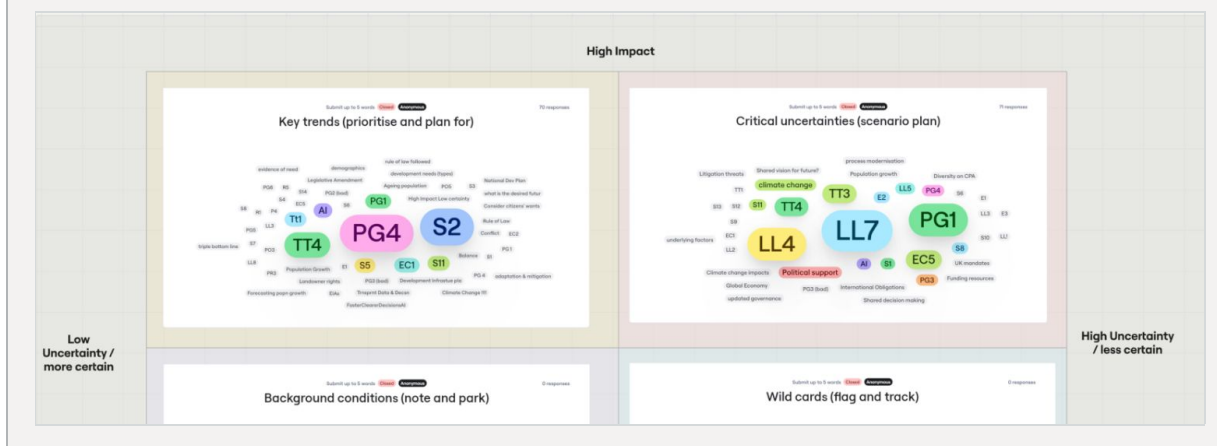
**EC5** Comprehensive stormwater management earlier in planning process

**EC2** Ensuring Environmental Impact Assessments can be undertaken as early as possible in the planning process

**EC4** Infrastructure development on mangroves<sup>15</sup>

## Step two — mapping the drivers

After mapping across each PESTLE category, drivers were then categorised on an Eisenhower Matrix according to high impact to low impact (on the Y axis) and high uncertainty to low uncertainty (on the X axis). Participants were given 5 votes to identify 'high impact, low uncertainty' drivers and 5 votes to identify 'high impact, high uncertainty' drivers. High impact, low uncertainty drivers were those that the Cayman Islands Government should prioritise and plan for. These are well known drivers that have a high impact on a shared decision framework. High impact, high uncertainty drivers are those that the Cayman Islands Government should prepare different scenario plans for. Here the nature of drivers are less known but if realised, the impact on a shared decision framework would be significant. Note that in the time available 'low impact, low uncertainty' and 'low impact, high uncertainty' quadrants were not completed. This voting was then supplemented by a reflective discussion.



By mapping these PESTLE drivers together, a shared evidence base was built because participants were required to engage with and agree on the evidence that has the highest potential impact on a shared decision framework.

### Outcomes from Session #1

- There was consensus that the key ‘high impact, low uncertainty’ driver to address is the lack of a current and forward-looking national development plan (PG4). This plan must cover all islands and include a clear plan for infrastructure, projects of national importance and areas of special interest. This was closely followed by historic and projected data on planning applications and how they are impacting the Cayman Islands as a whole (TT4) as well as the desire for the public to understand environmental and planning decisions (S2).
- For ‘high impact, high uncertainty’ drivers there was consensus around amending the Development Plan and providing opportunities for ordinary Caymanian input (LL7). This indicates that participants may have been less certain about the outcomes Caymanians may want to see in a new Development Plan. Other high impact, high uncertainty drivers receiving several votes include parliament introducing new or amended legislation (LL4) and the need for political appetite to take the difficult decisions to resolve the dispute (PG1).
- Societal drivers were the most identified across any category (15 in total e.g. compared to 6 political & governance, 4 economic, 4 technological & technical, 8 legal & legislative and 5 environmental & climate). This reflected discussion in the room about the importance of ordinary Caymanians taking part in a new shared decision framework. This extended to increasing the public understanding of both the CPA and the NCC and tackling misinformation around development and conservation processes.

