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GOVERNMENT AND CWSA LAUNCH JOINT INITIATIVE TO RESTORE ARGYLE AND AKERS WHILE CRACKING DOWN ON ILLEGAL DUMPING

Minister of Housing and Parliamentary Representative for South Windward, Hon. Andrew John, has partnered with the Central Water and Sewerage Authority (CWSA), the Solid Waste Management Unit, and other stakeholders in a renewed effort to clean up communities, restore key recreational spaces, and strengthen enforcement measures against illegal dumping.

The initiative was highlighted during a site visit to the old Argyle roadway and the Akers bypass, where extensive cleanup has been undertaken to remove illegally dumped waste, including household appliances, white goods, construction debris, and animal carcasses. Minister John said the cleanup exercise forms part of a broader vision to transform neglected areas into attractive, recreational, and tourism-friendly spaces while fostering greater community pride and environmental responsibility.

“These areas hold tremendous historical, social, and recreational value for the people of South Windward and St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a whole. We want to restore these spaces so families can once again gather, relax, and enjoy them, while preserving them for future generations,” Minister John stated.

The Minister noted that the old Argyle Road corridor, located near the Argyle International Airport (AIA), has significant potential for recreation and tourism development. Plans include beautification works, improved landscaping, installation of benches and seating areas, and greater community involvement in maintaining this and other identified sites.

He emphasized that preserving public spaces cannot rely solely on government resources and called on residents, community groups, and youth organizations to become active partners in protecting their communities. “This must become a community movement. National pride starts with taking care of what belongs to all of us. These spaces are part of our heritage, and we have a responsibility to leave them in a condition that our children can be proud of,” he said.

As part of the initiative, authorities are increasing enforcement measures against illegal dumping. Warning signs have been erected throughout affected areas, and surveillance measures are being strengthened to identify offenders. Officials reminded the public that illegal dumping carries severe penalties under existing legislation. Individuals caught illegally disposing of waste in sensitive coastal and marine areas may face fines of up to EC\$75,000 and imprisonment. In contrast, companies may be fined up to EC\$200,000 and face up to twelve months imprisonment.

CWSA Solid Waste Management Tahj Marksman revealed that approximately 100 cubic meters of waste were recently removed from the Argyle area during cleanup operations. “We are intensifying our regulatory efforts and public awareness campaigns. These locations are important community assets and tourism spaces, and we cannot allow illegal dumping to continue undermining public health, environmental protection, and national development,” Marksman said.

Public Relations Officer Joan Ryan said the initiative forms part of a wider national campaign aimed at resensitizing citizens about their responsibilities in proper waste management. “We want communities, schools, organizations, and individuals to partner with us. Waste management is not only about aesthetics; it is fundamentally a public health issue. Together, we can create cleaner, healthier communities and strengthen our tourism product,” Ryan noted.

CWSA General Manager Michael Creese highlighted the Authority's ongoing efforts, including its biannual White Goods Collection Programme, which has removed more than 30,000 large household items from communities since its inception in 2011. He also encouraged residents to utilize existing waste disposal services and the Diamond Landfill rather than engaging in illegal dumping.

Officials stressed that environmental stewardship requires collective action and urged all Vincentians to play their part by properly disposing of waste, participating in community cleanups, and encouraging responsible environmental practices. The collaborative initiative forms part of a broader commitment by government agencies and community stakeholders to preserve public spaces, protect public health, strengthen environmental sustainability, and enhance St. Vincent and the Grenadines' appeal as a premier tourism destination.

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