

The Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay  
Address to the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly  
4 October 2016

Your Excellency the Governor, Honourable Premier, Honourable Madame Speaker,  
Members of the Legislative Assembly.

It is a delight to be here in the Cayman Islands and to have this opportunity to speak to you. It is my first visit to an Overseas Territory since assuming responsibility for them in July. I couldn't have chosen a more beautiful starting point. Yesterday I visited Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and I saw for myself the stunning scenery, the enchanting wildlife and the impressive facilities that attract visitor after visitor.

I also met a number of local residents and experienced firsthand the '*Cayman Kindness*' that I have read so much about. I would like to thank Premier McLaughlin and Deputy Premier Kirkconnell for their welcome, and all the other members of this Assembly who have given me such an excellent insight into life on the Sister Islands. When Premier McLaughlin and his team come to London later this month for the Joint Ministerial Council meeting, I look forward to reciprocating your warm welcome.

We greatly value the JMC as an opportunity for all the Heads of the UK Overseas Territories and UK Ministers to meet and discuss areas of mutual interest and concern.

EU Referendum

A new item on the agenda this year will of course be the implications of the UK's recent referendum result. As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, we are determined to forge a bold, new, positive role in the world. This will present opportunities, including for the Cayman Islands, and we will work with you closely to ensure that your interests are protected.

We will protect your interests because the United Kingdom and the Cayman Islands share a close bond, thanks to our common history, our linked economies, our shared values, and our personal ties. And of course our relationship isn't preserved for posterity - it's a modern relationship which is evolving with the times. The Cayman Islands themselves are changing too, thanks to a well-managed and strong economy.

### Cayman Islands Economy

Your GDP is growing; employment is rising; debt levels are within target; and visitor numbers are up.

Of course your financial services sector is the driving force behind much of this impressive performance. As a leading international hub for pension fund investment and raising capital, the Cayman Islands bring real benefits to the global economy and onshore economies.

The UK and Cayman Island economies also enjoy mutual benefits from our respective financial services sectors. The expertise of the City of London and the financial services providers on this island are second to none.

The sector as a whole is often in the spotlight and a subject of discussion amongst world leaders, but the Cayman Islands' track record of cooperation and transparency speaks for itself. The need to make changes to counter serious and organised crime has been embraced by your financial service sector, with the support of the Cayman Islands Government.

We welcome this willingness to adapt in response to new and evolving challenges.

### LGB&T

Today I would like to raise another issue in which we have seen gradual change in recent years. That issue is equal rights for all. In particular I would like to address the issue of equal rights for people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities.

I know this is a sensitive matter in the Cayman Islands, and has been the subject of much debate here. We had similar debates ourselves not very long ago, including in my own place of business, the House of Lords. It took some time for changes to equality legislation to be agreed in the UK - so I understand the need for time, the need to reflect and to adjust. I have no wish to preach or to lecture.

What I do want to do is to set out the UK Government position and explain why I strongly believe that it is in everyone's interests to ensure LGB&T equality and freedom from discrimination.

First, and most importantly, I want to make clear that the British Government has no plans to impose same-sex marriage in the Cayman Islands. However, I also want to be clear that continued discrimination puts the Cayman Islands in breach of its international obligations, so there is a legal imperative to change.

There is also an economic imperative. Evidence has shown that it is only when countries are able to draw on all their available talents, and make all their citizens feel included, that they can fulfil their true potential.

The people of the Cayman Islands are famous for offering a warm welcome to a diverse range of people from all over the world, whilst retaining their special Caymanian culture and heritage. I hope they can begin to offer the same welcome to their own LGB&T communities.

#### Civil cooperation

As I said earlier, change takes time, and success does not come automatically, it takes hard work. The Cayman Islands have shown they have what it takes to succeed. Your dedicated and professional civil service is the envy of many countries in the region.

The excellent work of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service has helped ensure one of the lowest crime rates in the Caribbean. Your values of public service and respect for the rule of law – values that we very much share - offer a bright future for the Cayman Islands, and one which the UK is keen to support.

### Disaster preparedness

We already provide support in the important area of preparedness for natural disasters. We have a naval vessel in the Caribbean 365 days a year ready to respond to any crisis in the Overseas Territories. Yesterday, I visited a hurricane shelter on Cayman Brac, and heard about the excellent work of the Hazard Management Department, police, fire service and other agencies to ensure that the population is protected.

### Environmental protection

Protecting the environment is also fundamental to these islands. Another thing I learned about yesterday was the important work on Little Cayman to protect and restore reefs. Your unique environment is vital to your tourism industry – indeed, the bio-diversity of the Overseas Territories is globally important. Protecting it will remain a key priority.

That's why the UK Government is making additional funds available to the Overseas Territories, and the Governor's Office is working closely with the Government to develop projects that will protect the environment, together with others that will strengthen security and good governance, improve child safeguarding and support hazard management.

### Conclusion

These new projects show that, while the partnership between the United Kingdom and the Cayman Islands may be rooted in the past, it is one that will continue into the future.

I look forward to welcoming your leaders to London next month and to working closely with you in the months and years ahead. Working together for the best interests of the Cayman Islands and all their people. Thank you.