## Session #2: Shared ambition

This session focused on: *What does a successful shared decision framework look like?* We ran this session using both a MoSCoW (Must have, Should have, Could have, Won't have) matrix, which is a structured prioritisation technique, and thematic groupings based on prioritisation results.

### Step one: MoSCoW voting

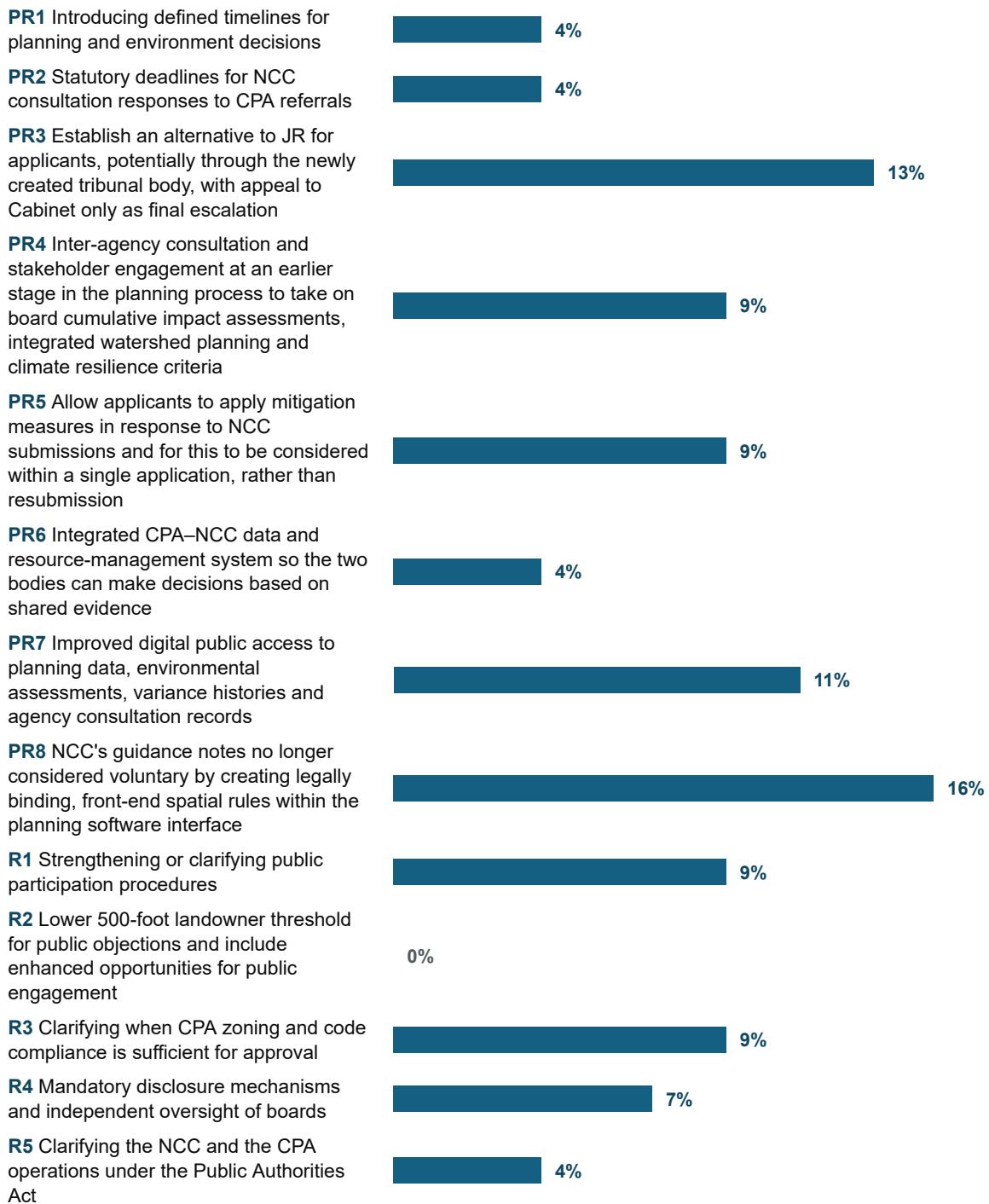
Participants were provided with a limited number of votes for each MoSCoW group. All voting was anonymised. For each group, participants were asked to prioritise the reform levers identified in the consultation phase. A reform lever is defined as tangible changes we could make to deliver a shared-decision framework, categorised as legislative (coded L), regulatory (R), policy (PO) and procedural (PR). In this prioritisation exercise participants voted which reform levers were either a:

