

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

PRESS NOTICE

CLARIFICATION ON THE ROLE OF THE IRU – IT IS NOT PART OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

The Commission of Inquiry (“the Commission”) 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. Sir Gary Hickinbottom is the sole Commissioner.

It has been brought to the Commissioner’s attention that recent publicity and information about the BVI Government’s (BVI) Inquiry Response Unit (IRU) is having a misleading effect resulting in confusion about the IRU’s role and function. To be clear, the IRU is **not** part of the independent Commission of Inquiry. It is a unit set up by the BVI to work in conjunction with the Attorney General’s Chambers with a modest but helpful goal of assisting with the mechanics of producing information requested by the Commission of Government officials. The Commissioner has written to the Attorney General to register his concerns about this publicity, and asking for it to be corrected.

While the Commissioner welcomes the establishment of the IRU to help implement the BVI’s expressed policy that all ministries, departments, statutory bodies and Government-owned entities provide appropriate and timely cooperation with the Inquiry, he wants to reassure members of the public, and public officers, that the IRU is wholly separate from the Commission. The Commission is, and will remain, entirely independent of the BVI.

Members of the public cannot engage with the Commission through the IRU: if they wish to engage with the Commission, they should contact it directly.

The Commission renews its open invitation to anyone who believes they have information that may assist the Inquiry, who has not yet submitted it to the Commission, to submit that information as soon as possible via the secure website portal (www.bvi.public-inquiry.uk).

As well as the website portal, the Commission 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.

Steven Chandler
Secretary to the Commission

4 March 2021