Development of a Strategic Plan for the Saint Lucia National Trust

Main elements of a new planning framework

April 2019

The Saint Lucia National Trust (the Trust) is a membership organisation established under the Saint Lucia National Trust Act Cap 6.02 of the Revised Laws of Saint Lucia to conserve the natural and cultural patrimony of Saint Lucia for present and future generations. The operations of the Trust and its organs are controlled by the Saint Lucia National Trust Rules, enshrined in Statutory Instrument No. 27 of 1984.

In 2010, the Trust formulated a ten-year strategic plan. In light of the changing environment and related challenges in which the organisation operates, the Council of the Trust has triggered an earlier review of this strategic plan to take account of these changes, and a new strategic plan (2019 – 2029) is currently being developed. Between October 2018 and March 2019, a number of activities, including workshops, focus groups, interviews and reviews of documents, has been held to assess the environment within which the Trust operates, to review progress made and to consult members and partners on needs, priorities and opportunities.

This short paper presents the main messages arising from the process to date, and which the Trust should consider in the formulation of its new strategic plan.

**FOCUS, FOCUS, the Trust needs to be more focused**

The rationale:

- the Trust was created in 1975, with a very broad mandate\(^1\), at a time when there were very few organisations, if any, with mandates and programmes in natural and cultural heritage;
- since then, several organisations have been created to work on (natural) environmental issues, including four institutions (in addition to the Trust) legally mandated to establish and manage protected areas;
- there is a strong view, among partners and other stakeholders, that the work of the Trust is too dispersed and lacks focus. As expressed by the head of one of its partner institutions: “they are cutting themselves too thin”\(^2\);

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1. The functions of the Trust as per the Act of 1975 are:
   - a) the listing of buildings, objects and monuments of prehistoric, historic and architectural interest and places of natural beauty with their animal and plant life;
   - b) the listing of objects of prehistoric, historic and archaeological interests;
   - c) the compilation of photographic and architectural records of the above;
   - d) to locate and to promote the preservation of buildings and objects of archaeological architectural, historic, artistic or traditional interest and the establishment of museums;
   - e) to promote and preserve for the benefit and enjoyment of the State of submarine and subterranean areas of beauty or natural or historic interest and to preserve (as far as possible) their natural aspect, features, animals and plant life;
   - f) to list the flora and fauna in the areas mentioned in paragraph (e) and to promote their conservation;
   - g) to make the public aware of the value and beauty of the State’s heritage as set out above;
   - h) to pursue a policy of preservation, and to act in an advisory capacity;
   - i) to acquire property for the benefit of the State;
   - j) to attract funds by means of subscription, donations, bequests and grants for the execution of the above objects;
   - k) to administer the Trust property for the furtherance and achievement of the above objects.

2. All parts in inverted comas are quotes from interviews carried out as part of the strategic planning process between January and March 2019.
among the functions specified in the Act, some are incompletely performed (by the Trust or other organisations), especially with respect to the built heritage;

as expressed by one staff member, “we do a lot of things”, but delivering tangible impact requires focus and clear priorities: doing “a lot of things” can become doing too many things and therefore not doing them in depth;

there is some duplication of efforts between institutions, at times resulting in tensions.

Implications for the new strategic plan:
- the work of the Trust should be governed by existing public policy, notably the National Cultural Policy and the various environmental policies;
- the Trust’s core mission, the area in which it creates value, is the conservation and promotion of heritage and patrimony, reflecting the interdependence between nature and culture, and placing heritage at the centre of national development and identity;
- there should be a focus on places and sites, the places that make us who we are.

How will this be done?
- by formulating and disseminating a clear message, a vision of heritage and of its place in national, community and individual development;
- by drawing up a new mission statement and a new tagline;
- through the identification and a progressive phasing-out of activities that are not within focus;
- by developing a new programme of work centred around places / sites.

Programming in cultural heritage
The rationale:
- the conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage is an urgent priority at national and community levels;
- this is an area where the Trust has a very clear mandate, but that mandate is only partially fulfilled;
- in recent times, there has been an imbalance between work on the natural environment and work on the built / cultural / historical heritage;
- this imbalance is partly due to the fact that the Trust had to “follow the market: it is easier to find funding for environmental work than for historic sites and buildings”;
- the preservation of buildings, sites and monuments of archaeological, architectural, historic, artistic or traditional interest is the only area in the Trust’s legal mandates in which no other national organisation is significantly involved;
- while the collection, study, preservation and promotion of cultural objects is in the mandate of the Trust as stated in the Act, very little work is being done in this domain (by the Trust or any other organisation).

