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January 8: The Royal Gazette

Breaking News: Petition launched against Warwick beach bar

By Amanda Dale

Protesters have officially launched a petition against a beach bar at Warwick Long Bay, with organisers claiming it has more than 1,000 signatures already. Residents and environmentalists today turned out in force at the site of the proposed bar, bearing placards which read: 'Don't Exploit Park Land' and 'Listen to the people'. Stuart Hayward, chairman of the Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce (BEST), said since organising the petition yesterday, more than 1,000 people have already signed up. He said that by upholding applicant Belcario Thomas' appeal for the 'Sandbar', Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney was destroying "the goose that lays the golden egg" – the Island's natural beauty which attracts tourists in the first place. Mr. Blakeney has said he approved the appeal in the spirit of sustainable development, in terms of balancing tourism, the environment and the economy. However, Mr. Hayward today said: "We sustain Bermuda's tourism potential when we preserve some areas in their pristine state. We sustain Bermuda's integrity when we save our policymakers from doing something we'd all regret. We sustain orderliness in society when we push for law-abiding practices from our citizens and leaders alike." Protesters are to meet Mark Pettingill, MP for Warwick West, to discuss the issue tonight at St. Mary's Church at 8 p.m.. The BEST petition can be found at: [www.best.org.bm](http://www.best.org.bm).

January 7: The Royal Gazette

Petition planned against Warwick Long Bay beach bar

By Amanda Dale

Protesters have questioned the Environment Minister's support for a beach bar, arguing that the precedent-setting concessions he stated in its favour, are why it should not go ahead. Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney outlined his reasons for giving the 'Sandbar' the go-ahead at Warwick Long Bay in yesterday's The Royal Gazette. He said he upheld applicant Belcario Thomas' appeal in the interests of sustainable development and that nine other beach facilities have set a precedent for such concessions. Residents and environmentalists however, said this was a reason why Government should not approve any more. Tomorrow, they will formally launch a petition at Warwick Long Bay against the project. Commenting on previous concessions – which include Gombeys at Clearwater Beach and Horseshoe Bay, Stuart Hayward, chairman of the Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce (BEST), said: "This list is the very reason Warwick Long Bay should be protected from commercial activity. "Residents and visitors alike who want to experience so-called amenities already have much to choose from. The Government has a policy of encouraging more dense development in already dense areas. "A coherent extension of this policy would be to protect pristine parklands such as at Warwick Long Bay from commercial incursion." Mr. Hayward also criticised ten conditions imposed on Mr. Thomas as "potentially... ineffective". These include only using 'reusable serving containers' to avoid trash, developing a pest control programme, restricting audible music to within 100 metres, and improving washroom facilities. "These conditions are potentially as ineffective as, for example, the current laws regarding noise emitting from cars and motorcycles. When was the last time someone was successfully prosecuted for violating those 'conditions'?" said Mr. Hayward. "The Government cannot be slack or lax in enforcing existing conditions, rules and laws, and then expect the public to feel anything but doubt that new conditions will be enforced." Mr. Blakeney told The Royal Gazette the 'Sandbar' was approved in the spirit of "Government's commitment to sustainable development". The Minister upheld the appeal despite the Development Applications Board's refusal of planning permission.

Planning officers rejected the beach bar as Warwick Long Bay is zoned as Open Space and a National Park Conservation Area. The DAB said the 'Sandbar' was contrary both to the Bermuda National Parks Act 1986 and the Bermuda Plan 1992 Planning Statement.

On Monday, Mr. Blakeney said: "Sustainable development doesn't mean 'no' development. It means responsible development that benefits Bermuda environmentally, socially and economically. "As the Minister responsible for this application, I am convinced that the social and economic benefits of this project are important to the continued revitalisation of Bermuda's tourism product, as well as fulfilling Government's desire to encourage Bermudian entrepreneurs."

Mr. Hayward however, responded: "Neither does it (sustainable development) mean 100 percent development. If one follows the Minister's logic, the precedent set by the list must eventually result in commercial development on all beaches.

"Such an outcome is an absurdity. To avoid such an absurdity, the question must be asked how many of Bermuda's beaches does the Minister/Government anticipate will be commercialised, ten percent, 50 percent, 100 percent?