- **Must have.** Non-negotiable. A shared decision framework without this element cannot function. The absence of this element would constitute a failure of reform (each participant had 10 votes for this group given the essential nature of these reform levers to a shared decision framework).
- **Should have.** Strongly recommended. The framework could operate in the short term without this element, but its inclusion is important to long-term effectiveness (each participant had 4 votes for this group).
- **Could have.** Desirable but lower priority. This element would strengthen the framework but its absence would not undermine it. A candidate for a second phase of reform (each participant had 4 votes for this group).
- **Won't have.** Outside the scope of this round of reform. This is not a permanent exclusion. These element will not be pursued in the current reform programme. Being explicit about Won't haves is a discipline that protects the scope and political bandwidth of the Must haves (each participant had 4 votes for this group).

By voting on these reform levers, we were able to reach an agreed collective view on which are non-negotiable, which are important but not immediately essential, which are desirable, and which fall outside the scope of this round of reform, and ultimately what a successful shared decision framework could look like.

EXCERPT FROM SESSION #2 · STEP ONE — MOSCOW VOTING

### Sample of 'Should have' votes — Procedural and Regulatory levers



Numbering of each reform lever (e.g. PR8 or R5) implies no hierarchy among the reform levers. Note this is an excerpt from voting for demonstrative purposes only. Reform levers that received votes or no votes here may have received more or less votes in the 'must have', 'could have' or 'won't have' categories.

## Step two: thematic grouping

Following voting in each MoSCoW group, the top five reform levers were identified<sup>16</sup> and grouped according to the following themes.

### Theme 1: Most popular ‘Must haves’ 138 votes cast in total, 10 per participant<sup>17</sup>

- Strengthening or clarifying public participation procedures **(R1)**
- Inclusion of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac (and DCB) in shared decision framework **(PO5)**
- Establish clearer triggers for environmental review and strategic environmental assessments **(L10)**
- Improved digital public access to planning data, environmental assessments, variance histories and agency consultation records **(PR7)**
- Clarifying when CPA zoning and code compliance is sufficient for approval **(R3)**
- Establish an alternative to JR for commenting agencies, potentially through the newly created tribunal body, with appeal to Cabinet only as final escalation **(PR3)**

### Theme 2: Most popular ‘Should haves’ 86 votes cast, 4 per participant

- Membership of CPA and DCB broadened to incl. non planning related sectors in line with the Office of the Auditor General's recommendation **(PO2)**
- Establishing a formal dispute resolution mechanism between CPA and NCC **(L12)**
- Clarifying when CPA zoning and code compliance is sufficient for approval **(R3)**
- Allow applicants to apply mitigation measures in response to NCC submissions and for this to be considered within a single submission rather than resubmission **(PR5)**
- Reform to protect wetlands and natural drainage and require watershed-scale stormwater assessments where development could worsen flood risk **(L9)**

An important finding from the Summit was that during the discussion of the two themes above, participants did not identify contradictions among the non-negotiable ‘must have’ reform levers, and there was a general willingness to incorporate the ‘should haves’ in the short-term for a shared decision framework.

### Theme 4: The ‘Won’t haves’ 64 votes cast, 4 per participant<sup>18</sup>

- Amend NCA to remove NCC’s directive powers but maintain cease and desist order powers. Cabinet would also be required to respond to NCC’s Conservation Plans within 90 days **(L2)**
- Cabinet has final decision making authority on planning decisions **(L4)**
- Clarifying the NCC and the CPA operations under the Public Authorities Act **(R5)**

## **Theme 5: What is missing from our prioritised list of reform levers?**

This thematic grouping was created via an open discussion on what the prioritised list of reform levers were missing. This discussion resulted in a promising and emerging breakthrough and a key source of summit compromise. This was that participants agreed the “CPA would ask for cabinet’s approval to delegate authority to the department of planning to forward to NCC referrals to section 41(3) and (4) of the NCA.” This has been reflected in Recommendation 9 of this report.