Implications for the Trust’s new strategic plan:
- within the broader realm of cultural heritage, the Trust should retain its focus on the built heritage;
- priority should be given to the completion and updating of listings of buildings, monuments and sites;
- this programming priority should be complemented by policy work, to promote and advocate for appropriate legislation, planning guidelines and incentives;
- quality work on the built heritage will require increased capacity and investment in research and documentation;
while the Trust cannot be directly responsible for the protection, adaptive use, interpretation and restoration of all sites deserving attention, it should act as a hub for the provision of and access to technical assistance and support.

How will this be done?
• by developing a new programme of work;
• in consultation with other organisations, as part of a coordinated approach to cultural heritage conservation and promotion that involves a sharing of responsibilities and a division of labour that reduces overlaps and duplication of efforts;
• with a capacity development plan (internal and external);
• with suitable institutional partnerships to ensure that skills are available to support the programme of work.

**Programming in natural heritage**

The rationale:
• there are several organisations with formal mandates in conservation and management of nature and natural resources, including five with specific mandates for the establishment and management of protected areas;
• the Trust has provided a leadership role in protected area planning at national level (System of Protected Areas), but is marginally involved in the management of natural sites;
• as demonstrated in the case of the Pointe Sables Environmental Protection Area (PSEPA), the Trust can play a unique, valuable role in coordination, fundraising and support to local action;
• there is a strong, unmet demand for the conservation and management of natural sites at community level and for the strengthening of local-level capacity to identify and manage such sites.

Implications for the Trust’s new strategic plan:
• avoid duplication with the mandates and activities of natural resource management agencies by keeping the focus on heritage and developing rules of engagement with partner agencies;
• retain a leadership and facilitating role in support of the national System of Protected Areas, in collaboration with the Department of Sustainable Development and other institutions;
• build and maintain an inventory and a data base of sites, which can then be consulted by researchers, journalists and interested members of the public, and which can guide planning and management by the Trust and by other organisations;
• facilitate the multi-stakeholder management of complex sites (e.g. PSEPA);
• provide support to selected community organisations in the identification, conservation and management of locally important sites and landscapes;
• develop and implement education and advocacy work in support of these activities.

**The Trust as advocate**

The rationale:
• responsible, evidence-based advocacy is needed in support of cultural and natural heritage conservation and promotion;
• advocacy must lead to policy reform;
• at present, the Trust’s involvement in advocacy is too reactive (or at least perceived to be so);
• reactive advocacy contributes to a perception of the Trust as being partisan.
Implications for a new strategic plan:
- the Trust must see itself and act as a thought-leader and an incubator for responses and solutions to current and emerging challenges and opportunities in heritage conservation and sustainable use;
- advocacy work should be linked primarily to the focus areas, i.e. the places and sites under the Trust’s supervision or management);
- the Trust should also identify key issues that require sustained advocacy work, and develop an approach and work plan to address these issues:
  - the protection and management of the Queen’s Chain
  - the policy, behaviour and investment requirements for the conservation and sustainable use of the built heritage
  - the System of Protected Areas
  - the need for a national land use plan;
- the Trust may also consider the need to conduct a national campaign on heritage, jointly with other organisations;
- while much of the advocacy work should be proactive, the Trust should still be actively engaged if and when sites are threatened, or if there are policies and actions that are detrimental to Saint Lucia’s heritage in general.

**Partnerships – the Trust as convener**

**Rationale:**
- there are several institutions with shared and overlapping mandates in natural and cultural heritage;
- because of its nature, structure and broad mandate, the Trust can act as a convener;
- the Trust has demonstrated its capacity to collaborate with a wide range of institutions.

Implications for the new strategic plan:
- the Trust should advocate for the development of a framework for collaboration among cultural organisations;
- this framework should be built on a common vision statement of heritage in nationhood, identity and development, formally endorsed by partner organisations;
- there should be continued collaboration with government agencies, civil society organisations, businesses and communities in site management.

