

MINISTRY PAPER NO: -

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT – UPDATES ON THE APPROVAL PROCESS

The Planning and Environmental Management portfolio incorporates Environmental Management, Planning Policy and Standards (Development Plans and Orders, National Spatial Plan) and Development Approvals.

OBJECTIVES

The key objectives related to this portfolio are:

- Ensuring a management framework that facilitates economic development whilst maintaining the sustainable use and development of Jamaica's natural resources;
- Ensuring an integrated national spatial planning framework that secures compatible land use decisions; and
- Providing and supporting an efficient and effective Development Approvals Process.

The Development Approvals Process

The development approvals process has traditionally been characterized by lengthy processing times for development applications. The government recognizes that an efficient and effective development approvals process is critical to investment and growth, and has committed to a 90 day timeline for the approval of all projects except complex developments requiring Environmental Impact Assessments. An integrated approach involving the major stakeholders is being employed to improve and enhance the approvals system to achieve this target. Other measures being employed to improve the process include:

- Streamlining the development applications process
- Accelerating the approvals of the New Building Codes and New Building Act
- The establishment of a Development Assistance Centre (DAC) that is expected to evolve into a One Stop Shop for development application processing.

Planning Policy and Standards

A National Spatial Plan (NSP) is one tool towards developing an integrated spatial planning framework. The NSP is useful in the identification of land resources and critical infrastructure needed to support the goals and objectives of Vision 2030 Jamaica (the National Development Plan), and to provide the strategic framework to underpin and guide spatial development and investment decision-making. The PIOJ, National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), OPM and Cabinet Office are the primary agencies collaborating on this project.

Funding: The estimated cost of the NSP is US Nine Hundred and Seventy Thousand (US\$970,000). Grant funding has been requested from the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB's) Special Fund Resources by the PIOJ, and the application process is well advanced.

Environmental Management

The Environmental Management Division focused on two key areas for the 2008/2009 financial year:

- Climate Change
- Environmental Stewardship

Climate Change: The impact of climate change will be severe and has the potential to cripple the country's economic growth. The management framework for the sustainable use and development of Jamaica's natural resources therefore involves developing initiatives to mitigate the effects of climate change. Emphasis must be placed on assessments of the vulnerabilities and adaptation options as they relate to coastal zones, human health and human settlements.. Also of significance is the development of a policy framework for Carbon Credits Trading.

One key aspect of the required adaptation is the development of a policy to guide Jamaica's involvement in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) Projects under the Kyoto Protocol. A project is being developed for funding through the Planning Institute of Jamaica for 4-5 Million Euros under the EU Global Climate Change Alliance.

Environmental Stewardship: The need for better stewardship of resources in the public sector is critical not only in terms of the economic benefits that will accrue, but also in terms of environmental impacts and improvements in productivity in the workplace.

A programme for environmental stewardship of Government operations has been developed under the Environmental Action Programme (GoJ/CIDA) addressing conservation of water and energy (electricity and fuel), comfort and productivity in the workplace, green procurement, and waste minimization. Under this programme an environmental stewardship policy has been prepared for approval.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2008/2009

Development Approvals

- Reduction in the number of applications brought forward for the 2008/2009 year by NEPA (from 1411 at the end of March 2008 to 345 at the end of March 2009 – 90% of which were still within the 90-day timeline)
- Approval and Submission of Gazette Notices for nine (9) application documents of the New National Building Code
- Completion of the re-engineered applications process flow for subdivisions of 9 lots and less.
- Roll out of the Applications Management and Database Software (AMANDA) in the Manchester and St. James Parish Councils and the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation.

Planning Policy and Standards

- Finalization of the Terms of Reference and approval by the Loans Committee of the CDB of Jamaica's request for grant funding to prepare the National Spatial Plan.
- Approval of the Portmore to Clarendon Park, Highway 2000 Corridor Development Plan, 2004 – 2025.

- Preparation of Draft St. Catherine Development Order
- Commencement of land use survey in St. James.

Environmental Management

- Climate Change and Action Plan being developed based on 2nd National Communication which is presently being drafted and is expected to be completed by the 3rd quarter of 2009/2010.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Energy to develop a Policy Framework for Carbon Credits Trading
- Under the Environmental Action Programme (2001 – March, 2009), over 2,800 managers of ministries/agencies, procurement officers, and administrative and ancillary staff have been trained by MIND in environmental stewardship, and stewardship action plans were developed in some Ministries
- A Carbon Impact Monitor (CIM) has been developed relating to the measurement of the use of energy and water in terms of actual consumption, cost and carbon dioxide emitted. The CIM will allow for simple standardized monitoring and provide clear reports on a monthly basis as well as information on trends
- An environmental stewardship policy has been prepared for approval..

PROJECTIONS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/2010

Some key projections for the three areas in financial year 2009/2010 are as follows:

- Commencement of preparation of the National Spatial Plan in the 3rd Quarter. It is projected that the establishment of a Steering Committee and employment of a Project Coordinator will be completed within the 1st – 2nd Quarter.
- Preparation of a New Building Act to govern the use of the New Building Code
- Establishment of a pilot DAC.
- Integration of climate change adaptation and hazard risk reduction strategies into planning and resources management processes.
- Completion of the amendments to the Strata Titles Act and the Real Estate (Dealers and Developers) Act
- Completion of the Jamaica Application Document for the International Residential Code (IRC) and the Jamaica Application Document for the International Code Council Electrical Code (ICCEC)
- Ministries and agencies will develop environmental action plans and monitor and report on their conservation efforts (energy, water, materials), waste management, operations (meetings and events), workplace conditions, procurement and disaster management
- Completion of the 2nd National Communique on Climate Change
- The development of a Protected Areas Systems Mater Plan.