



Government of the
Commonwealth of The Bahamas

Grand Bahama: A Framework for Stability and Growth

Summary of the Green Paper on
Development, Governance and Regulation

Draft for Cabinet consideration | October 2026



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This document summarises the Green Paper *Grand Bahama: A Framework for Stability and Growth*. The Green Paper sets out the proposals in full, with the evidence, the options and all 51 consultation questions.

The Green Paper sets out policy proposals. It does not itself amend existing law or confer a new entitlement.

Draft for Cabinet consideration. Publication details and submission arrangements will be confirmed for the consultation launch.

Proposed consultation period: 1 November 2026 to 30 April 2027.

Cover: container cranes at Freeport Harbour. Photographs: Office of the Prime Minister.



Picture: A cruise ship in dry dock at the Grand Bahama Shipyard, Freeport. Office of the Prime Minister

Summary

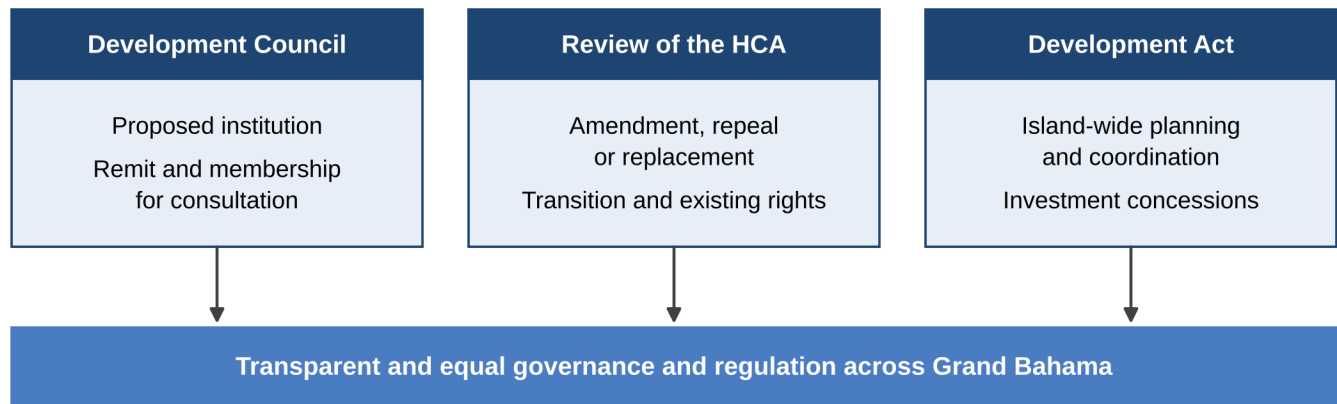
The Government's position

1. Grand Bahama is one island with one economy. Freeport, East Grand Bahama and West Grand Bahama depend on one another for jobs, services and opportunity. The Government's primary objective is transparent and equal governance and regulation across the whole island. That objective is not itself open to consultation. What is open is how to achieve it.
2. The Government considers the Hawksbill Creek Agreement (HCA) to be an antiquated, colonial, pre-independence mechanism. It has outlived its utility and has created an economic imbalance on the island. National economic policy for Grand Bahama must be set by the elected Government of The Bahamas. No institution responsible principally for the Port Area should hold an effective veto over the development of the island as a whole.
3. Freeport remains the commercial, maritime and industrial centre of the island. The objective is not to diminish Freeport. It is to ensure that Freeport's success contributes to the prosperity of Grand Bahama as a whole. Reform will be deliberate, consultative and lawful. Legitimate property, contractual and investment rights will be respected, and there will be no retrospective interference with them. Any change to the law will be made through the proper legal process, with clear transition arrangements and continuity of essential services.
4. The Partial Final Award of 27 February 2026 informs this work. Seven of the eight counterclaims of the Grand Bahama Port Authority (GBPA) failed. For different legal reasons, the Award materially constrains the proposition that the HCA creates an autonomous and perpetual private regulatory franchise, insulated from national law and Government oversight. The Award did not repeal the HCA, transfer functions to Government or establish a debt. Each proposed change therefore requires its own lawful means of implementation.