By categorising these elements together, a shared ambition for a new decision framework was built, as participants were required to engage with other people’s priority reform levers rather than their own.

### **Outcomes from Session #2**

- 11 reform levers were not disputed or viewed as incompatible during the Summit (see Themes 1 and 2 above). These reform levers should form the baseline of a shared decision framework.
- There was broad consensus on ‘Must have’, ‘Should have’ and ‘Won’t have’ reform levers. In particular the figures below do not generally show significant splits in the participants between ‘Must have’ or ‘Should have’ reform levers and ‘Won’t have’ reform levers. In other words, there are few cases in which one side clearly views a reform lever as a ‘Must have’ while the other side views it as a ‘Won’t have’ and vice versa; those have been highlighted in yellow in Figure 1 below.

## Outcomes from Session #2 (continued)

- **Geographic scope.** Inclusion of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac and the DCB (PO5) was the joint top Policy and Legislative Must Have (10%). Any reform seen as applying only to Grand Cayman will not be considered a complete solution. We recommend this be treated as a standing design principle across the recommendations.
- **Public participation and transparency.** This was the strongest cross-cutting theme of Session #2. Improved digital public access to planning data (PR7) and strengthening public participation procedures (R1) were both top tier Regulatory and Procedural Must Haves (20% and 15% respectively). PR7 was also the third Should Have (11%) and the top Could Have (22%). Participants consistently wanted the public to see more of how decisions are made, even where they disagreed on how quickly this should happen. This echoes the public understanding and misinformation drivers (S2, S5) raised in Session #1.
- **Dispute resolution and appeals.** A specialist tribunal as an alternative to judicial review (PR3) was the top Must Have overall (22%) and 13% in Should Have, but it also scored 11% in Won't Have, making it one of the most divisive levers. There is general agreement that judicial review alone is disproportionate as the only route of appeal. The disagreement is over whether a new tribunal body is the right fix, with a minority preferring no new institution be created. A formal CPA-NCC dispute resolution mechanism (L12), by contrast, scored 15% in Should Have with 0% in Won't Have, suggesting broader comfort with resolving disputes between the two bodies directly before any need for an external tribunal. This is included within Recommendation 1.
- **Environmental triggers and criteria.** Clearer triggers for environmental review (L10) was a joint top Policy and Legislative Must Have (10%). Wetlands and stormwater reform (L9) was the top Should Have (17%) and also scored highly in Could Have (14%). Both reflect a consistent finding from consultation: applicants and the bodies themselves cannot reliably predict when a Section 41 review will be triggered, and climate and drainage pressures (drivers EC1, EC5) are a live concern.
- **Application process certainty.** Clarifying when CPA zoning and code compliance is sufficient for approval (R3) was a top Must Have (10%). Allowing applicants to apply mitigation measures within a single application, rather than resubmitting (PR5), was a strong Could Have (14%). Both speak to the dual bottleneck problem we heard from stakeholders during the consultation phase.

