

25<sup>th</sup> August 2020

By Email: [steking@gosl.gov.lc](mailto:steking@gosl.gov.lc)

Hon. Minister Stephenson King  
Minister for Infrastructure, Ports, Energy and Labour  
Ministry of Infrastructure Complex  
Union, Castries

Dear Minister King,

Our water-based tourism sector plays an integral role in the development and sustainability of tourist activity in St. Lucia and this particular sector has not been spared by the wrath that COVID-19 has had on the hospitality and tourism industry as a whole.

Rather than hoping for things to return to normal, we would like to be proactive instead and address certain challenges that have been faced by our members over the years to ensure the sustainability and longevity of their sector. Many of these challenges have directly affected the water-based tourism sector (i.e. day boat charter, water taxi & dive operators) but the issues do stem much further.

The SLHTA – on behalf of our members offering water-based activities- would like to bring their following concerns to light and offer assistance in resolving them through meetings and consultation;

1. SLASPA Ply for Hire License & Captains License Renewal;
  - a. As we are all aware, since March many if not all tourism related businesses have been closed and the majority remain closed today. The SLHTA would like to request that SLASPA offer an eight month waiver or extension on Inspection & Licensing fees for all vessels and Captain Licenses. For those companies that have already paid for the year 2020, we ask that 50% discount be given next year, 2021. The business operators do not know when any viable business will return and operations are minimal and even nonexistent for the last 5.5 months.
2. SLASPA Enforcement of Laws;
  - a. SLHTA & many independent operators have, many times, brought the issue of foreign flagged vessels plying for hire in St. Lucia doing local day charters. As far as we are aware this is against the law, because these vessels have not been

Registered, inspected by SLASPA, have not been imported and duties have not been paid.

- b. Earlier in the letter you will note the mention that the concerns have “directly affected the water-based tourism sector but that the issues stem much further”. This was mentioned because the vessels in question also do not have insurance to cover these day charter operations. The reason this is pointed out is because no insurance company will condone a business knowingly breaching local laws to operate. Therefore, if any accident is/was to take place the liability could then fall on SLASPA or on the Hotel the guests are staying at or even the Government of St. Lucia.
- c. Dive Boats & Ski Boats that have been granted concessions by the Ministry of Tourism & Licenses to operate by SLASPA for their specific activity are being used for every day tours such as;
  - i. Day Tours to Soufriere
  - ii. Sunset Cruises
  - iii. Whale & Dolphin Watching Tours

Point 3.3 in the Tourism Transport Policy clearly states “Water Sports Vessels are to only engage in water sports activities, not to conduct tours, transfer services, etc...”.

It would be useful to receive a summary list of licensed vessels with details on what precisely the vessels have been licensed for so that the SLHTA could examine and highlight potential infractions.

- d. A suggestion would be to set up a Hotline or Email that can receive reports of violations along with proof if needed.

### 3. Ferry dock at Point Seraphine;

- a. Are there plans to extend this dock or refurbish it so that small boats can do quick loading and offloading of guests and large boats can also tie up for safe loading and offloading? We have been informed by our members operating in this sector that cruise ships are frustrated with the time it takes for tours to depart, operators are frustrated with what they call “ the free for all” that takes place and overall, they are concerned that more accidents are going to take place. On behalf of our members, the SLHTA also would like to request the presence of the port police to make sure things are running smoothly as there is often confrontation between boat operators while everyone is trying to pick-up or drop off guests at the same time.

### 4. WAC (Watercraft Advisory Committee);

- a. Is the WAC currently operational?
- b. If so, can you please clarify who sits on the board of the WAC and the exact role of the Committee?
- c. If active, will SLHTA be granted a seat on the WAC?

5. Lastly, as you are aware SLASPA has a seat on the board of the SLHTA. We would like to request that SLHTA be given a seat on the board of SLASPA to allow for better synergies going forward.

All in all, we know that SLASPA has many areas of operations and appreciate that resources can be spread thin. Therefore, this letter is being sent out to help address concerns of our members so that we can work together to enhance the water-based tourism sector.

We appreciate your attention to these matters and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



KAROLIN TROUBETZKOY  
President  
Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association

Cc: Mr Daren Cenac – General Manager SLASPA  
Donalyn Vittet - Permanent Secretary of Tourism