"And if any are to be protected, which ones are they? In our view, this beach, because of its stature as one of the most pristine and picturesque of our beaches, must be at the top of the protected list. In other words, this must be the last beach on which commercial activity is permitted."

He added: "Encouraging private Bermudian entrepreneurs should not be at the expense of publicly-owned resources."

Mr. Hayward went on to describe Mr. Blakeney's pledge of "very strict guidelines to ensure minimal impact to the environment" as "habitually unenforceable".

Local resident Toni Daniels also questioned the need for another beach bar concession.

"The Minister cites nine prior precedents, but in itself this seems to present an argument for necessity of the Warwick Long Bay development," said Miss Daniels.

"How has the need for another such facility been established? Have there been any studies?

Further, the Minister lists three such facilities that all occur within three miles of Warwick Long Bay.

"How has the Minister been able to make such a significant decision about the development of our public parkland, having been in his position for mere weeks?" she said.

"This is a critical matter not to be taken lightly, and such a hasty decision suggests a lack of serious and in-depth consideration and study that should be required."

Commenting on Mr. Blakeney's reference to Government encouraging entrepreneurs, she said:

"Why hasn't this gone to tender?"

Residents and environmentalists say they will continue to oppose the 60-seat restaurant and cocktail bar with Town Hall meetings and "on-site protests".

One local resident, who did not wish to be named, said: "We are still determined to campaign against this. We are very disappointed that the normal (planning) process has been followed but that it has been overruled.

"We think the Minister has made the wrong decision and are going to petition the Premier directly."

December 12: The Bermuda Sun

Battle over beach bar Residents ready to rumble over Warwick Long Bay plan

Angry residents are launching an island-wide protest to stop a "disgusting" beach bar ruining the island's "most pristine beach."

Residents have joined forces with Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce (BEST) to fight the controversial bar and restaurant at Warwick Long Bay. On-site protests, petitions and public meetings are all in the pipeline "to raise everyone's attention to what is happening." About 40 residents and BEST - who are expected to call themselves the Warwick Long Bay Action Group - attended a meeting on Wednesday evening ready to go "full steam ahead with their protest." They are warning developer Belcario Thomas, who has been given the go-ahead for his controversial proposal, that he has a fight on his hands. Entrepreneur Mr. Thomas believes the bar, which will be on temporary wooden decking above the sand dunes, will "broaden the offerings" to tourists at a time the island needs it most. But residents believe it's a "disgusting example of how making money is more important than preserving our heritage." Warwick West MP Mark Pettingill said: "The residents have a number of valid concerns regarding the environment, noise and traffic and they don't think they have been heard. "All they can do now is protest, they are determined to

