

A New Strategic Plan for the Saint Lucia National Trust

October 2018

Background

The Saint Lucia National 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. It is expected that the new strategic plan (2019 – 2029) will be launched at the time of Saint Lucia's 40th Anniversary of Independence, and that a work programme for the first three years will be formulated in March 2019.

Between October 2018 and March 2019, a number of activities, including workshops, focus groups, interviews and reviews of documents, will be held to conduct assessments and develop the new plan. A consultant has been hired to assist with the facilitation of this process. A schematic representation of the process is presented in annex to this note.

The formulation of a new strategic plan should be informed by a consideration of a number of critical issues and by answers to a number of questions, as summarised in this paper. In the consideration of these questions and issues, the Trust¹ and other stakeholders should not be too constrained and influenced by current design, arrangements and debates, and should not avoid difficult conversations if they arise.

Mandate, mission and focus

The Trust's mandate is primarily to perform a management function on behalf of the State. The Trust also performs an education function, and this function has expanded into advocacy on behalf of the country's cultural and natural heritage. In recent times, because of a number of public policy and management decisions that have impacted, or have the potential to impact, negatively on the Trust and its mission, this advocacy function has taken on more importance. Can an organisation simultaneously be a manager of public assets and an independent advocate?

The Trust has already prepared a revision to its constituting Act. Should one wait until the completion and adoption of the strategic plan to examine the proposed revision and adjust it if needed? Are there additional ways to clarify and strengthen the Trust's legal status?

Is there coherence between the mandate given by the Act, the current strategic plan, the guidance provided by members, and the actual work plans, activities and projects? How is / could that coherence be guaranteed? What takes precedence if there are diverging demands and expectations?

¹ In this paper, "the Trust" means the institution and includes all components and constituents of the organisation, including the Council, the staff and the membership.

The Trust often describes itself as a civil society / non-governmental organisation, yet it was created by an Act of Parliament. It is “owned” by the State and governed by a body (Council) in which individuals elected by the membership have a majority. What are the implications of this structure, and do all concerned understand those implications?

Are there complementary strategies and processes that the Trust should promote within, or in support of, its own strategic plan (such as a human resource development / training strategy in disciplines relevant to heritage)?

Relevance, effectiveness and efficiency

The assessment of the Trust’s relevance and effectiveness must be looked at in the wider context of the institutional arrangements for heritage conservation and sustainable development in the country. Are the current arrangements, mandates and capacities suitable to achieve the objectives of conservation and the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage? What is the desirable place of the Trust in such a landscape? Are its partnerships adequate? How should the Trust position itself in relation to other organisations? Should partnerships be formalised (e.g. through memoranda of understanding with other protected area management agencies)?

There seems to be a consensus that the Trust has for some time neglected its mandate to conserve and promote the cultural heritage, and has focused primarily on the natural environment. What is the desirable balance between the two areas? Is it still desirable and possible – as it was when the Trust was created – for the same organisation to focus simultaneously on the natural and cultural heritage? If so, what are the vision and the concept that are at the core of that integrated focus? Is it understood and supported by members, partners and other stakeholders? How should it be articulated and communicated?

While it is agreed that this process does not require a formal evaluation of the organisation and does not involve a management audit, the preparation of this new strategic plan should examine a number of questions related to the performance of the Trust (based on standard criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and should apply findings and lessons learned. Issues and questions to be considered may include:

- is the Trust effectively fulfilling the mandates (objects) as spelled out in Article 4 of the Act?
- does the Council operate efficiently? are roles adequately distributed between Council and Staff? does the Council have in place all the policies and systems required for it to perform its role? are additional or revised procedures and systems needed?
- is the current staffing structure adequate? what capacities and what internal structure will be needed to implement the new strategic plan? what are the implications for succession planning and staff mobility?
- how efficient are the Trust’s operations? are there internal and / or external factors that affect its efficiency? if so, how could these be addressed?
- how effective is the Trust’s presence “on the ground” and outside of the northwest corridor? should it consider ways to increase its presence at local level?
- what is the current organisational culture, and does it need to change / evolve? is internal communications adequate? if not, how could it be improved?
- are there lessons that can be learned from the implementation of donor-funded projects (e.g. 5Cs, OPAAL)?

Membership

What are the current role and place of the membership in the organisation? Is it adequately engaged? Is the current membership representative of the Saint Lucian public? What should these be in the future? Is there a membership development and engagement strategy? Is there need for such a strategy? Should outreach be directed primarily at the membership? Should the membership structure be reviewed? If so, along what criteria? Are there other options of organisational design and structure that the Trust may consider to achieve its mobilisation, outreach, advocacy and education objectives? In response to the current national policy context and to specific governmental decisions affecting the Trust, there has been a positive and encouraging wave of public support. To what extent does this reflect support for the Trust? For the mission of the Trust? How does the Trust capitalise on this response? How does the Trust manage the fact that it has a positive and rallying mission?

Communications and advocacy

What is the current place of advocacy, education and public relations in the Trust's programming and structure? Should these areas be given a more central role in the new strategic plan? Should the plan include a comprehensive communications strategy that serves the complementary objectives of: raising awareness and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage; helping the general public and concerned institutions to understand and respect the mission of the Trust; and increase visibility and promote collaboration? Should the strategic plan lead to "re-branding"? How could and should this strategic planning process help the Trust in dealing with current challenges, perceptions and debates?

The issues surrounding public understanding of and support for the Trust are actually "bigger" than the Trust, and reflect a weak appreciation of the importance of heritage (and especially the cultural heritage) in individual, community and national development in Saint Lucian society, as well as an erroneous perception that heritage conservation and socio-economic development are often incompatible. Given this state of affairs, should this strategic planning process consider the possibility of designing and implementing a national campaign to raise awareness of Saint Lucia's patrimony? Such a campaign could be designed and implemented in collaboration with other public and civil society organisations that have similar mandates (i.e. Cultural Development Foundation, Folk Research Centre, Saint Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society, Saint Lucia National Archives, Saint Lucia School of Music, and selected community-based organisations)?

Financing, fundraising and business development

Should the Trust re-evaluate its business / financial model? Is the need for revenue generation compatible with its conservation mandate? Should the strategic plan include a new financing / fundraising strategy? Should such a strategy seek to increase and optimise the revenue generated from sites (without compromising on their integrity)? Are there opportunities to increase linkages with the tourism sector? Are there opportunities to increase revenue from membership fees? Other contributions to be envisaged from membership? Are there opportunities to increase grant funding? How can partnerships assist in financing? How can the Trust keep coherence between fundraising and its mission? What should the Government's policy be with respect to the financing of the Trust?

Inputs into this process can be made by responding to [this online survey](#) or sending an email to slnt.sp.slu@gmail.com.