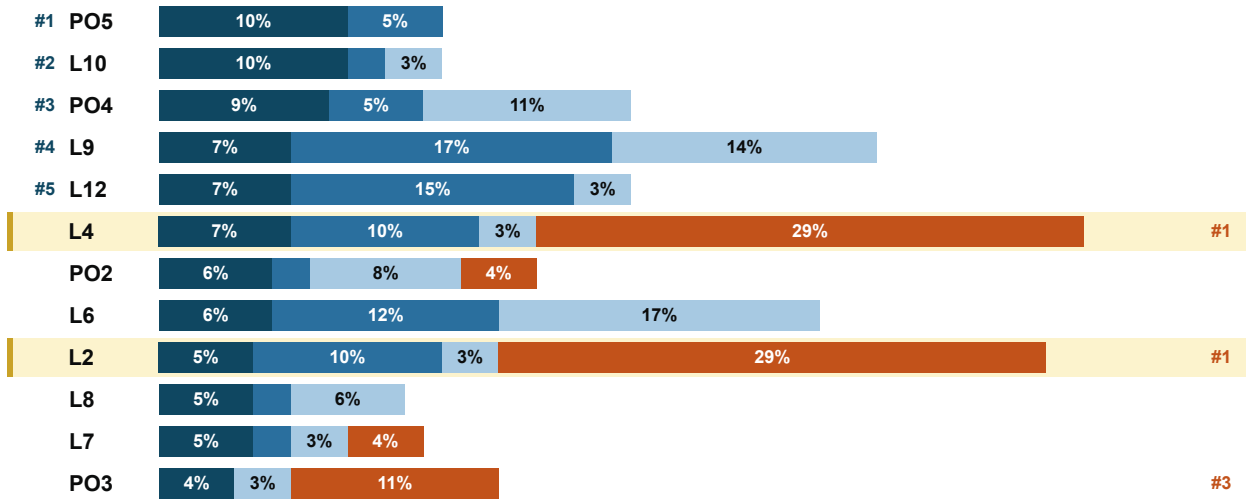
FIGURE 1

### Voting results across the reform levers

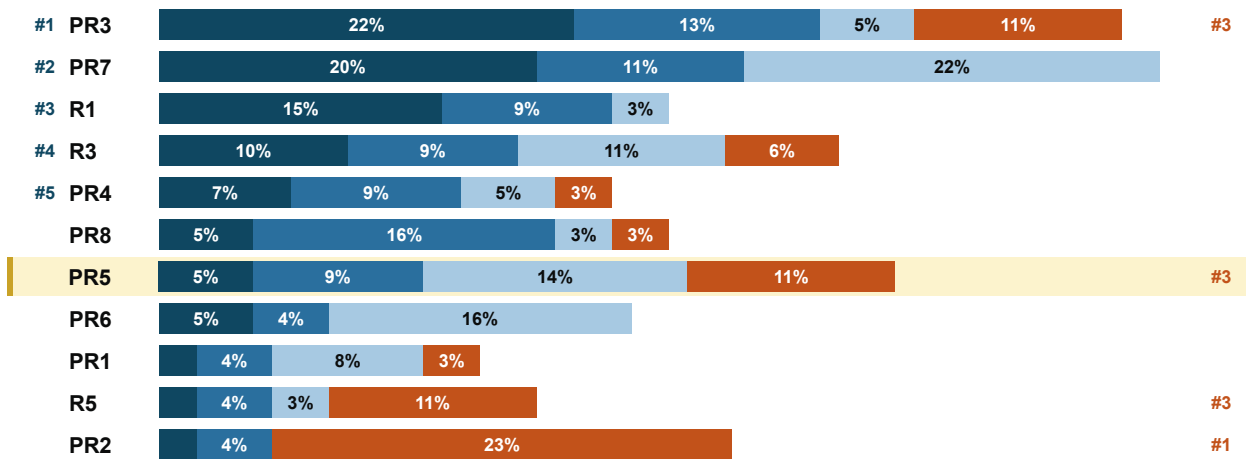
Share of MoSCoW votes per lever. # marks the most popular Must have (left) and Won't have (right).

■ Must have ■ Should have ■ Could have ■ Won't have ■ Divided (lacks consensus)