make sure all roads have been exhausted." He added: "Their paramount concern is that because of the nature of the small island, we need to preserve the natural state of our land. "There's a fine line between preservation and progress in the name of tourism. Once natural beauty has gone, it's gone, it can't be brought back." Plan of action A 37-year-old local resident, who didn't want to be named, said they had called on the expertise of BEST to "develop a plan of action." She said: "We cannot just sit by and let it happen, we will make our voices heard. "The next step is to organize petitions, town hall meetings and on-site protests. "We aren't going to let this go, we are going to make sure everyone knows just what is happening. "And this isn't just about local residents, it's an island-wide issue, it affects everyone as it could be the start of things to come." About 100 residents launched a collective objection to the original planning application, which was stalled after the Development Application Board (DAB) decided it breached regulations. However, the developers appealed and Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney ruled in their favour. The mom, who lives near Warwick Long Bay, said it was now "full-steam ahead with getting the word out there." She added: "We are extremely disappointed that the minister granted permission without giving any real reasoning and despite the advice of experts. "Residents have been opposed to this development from the inception and we have taken all the correct channels of action that were open to us. We won't let this happen" Environmentalist Stuart Hayward, said BEST and residents agreed that "education and information" was needed. He said: "We brainstormed our options and all ideas were put on the table. "The residents are ready to launch a campaign and have each agreed on different tasks to alert the public to what is going on." Mr. Hayward, who helped residents stop the Southlands development nearby in Warwick, added: "This is the most pristine beach in Bermuda's arsenal of tourist attractions. "Some tourists don't want to see alcohol and litter on a beach, they want a restful vacation without any commercial activity. "We are drawing the line here as if they honour commercial use on this beach, it will throw open the door for others to follow." Deborah Titterton-Narraway, who lives near Warwick Long Bay, called it "totally the wrong location" and said she would prefer existing beach bars to be "utilized to the best of their ability." The mom-of-two uses Warwick Long Bay "all the time" with her family and doesn't want its natural beauty to be destroyed. Mrs. Titterton-Narraway said: "It's a totally natural environment, you can walk the dog along the trails and you pass horses or the regiment marching. All that would be affected by a business being there. "The reason Warwick Long Bay beach is so popular because it is natural and quiet. The people who use this beach do so to avoid the tourist attraction at Horseshoe Bay, Tobacco Bay and Snorkel Park. "People should be free to choose a public beach with a restaurant or one without." Mrs. Titterton-Narraway is most worried about the level of noise, as residents are already disturbed by beach parties and events on the beach in the summer, and safety as the beach has an extreme drop off of the sand level and also a strong current. She said: "The level of noise coming from the music and bar customers is a huge concern. Sounds travel, especially at night. We are already fighting someone else's noise and it's not pleasant." Developer Mr. Thomas and Minister Blakeney were not available for comment. The Warwick Long Bay Action Group will hold another meeting next month. Anyone who wants further information can email [info@best.org.bm](mailto:info@best.org.bm)

December 12: The Royal Gazette

Objectors mull protests against Warwick Long Bay beach bar

By Amanda Dale

Residents and environmental campaigners are ready to stage "on-site protests" against plans for a beach bar on the South Shore.

They say they will also mobilise public opinion against the 'Sandbar' through petitions and Town Hall meetings, as well as fighting any application for a liquor licence.

Opposition to the bar and restaurant, earmarked for Warwick Long Bay, escalated into direct action at a public meeting on Wednesday.

One resident said: "We are going to form an action group to galvanise public opinion against the development, with the help of BEST (Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce).

"The group is going to organise a series of petitions, Town Hall meetings and on-site protests, and will object to any application for a liquor licence."

She said: "I don't know if you can describe the mood as militant, but people are very frustrated that the normal and due process was followed, the process of writing objections and then having the appeal rejected.

"In spite of the DAB (Development Applications Board) and an independent inspector opposing the bar, the Minister of the Environment has allowed it to proceed. People are angry that there is a Planning process in place which has rejected the bar, but it has then been approved."

Last night former UBP MP Quinton Edness said in order for the bar to go ahead, the law would have to be changed. Mr. Edness, a former Minister of Works, Agriculture and Housing, said the land at Warwick Long Bay would have to be delisted from the Bermuda National Parks Act 1986. "The Long Bay development cannot take place just from the (Environment) Minister giving his approval," said Mr. Edness.

"Long Bay is a protected park listed in the schedule of the Parks Act, which means in order for development to take place on any portion of the Park an affirmative resolution has to be taken to the House of Parliament and debated to delist it from the schedule.

"Should the Government proceed with a development or sanction a development on a listed property, it will be violating its own law and so could be subject to a legal challenge."

Independent Senator Walwyn Hughes this week said the granting of a liquor licence would also break the law.

Sen. Hughes spoke out against the development at this week's Senate, saying he was "disappointed" with new Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney's upholding of the appeal.

"I would like to express my disappointment," he said. "This is something which disturbs a lot of people with environmental concerns. I think everybody knows that stretch of beach is a magnificent pristine area which falls in the National Parks scheme.

"I think a lot of people are concerned and disappointed that a decision was taken which overruled the decision of Planners, the DAB and an inspector as well.

"It is sad when you see these pristine areas developed," he said. "These areas are supposed to be kept as far as possible in their pristine state. It is hard to see how a bar and restaurant would fit into that."

Sen. Hughes said: "In the Liquor Licence Act there is a clause which precludes issuing a liquor licence other than a temporary licence, such as for a day. Section 22 (3a) of the Liquor Licence Act (1974) says a licence other than an occasional licence shall not be granted where the premises form part of a Park. And of course this area is in a Park area.