**How will this be done?**
- a common position on public sector financing: building and communicating the rationale for State financing of “public good” functions;
- a Code of Conduct among participating organisations;
- the development and implementation of joint strategies, projects, initiatives (e.g. on museums);
- the sharing of resources and services whenever desirable and possible;
- a broadening of partnerships, e.g. with the Police (enforcement) or the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (capacity development, technical support);
- a proactive and ambitious strategy for regional cooperation.

**The Trust as a national movement**

**Rationale:**
- the Trust is a membership organisation, and this represents a huge potential;
• but membership must be representative (of society, of geography, of all age groups);
• yet the Trust is more than members, it is a national organisation;
• the Trust “is not there to serve its members, the members are there to serve the Trust”;
• the Trust “lacks on-the-ground presence”, it is insufficiently visible and active in many parts of
  the island;
• with recent and current challenges, there is a wave of goodwill in society that could and should
  be mobilised.

Implications for the new strategic plan:
• there is a need to sustain and build strong partnerships,
• with a continued focus on youth and on schools,
• membership must be meaningful and should entail means/ways of being actively involved
  in the Trust’s work;
• membership must remain accessible;
• organisational membership should be formalised, with specific rights and responsibilities, and
  with a representation on the Council;
• the Trust should develop a policy on corporate membership and/or engagement;
• current efforts at membership recruitment should be sustained, including in the diaspora.

**Securing the required financial resources**

The rationale:
• like all organisations, the Trust needs financial resources commensurate with its mandate and
  work programme;
• the suspension of a State contribution to recurrent(??) budget has placed the Trust in a difficult
  situation;
• over the recent past, the Trust may have been too dependent on the “market” for
  environmental project funding.

Implications for the new strategic plan:
• a new financing strategy,
• that builds the case for public support for core functions,
• that diversifies and increases revenue, including through grant funding,
• including revenue from sites, but without compromise on conservation requirements,
• and that optimises the benefits generated through the sustainable use of Pigeon Island and an
  associated souvenir shop providing mementos linked to heritage sites (T-shirts, mugs, tote bags,
  caps, etc.),
• with an increase in revenue from membership dues (because of increased numbers and
  voluntary contributions).

**The Trust needs a new brand**

Rationale:
• the mission and role of the Trust are not well understood;
• .... not even by members;
• among some sectors of society, the Trust is perceived as partisan;
• the Trust is also often perceived as elitist.

What the Trust should do (in addition to being focused):
• communicate better its role and its achievements: the Trust needs to “blow [its] horn”;
• more generally, using its own experience as well as lessons from other countries, demonstrate the social, cultural and economic benefits that can be generated from heritage conservation and its sustainable use;
• use communication to raise support and mobilise current and potential partners.

How can this be done?
• the new strategic plan should include a brand strategy;
• this should be part of a broad communication strategy that ensures that all sectors of society understand the Trust, what it is, and what it is not;
• the Trust should engage opinion leaders in society to influence perceptions.

An organisation fit for its purpose
The rationale:
• the Trust’s current capacity is not adequate to implement the new strategic plan;
• the current staffing structure is not fully effective and efficient;
• the benefits of a complex and diverse structure (membership, Council, staff) are not fully realised.

Implications for the new strategic plan:
• the structure should be turned to the Trust’s advantage, optimising the role and impact of each component,
• with stronger linkages and synergies between Council, staff and members,
• allowing the Council to focus on policy and programming guidance, and with the Director and staff fully responsible for execution,
• with an increased capacity for communications, education and advocacy,
• with an increased capacity for research,
• and with a fundraising capacity, engaging all staff in the fundraising effort, and involving members and partners whenever possible.

How should this be done?
• restructure the Secretariat, after the recruitment of a new Director;
• formulate and implement a capacity-development plan for current and new personnel;
• review operations and customer service, with a focus on Pigeon Island;
• develop and implement a strategy to enhance an island-wide presence, primarily through partnerships with selected organisations;
• improve systems and procedures for internal communication;
• develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy that supports the implementation of the new strategic plan;
• exploit the potential offered by the website as a tool to promote the Trust’s mission through increased communication and as a fundraising platform, especially for people based abroad.