#### Policy & Legislative reform levers



#### Procedural & Regulatory elements



## Session #3: Shared action

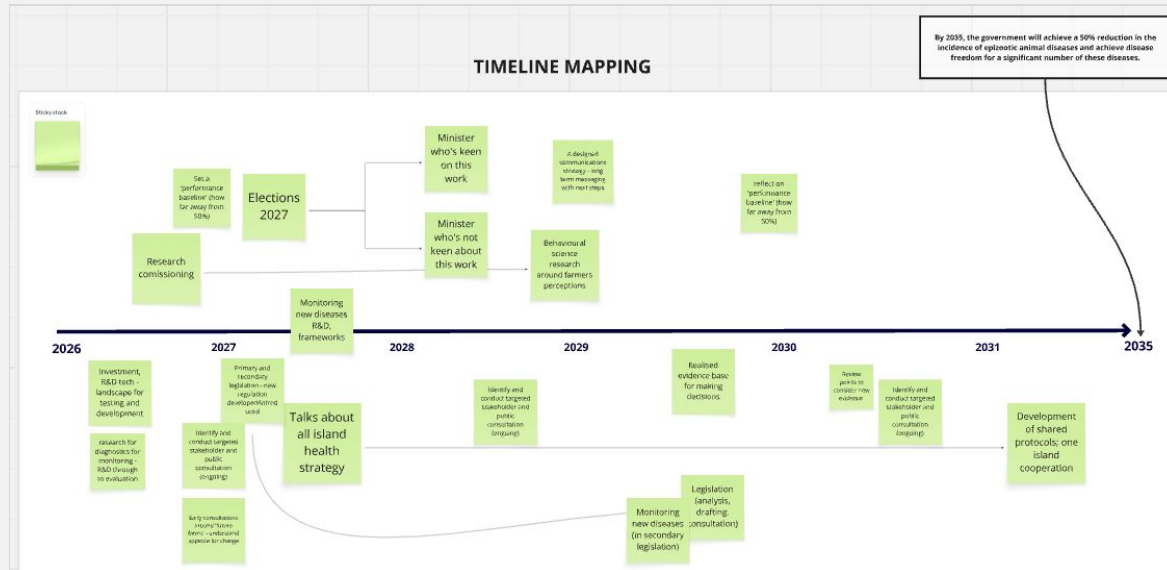
Our original plan for Session #3 was to take the agreed reform levers under Themes 1, 2 and 5 and translate these into a sequenced roadmap using the backcasting technique (step one) and then undertake a control analysis (step two) to assign responsibility for those reform levers. As noted earlier, following instructions from the Premier we built on the positive momentum from the previous session and pivoted Session #3 to focus on two questions of which only Question 1 was addressed in the session:

- **Question 1:** How should 'adverse effect' be defined? When is adverse effect triggered?
- **Question 2:** Are we satisfied with the conservation plans over particular species and how they are defined?

Given the importance of Session #3 to the summit, the outcomes from this session can be found in key findings in Part 3 of this report. To avoid repetition, we have not included them again here.

### Step one: Mapping the reform pathway

Our original plan for Session #3 was to focus on *How do we get to a shared decision framework?* We were planning to run this section using Backcasting, a structured technique that begins from an agreed destination and implementation date and works backwards to the present. Working backwards from the shared ambition of a shared decision framework, we would work systematically through the 'Must have' and 'Should have' reform levers as well as elements we missed, asking the question: when does this need to be achieved? Through plotting these reform levers on a timeline participants would then have identified the steps needed to achieve it e.g. legislative amendments, regulatory changes, procedural reforms and communication actions.



This is a Miro Board mock up of backcasting exercise on an entirely separate policy issue. It is included here for demonstrative purposes only.

### Step two: Control analysis

Once the required steps to deliver a must have or should have reform lever have been mapped to a timeline in step one, the next stage is to perform a control analysis. This analysis identifies who is responsible for delivery of the reform lever, which of the steps needed to achieve it are fully or partly within your control ('partly within your control' would include dependencies, such as parliamentary approval for legislative reform or budgetary constraints). Finally, we would then have identified the immediate next steps for those responsible to take and mapped these out together, moving from shared ambition to shared action.



## PART 6

# 6 Next steps

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The final part of this report considers the next steps for the Cayman Forward Initiative in two categories, both (i) the short-term implementation of actions from Part 4, and (ii) the longer-term future work that in some cases extends beyond these actions. This part of the report does not repeat the content of the actions list here, rather it acts as advice as to how you might approach implementation of both these short-term and long-term actions. You will need to read the detail of Table 1 in Part 4 to fully understand short and long-term implementation, as well as the dependencies that might impact delivery of those actions.

## Short-term implementation

A shared decision framework should not wait for the implementation of all of the actions listed in Part 4. As identified in Table 1, some of these actions will take longer to implement (i.e. beyond 180 days). A shared decision framework and the positivity generated by the Cayman Forward Initiative risks losing momentum if you were to wait for all actions to be completed or present in a single comprehensive agreement. Instead you should not be afraid to implement 'quick wins' where these are possible e.g. the CPA seeking Cabinet approval to delegate functions under Section 5(3) DPA or other actions within the 30 day window, such as the publication of decision records or creation of START. While delegation of functions and the creation of these groups may seem like an interim step to potentially broader change, implementing these actions now already delivers a benefit to the planning process. They are something to build on. We also recognise that for some of these actions in the first 180 days you may require further assistance in their implementation, either due to capacity constraints or inexperience in delivering these actions. For instance, the establishment of START may require detailed Terms of Reference before it can get to work. More broadly, START may require assistance in monitoring and holding to account those responsible for the implementation of these actions. Where that is the case, the facilitators and delivery partners would be able to continue supporting the Initiative.