Three connected proposals

5. The Green Paper proposes three connected reforms. They must work together. A new institution cannot cure an unclear allocation of legal powers, and a new law must say who does what.
- a. **A Grand Bahama Development Council.** The Government's proposed starting point is a defined programme of policy advice, rather than an immediate transfer of executive or regulatory powers. The Council's remit, membership, accountability and any continuing role are questions for consultation.
 - b. **A structured review of the Hawksbill Creek Agreement.** The review will examine amendment, repeal or replacement, including combinations of measures where different provisions or functions require different treatment. It will address existing rights and obligations and the provisions necessary for transition.
 - c. **A Grand Bahama Development Act.** The Act would establish the selected framework for island-wide development, planning, regulatory coordination and public accountability. It will include consideration of concessions for investment throughout Grand Bahama, with possible enhanced concessions outside Freeport to accelerate economic stability in the rest of the island.

Figure 1: Three complementary proposals for one framework



Note: Proposed design. The Council's initial advisory remit and any continuing functions are subject to consultation.

6. The proposals are complementary. The Council concerns institutional capacity and representation. The HCA review concerns the legal basis and operation of the existing settlement. The Development Act concerns the statutory framework for the future. The relationship between them must be resolved as a coherent package.
7. A separate, time-limited Consultation Steering Committee is proposed to run the six-month consultation. It will coordinate engagement, organise the receipt and analysis of evidence and prepare recommendations for submission through the responsible Minister. It will not grant concessions, vary the HCA, determine individual permissions or acquire a permanent regulatory or delivery role. Cabinet will retain the policy decisions to be taken after consultation.
8. The White Paper will state the selected combination of measures. It will explain the responsibilities, legal measures and transitional arrangements needed to make them work, and it will distinguish enactment from commencement.



Picture: On approach to Grand Bahama. Office of the Prime Minister

What the reform is for

9. The Government's supporting objectives are:
 - investment and employment throughout Grand Bahama
 - faster economic stability in East and West Grand Bahama
 - improved public services
 - clear public accountability for development decisions
 - economic and climate resilience
10. Equal governance does not require identical facilities, identical administrative arrangements or uniform incentives in every location. Differences must have an intelligible public purpose and operate within a transparent framework. Every resident and every business on Grand Bahama should know who holds authority, how decisions are made and how to obtain an answer or a remedy.

Table 1: Grand Bahama at a glance

Measure	Latest published figure	Comparison
Economic output	B\$1,808.3 million in 2024, 11.4% of national GDP	Up 13.4% on 2023 but 7.5% below 2021
Census population	46,740 in 2022	51,368 in 2010, a fall of 9.0%
Unemployment rate	8.7% in Q3 and Q4 2025	12.8% in January 2025 (Q1)
Foreign entries	1,090,677 in 2025	570,513 in 2024, a rise of 91.2%
Stopover visitors	101,077 in 2025	121,636 in 2024, a fall of 16.9%
Dwellings	22,127 at the 2022 census	4,306 vacant, about 19.5%

Source: Bahamas National Statistical Institute; Central Bank of The Bahamas; Ministry of Tourism. Output is nominal, at current prices. Entries and stopovers are measured differently and are not parts of one total. Chapter 2 of the Green Paper gives the definitions and limitations.

The choices on which we want your views

11. The consultation concerns how to achieve the objective: which institutions should hold which responsibilities, what a new law should contain, how existing rights should be protected and in what order changes should be made. Table 2 summarises the principal choices.

Table 2: The principal choices

Proposal	Options set out in the Green Paper	The Government's position
Development Council	Advisory tasks; membership and appointment; chairing; safeguards; any continuing functions.	Begin with a defined, time-limited programme of policy advice. Any continuing role must rest on a specific function that existing arrangements cannot perform.
Review of the HCA	Route A: targeted amendment. Route B: repeal with consequential provision. Route C: a comprehensive successor framework. Routes may be combined.	The HCA has outlived its utility. Each route will be examined function by function. The precise legal route is a question for consultation.
Island-wide governance	Clearer allocation of functions with stronger coordination; common service standards; reassignment of specified functions.	Start from the framework as it operates in practice, verified function by function. No allocation is fixed at this stage.
Development Act and concessions	Geographic reach; eligibility; public benefit conditions; fiscal protection; administration.	Concessions throughout Grand Bahama, with possible enhanced concessions outside Freeport. Any change to existing concessions will be predictable and, where appropriate, phased.