"It's difficult to see how that particular property can be used in this way unless the law is changed. This raises another issue which should have been taken into account when the application was considered."

Opposition Senator Michael Fahy added: "I support entrepreneurship, however this calls into question the Planning process. How is it we can have Planning officers recommend this should not be done and then we have a new Minister of the Environment override all those recommendations?

"I think we need to look at the Planning Act, at how a Minister can override decisions of those in the know."

Mr. Blakeney has upheld an appeal by developer Belcario Thomas following a DAB rejection of the 60-seat restaurant and cocktail bar.

The 'Sandbar' will be situated to the west of the Warwick Long Bay car park and will consist of a split-level wooden decking, with panels anchored into the sand to enable their removal in the event of a hurricane and the end of the summer season.

Mr. Thomas — the events' organiser behind Unite, says he aims to create an "ambient, Ibiza-type bar" and will follow Government conservation and environmental advice to make it "as environmentally-friendly as possible".

He says the 2, 500 sq ft development will be operational between May and November, with a mobile kitchen and 'Port-a-loo' toilets.

Planning officers refused permission for the 'Sandbar' as Warwick Long Bay is zoned as Open Space and a National Park Conservation Area.

The DAB report said: "Warwick Long Bay is the last of Bermuda's pristine beaches. The proposal will have a dominating and detrimental impact on the natural aesthetic of the beach."

It said the development was contrary to the Bermuda National Parks Act 1986 and the Bermuda Plan 1992 Planning Statement.

There were 107 letters of objection to the 'Sandbar', and more than 80 residents went on to protest Mr. Thomas' Planning appeal. Among the residents' concerns are noise, litter and potential parking overflow, while others have called the project an environmental "travesty".

Commenting on Mr. Blakeney's upholding of the appeal, BEST chairman Stuart Hayward said: "What is the point of laws and regulations and the expert counsel of Planners, conservation specialists, custodians of parklands and even an independent inspector, if a Minister can ignore it all, and in the process endorse the trashing of the very environment he is pledged to protect?" Mr. Blakeney was last night off-Island but said: "I will be making a statement with regard to the Warwick Long Bay beach bar in due course."

December 5: The Bermuda Sun

Warwick Long Bay beach bar to go ahead

But environmentalists are livid, and claim it will 'wreck' the south shore beach

A row has reignited over a new beach bar and restaurant after Government gave the controversial project the green light.

Belcario Thomas, the entrepreneur behind the proposed development at Warwick Long Bay, yesterday defended the plan, saying it would "broaden the offerings" to tourists at a time the island needs it most.

He also said his management team is working closely with Government conservationists to ensure the restaurant has as little negative impact as possible.

However, environmentalists are furious, saying new Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney steamrolled the scheme through the planning objections of experts. The Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce (BEST) said the "sickening" disregard of safeguards and regulations "opens the door to the wrecking of every last beach on our coastline."

The plan originally stalled after the Development Application Board (DAB) decided it breached regulations. However, the developers appealed and Mr. Blakeney ruled in their favour.

Environmentalist Stuart Hayward said: "Warwick Long Bay is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and most pristine of Bermuda's beaches. If its rank, supported by laws and regulations, cannot protect this special beach from commercial development, then no beach is safe.

"What we are seeing here is the opening of the door to the wrecking of every last beach on our coastline ... with this decision we are selling out our heritage and an environmental treasure. Every Bermuda resident should take note of and take issue with this decision," he said.

Mr. Hayward also said the community should ask, "What is the point of laws and regulations and the expert counsel of planners, conservation specialists, custodians of parklands, and even an independent inspector if a minister can ignore it all, and in the process endorse the trashing of the very environment he is pledged to protect?

"One would have thought that a new Minister with little background in environmental matters would have the good sense to make a decision based on sound advice."

Mr. Hayward said the community must also ask, "What is to be gained by this development? This is no benefit to tourism. This is of no benefit to the residents. Any jobs created will likely require imported workers. If tourists or residents want to visit a beach with commercial facilities, they have plenty of options, from Tobacco Bay to Horseshoe Bay and beyond.