## Longer-term future work

In addition to the actions beyond the 180 day window, we see two significant longer-term future workstreams.

**A New Development Plan for the Cayman Islands.** At the beginning of this report we noted that an overarching strategic outcome will be the consideration of development plans for each of the islands, replacing the last development plan from 1997. This has been a consistent thread throughout our work on the Cayman Forward Initiative, namely that the absence of an updated, fit-for-purpose development plan is the source of many of the issues with the planning process that Cayman experiences today.

It is ambitious to expect the delivery of a New Development Plan in a 180-day time window. However, the Government can act now to put in place the building blocks to deliver this plan with renewed urgency. START should be at the forefront of this drive (see Recommendation 7), with the specific purpose of considering the necessary reforms that can be taken forward into a New Development Plan (see also Recommendation 1).

As part of this renewed urgency, START's engagement with the Development Plan Appeals Tribunal could consider the following, non-exhaustive list of issues:

- Ensure that every future decision of the NCC and CPA references a New Development Plan i.e. does this decision align or contravene with the island's overarching development plan. Environmental designations, protected areas and critical habitats all need to be reflected in each of the islands' plans.
- The insertion of a 'national importance' clause into new projects under a New Development Plan.
- Replace the out-dated current zoning map model with a proper development plan that matches the reality of the Cayman Islands today. A solution raised during the Summit was to introduce risk-based zoning (e.g. in the form of colour coding), which could give developers more certainty up front. The idea is simple: a landowner looks up the colour of their plot and sees what they can build there. This could be accompanied by stronger guidance explaining when zoning and code compliance is sufficient. To begin early consideration of this, examples of zoning maps from international jurisdictions could be drawn on.
- The inclusion of conservation plans for a particular species. These would need to be clearly specified and defined in this work.

Following the delivery of the Planning Statement to Parliament in September 2026, we would advise undertaking an engagement process that follows a similar methodology to the Cayman Forward Initiative, with scoping, consultation and Summit phases, bringing together the views of stakeholders across Caymanian society.

Given the likely complexity of the issues a New Development Plan must reconcile, a structured, evidence-led process with extensive consultation offers the best route to an outcome that is both technically sound and broadly owned. Having designed and delivered the Cayman Forward Initiative, the facilitators would welcome the opportunity to help convene this engagement, bringing the same methodology to bear on this next stage of work.

**Policy upskilling.** Finally, both the New Development Plan and some of our recommendations (e.g. drawing on international best practice) require policy development expertise. As well as our recommendation to expand FTE resource (e.g. additional planning officers), there would also be value in upskilling existing officials in policy development skillsets to increase your in-house capabilities. This should mirror the standardisation, training and capacity building previously led by the Cabinet Office in partnership with the UK Government's Communication Service which transformed the Cayman Islands Government's communication profession. Having designed and delivered policy processes of this kind, the facilitators would be glad to help shape such a programme where that would be useful.

# Recommendations summary

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The report's thirteen recommendations are summarised in headline form below, grouped by theme. The detail of each recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this report.

## STRATEGY

- R1** Establish a Strategic Taskforce for Action, Reform and Transformation (START) led by the Office of the Premier to oversee delivery of the reform programme.
- 

## LEGISLATIVE

- R2** Legislation to authorise delegation to professional planning officers.
- 

## REGULATORY

- R3** Develop an internal assessment tool that enables DoP to better understand if 'adverse effect' is triggered.
- 
- R4** Update NCC and CPA governance processes with clear and binding timelines.
- 
- R5** Publish all NCC, CPA and DCB minutes, decisions and voting records.
- 

## POLICY

- R6** Incorporate international best practice into Cayman's planning framework.
- 
- R7** Accelerate delivery of the Development Plan.
- 
- R8** Ensure the public understands the rationale behind planning decisions and environmental considerations.
- 

