

## **BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

### **PRESS NOTICE**

#### **COMMISSION OF INQUIRY UPDATE: FIRST HEARINGS**

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 Rt Hon Sir Gary Hickinbottom is the sole Commissioner.

In line with the Commissioner’s intention that the COI should operate in as flexible a manner as possible and given the need to maintain its progress, the Commissioner intends to begin hearings in Road Town in the week commencing 3 May 2021.

Over recent weeks, the COI has sent out letters of request seeking information and documents relevant to its Terms of Reference. These requests continue. Whilst the requests have resulted in many documents being lodged with the COI, for which the Commissioner is grateful, he considers that hearings are now required to facilitate the prompt and full production of relevant information and documents.

That will be the purpose of the initial hearings, which are therefore likely to be short and conducted in private so as to ensure that documents and information that cannot at present be disclosed in public can be securely provided to the COI. However, mindful of the need for openness where possible, following each hearing he will give directions for any publicity of that hearing he considers appropriate.

The first summons requiring a respondent to appear before the Commissioner for examination on oath or affirmation, and to provide information was issued today.

The Commissioner expects that further hearings will be necessary over the coming weeks. The COI will issue further press notices as necessary to update the public as to the timetable and nature of future hearings.

The ‘COI Rules’, dealing with matters of evidence and procedure, and two further Protocols, one concerning applications for legal representation and the other for witness expenses, were published by the Commissioner on 13 April 2021. The Rules will assist all those who may be involved in the COI. The two Protocols give guidance as to the process by which the Commissioner will consider applications to be represented by counsel and claims for appropriate witness expenses (which exclude any fees and expenses incurred by a person in respect of legal representation or advice). They can be found on the COI’s website at [www.bvi.public-inquiry.uk](http://www.bvi.public-inquiry.uk).

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](http://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](mailto:contactcoi@bvi.public-inquiry.uk)), a WhatsApp phone number for messages or audio/video calls (+ 1 (284) 340 9078), 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

23 April 2021