

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

PRESS NOTICE

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY – LIVE STREAMING OF HEARINGS

The Commission of Inquiry (“the COI”) was issued on 19 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; and to make appropriate recommendations as to governance and the operation of the law enforcement and justice systems in the BVI. The Rt Hon Sir Gary Hickinbottom is the sole Commissioner.

The Commissioner has emphasised that he wants the inquiry to be conducted in as open and transparent a manner as possible. He expects those who have been granted the right to participate in the inquiry and their legal representatives to make every effort to assist him in ensuring a transparent process and that the BVI public are given accurate information as to the COI’s progress.

For reasons that have been explained previously, the initial hearings of the COI were conducted in private. Transcripts of those hearings are available on the COI’s website.

However, going forward, wherever possible, COI hearings will be conducted in public. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the public are not able to attend the hearings in person; but the hearings will be live streamed via the COI’s dedicated YouTube channel. The channel can be accessed via this link: [BVI COI YouTube channel](#). The link will also be available on the COI’s website.

There may be occasions where for good reason it will be necessary to hold a private hearing or go into private session (e.g. where some confidential government document is being considered). However, the Commissioner will ensure that these occasions are kept to a minimum.

The live stream will be subject to a three-minute time delay. In the event that a witness gives an answer which contains information that may not be made public, then the time delay will allow either Counsel to the Commission, the legal representative of a participant or a witness to raise the matter. The Commissioner will then direct that the live stream be paused and the hearing will go into private session. Once the Commissioner has determined the matter and any confidential evidence heard in private, the live stream will be resumed.

The next hearing is scheduled for Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 10am, when the Commissioner will hear legal submissions on behalf of the Attorney General on the extent to which Cabinet documents should be disclosed to the COI and thereafter to the public. The Commissioner has not received any application that this hearing be in private. It will therefore be live streamed. Further, the transcript of proceedings will be made available on the COI’s website as soon as possible after the hearing.

Steven Chandler
Secretary to the Commission

31 May 2021