He continued: "This is of no special benefit to anyone, except a private individual who will now capitalise on private enterprise conducted on sacred public parkland."

Mr. Thomas, responded by saying that the beach bar would help attract tourists at a time of economic downturn.

He said: "Similar offerings along the beaches of Tobacco Bay, Horseshoe Bay, and others have proven both responsible and popular over the years with residents and tourists alike and we are committed to providing a similar, small, low key quality product.

"Our temporary wooden structure with mobile kitchen will be minimal and easily removable and we have committed to introducing only endemic or native coastal species to the area to enhance the space as well as assist in the reduction of damage that naturally occurs.

"As an added bonus, we will renovate the existing public washroom facilities at no cost to the taxpayer," he said.

Mr. Thomas again stressed that he and his development team would continue to consult with Government conservationists and environmentalists to ensure that the bar leaves a minimal footprint as possible on the surrounding environment.

December 5: The Royal Gazette

Outcry as Minister allows beach bar and restaurant at Warwick Long Bay

By Tim Smith

A beach bar and restaurant are set for Warwick Long Bay after new Environment Minister Glenn Blakeney upheld an appeal by developers.

Environment campaigners said they were “incredulous” at the decision which overturns an earlier refusal of permission for the Sandbar — a 60-seat restaurant and cocktail bar west of the beach’s car park.

“What is the point of laws and regulations and the expert counsel of planners, conservation specialists, custodians of parklands and even an independent inspector, if a Minister can ignore it all, and in the process endorse the trashing of the very environment he is pledged to protect?” asked Stuart Hayward of Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce (BEST).

Applicant Belcario Thomas must now get a building permit and stick to 12 conditions including rodent control and restrictions on noise.

Commenting publicly at length on the project for the first time yesterday, Mr. Thomas said in a statement: “I am encouraged that this initiative, designed to broaden the offerings of our tourism product, has now been sanctioned by the Ministry of the Environment, particularly in light of the global economic slowdown and the potential consequences for Bermuda’s tourism.

“Similar offerings along the beaches of Tobacco Bay, Horseshoe Bay and others have proven both responsible and popular over the years with residents and tourists alike and we are committed to providing a similar, small, low key quality product.

“Our temporary wooden structure with mobile kitchen will be minimal and easily removable and we have committed to introducing only endemic or native coastal species to the area to enhance the space. As an added bonus, we will renovate the existing public washroom facilities at no cost to the taxpayer.

“If the restaurant is permitted to open, I am confident that with a great management team, and continued support from the community, we can deliver a simple, quality and responsible offering which continues to consult with and take heed of concerns, advice and stipulations of Government conservationists and environmentalists alike.

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank the wide base of support we are receiving while navigating this challenging process.”

More than 100 residents had raised objections to the Sandbar, citing noise, litter and potential parking overflow.

Mr. Hayward continued in his statement: “The Minister has also gone against the considered decision of the Development Applications Board, whose interpretation of the Planning legislation and other factors moved them to deny the application in the first place.

“It is sickening to see decades of good sense Planning legislation and public shaping of consecutive development plans thrown out the window by a Minister who, in doing so, violates the trust placed in him upon accepting the environment portfolio.

“What is to be gained by this development? This is no benefit to tourism. This is of no benefit to the residents. Any jobs created will likely require imported workers. If tourists or residents want to visit a beach with commercial facilities, they have plenty of options, from Tobacco Bay to Horseshoe Bay and beyond.

“This is of no special benefit to anyone, except a private individual who will now capitalise on private enterprise conducted on sacred public parkland.”

Mr. Hayward suggested Government could show it was interested in promoting sustainable tourism by aggressively seeking to sustain Bermuda’s image.

“Warwick Long Bay is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and most pristine of Bermuda’s beaches,” he said.

“If its rank, supported by laws and regulations, cannot protect this special beach from commercial development, then no beach is safe. What we are seeing here is the opening of the door to the

wrecking of every last beach on our coastline. If Warwick Long Bay is not safe, then no beach can be saved.

“With this decision we are selling out our heritage and an environmental treasure. Every Bermuda resident should take note of and take issue with this decision.”