

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

PRESS NOTICE

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TEAM TO RETURN TO THE BVI NEXT WEEK

The Commission of Inquiry (“the COI”) was announced on 18 January 2021 to look into whether corruption, abuse of office or other serious dishonesty may have taken place amongst public, elected and statutory officials in recent years. The Commissioner, the Rt Hon Sir Gary Hickinbottom, was sworn in on 22 January and began his work from that date.

The COI is currently engaged in the second stage of the Inquiry, namely obtaining further information and documentation in response to the information already provided by members of the public. The COI has to date sent over 100 letters of request for information/documents to public officials, including elected and statutory officials.

Members of the COI team intend to return to the British Virgin Islands next week to continue with the information gathering stage of the COI. The Commissioner will be accompanied by Mr Steven Chandler (Secretary to the COI) and Mr Andrew King (Senior Solicitor to the COI). All three will of course observe the current 14 days quarantine requirement on arrival.

The Commissioner is currently considering holding preliminary hearings in the BVI in late April and early May, prior to the main oral hearings. The Commissioner will publish rules to regulate the conduct and management of the COI’s hearings shortly.

In the meantime, the Commissioner continues to encourage anyone who believes they have information that may assist the Inquiry, who has not yet submitted it to the COI, to submit that information directly to the COI as soon as possible via the secure website portal (www.bvi.public-inquiry.uk). As well as the website portal, the COI has provided a number of different and secure ways for individuals to share information with the Inquiry Team, including a dedicated email address (contactcoi@bvi.public-inquiry.uk), a WhatsApp phone number for messages or audio/video calls (+44 (0)7832 111254), and a UK postal address (The Secretary, BVI Commission of Inquiry, Room RB 1.11, 22 Whitehall, London SW1A 2EG). Please be assured that all information will be received and held in strict confidence.

The Commissioner would like to remind members of the public, and public officers, that the BVI Government (BVI) Inquiry Response Unit (IRU), which has been set up to facilitate responses to requests for information made to public servants by the COI, is wholly separate from the COI. The COI is, and will remain, entirely independent of the BVI. Members of the public cannot engage with the COI through the IRU: if they wish to engage with the COI, they should contact the COI directly. If they wish, public servants too may of course make direct contact with the COI if they have relevant information.

If anyone wishes to meet/speak with the Commissioner on his return to the Islands, they should contact the Secretary who will be able to arrange a face-to-face or a remote meeting (for example by WhatsApp).

Once again the Commissioner thanks the people of the BVI for their continued engagement and support.

Steven Chandler
Secretary to the Commission of Inquiry

22 March 2021