Questions we are asking

- Q5.1** Which substantive advisory tasks would add most value to the reform programme, and how should the initial mandate distinguish them from decisions reserved to existing institutions?
- Q6.2** How can targeted amendment, repeal with consequential provision, or a comprehensive successor framework best give effect to the Government's policy objective? Which combination of legal instruments is appropriate for particular functions?
- Q6.3** Which existing licences, approvals, concessions, contracts and other lawful interests require express savings or transitional provisions, and what treatment would provide clear administration during the change?
- Q7.3** How should concessions throughout Grand Bahama and possible enhanced concessions outside Freeport be structured to address their intended development constraints?
- Q8.2** Which functions can be administered coherently through coordination or common standards, and which require a change in statutory responsibility to implement island-wide equal governance?
- Q9.3** What engagement arrangements will secure effective participation throughout Freeport, East and West Grand Bahama within the six-month period?

These are 6 of the 51 questions in the Green Paper, which lists them all in Annex E. You may answer any question, suggest alternatives or provide evidence.

Have your say

- 12. The consultation will run for six months, from 1 November 2026 to 30 April 2027. The Government wants to hear from everyone with a stake in the island's future: residents, workers, businesses, licensees, the GBPA, local government and community organisations. The programme will include engagement in Freeport, East Grand Bahama and West Grand Bahama, thematic discussions and written submissions.
- 13. You may comment on any of the proposals, tell us how the present arrangements affect you, or suggest a better way of achieving the objective. Each response will be considered on its substance. The number of submissions will not in itself determine the merits of an option.

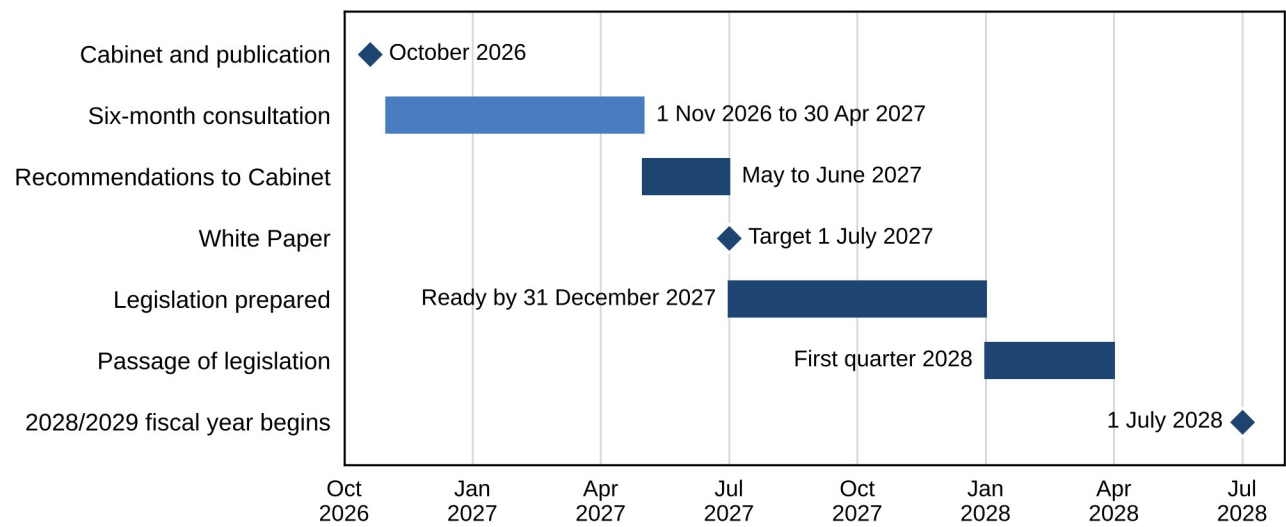
How to respond

[website address]; [email address]; [postal address]; [locations in Freeport, East Grand Bahama and West Grand Bahama where printed copies can be collected and responses delivered]. Responses must be received by [time] on 30 April 2027. Enquiries: [name, office and telephone number].

What happens next

- 14. Final recommendations will follow consideration of the full record after the closing date. They are proposed for Cabinet consideration in May and June 2027.
- 15. The Government intends to publish a White Paper on 1 July 2027 setting out its decisions and the reasons for them. Draft legislation is targeted for completion by 31 December 2027, with passage in the first quarter of 2028, subject to the relevant decisions and parliamentary process. This sequence is intended to allow the new framework to be properly budgeted for in the 2028/2029 fiscal year.

Figure 2: The proposed route from consultation to implementation



Note: Proposed targets, subject to the relevant decisions, publication arrangements and parliamentary process.

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