## PROCEDURAL

- R9** CPA to delegate functions under the DPA to speed up the planning application process.
- 
- R10** Consider whether current levels of planning officers and environmental officials are sufficient.
- 
- R11** Modernise information technology (IT) systems to ensure the online planning system is fit-for-purpose.
- 
- R12** Earlier engagement between the NCC and CPA and subject matter experts.
- 
- R13** Additional capacity for Cabinet to consider appeals.
-

# Footnotes

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- 1 This report is anonymised following the same approach towards Chatham House rules that were applied for consultation and Summit phase of the Cayman Forward Initiative. ↩
- 2 The information provided in this paper is for general informational purposes. It does not constitute legal advice. The authors are not licensed attorneys. Readers are encouraged to consult with a licensed legal professional before taking any action based on this information. ↩
- 3 Where legal expertise is needed, we recommend that the Cayman Islands Government use internal and neutral government lawyers, to absolve the need for costly external legal advice. ↩
- 4 “What are the non-negotiable elements of a shared decision framework between the Central Planning Authority and the National Conservation Council, and which of those elements require legislative, regulatory, policy or procedural reform?” ↩
- 5 See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-employment-status-for-tax>. Additional assessment tools that the Cayman Islands Government’s IT teams could use for inspiration include GOV.UK’s checking if individuals can get help with childcare costs (see <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/childcare-calc/>) and eligibility for legal aid (see <https://checklegalaid.service.gov.uk/find-your-problem>). Note that they do not provide a “stand by all results” disclaimer as the HMRC’s CEST tool. ↩
- 6 Miro Board comment: “Only appeals of NCC decisions can be made to Cabinet.” ↩
- 7 Miro Board comment: “The cost is not economic. Any 'appeals' process will have the same costs. The cost is political.” ↩
- 8 Miro Board comment: By mitigation measures do we mean accounting for NCA and CPA requirements ↩
- 9 Miro Board comment: This number is disputed and does not address the core underlying problem of population growth ↩
- 10 Miro Board comment: “The Government just approved and adopted the "Cayman Islands Public and Affordable Housing Policy and 10-year Strategic Plan" as a guiding framework for housing supply.” ↩
- 11 Miro Board comment: Transport must be a consideration in a shared decision framework ↩
- 12 Miro Board comment: IT systems and data sharing between DoE and DoP rather than NCC and CPA ↩
- 13 Miro Board comment: “what kind of data? At the moment, plans for applications for planning permission are visible on the Planning website during the notice period (21 days).” ↩
- 14 Miro Board comment (1): persons have no standing to appeal, so there must be a process for them other than JR; Miro Board comment (2): suggested rewording to include “Natural assets critical to security e.g. mangroves” ↩
- 15 Miro Board comments: suggest broadening scope to any primary habitat or alternatively “Natural assets critical to national security e.g. mangroves, reefs, seagrass, etc” ↩
- 16 Note: expanded five to six reform levers if there was a tie in the votes for fifth place ↩
- 17 Note that while 10 votes were available to all participants, a participant could vote for less than 10 reform levers ↩
- 18 Due to positive progress there were timing constraints during this session. Therefore, Theme 3 regarding ‘could haves’ were not discussed in step two. For transparency, the top six ‘could haves’ were: Improved digital public access to planning data, environmental assessments, variance histories and agency consultation records (PR7); Providing for representation of NCC and CPA members on each other’s Boards (PO1); Membership of CPA and DCB broadened to incl. non planning related sectors in line with AG recommendation (PO2); Integrated CPA-NCC data and resource management system so two bodies can make decisions based on shared evidence (PR6); Allow applicants to apply mitigation measures in response to NCC submissions and for this to be considered within a single submission rather than resubmission (PR5); Reform to protect wetlands and natural drainage and require watershed-scale stormwater assessments where development could worsen flood risk (L9). ↩

CAYMAN FORWARD INITIATIVE

# Planning & Environment Policy Dialogue

Post-Summit Report

DRAFTED

July 2026

The Cayman Islands Government retains ownership of the recommendations set out in this report.



CAYMAN ISLANDS  
GOVERNMENT