

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RACE TRACK AT SEA COWS BAY, TORTOLA

Description and Scope:

This project entails the development of a proper track for horse racing to include a five furlong course, stables, a grand stand, concession stands, and parking. This development will provide the facilities needed to revive this popular spectator sport which had deteriorated due to lack of a proper race track. The first phase of the track - five furlong course and stables - were completed in early 1998.

Background:

For many many years horse racing has been the most popular spectator sport in the Territory. This sport took place in various areas on Tortola where there were no race track until Mr Ellis Thomas of Sea Cows Bay, a horse owner and avid lover of the sport, constructed an area on his property and adjoining property of the late Emile Forbes to accommodate horse racing. This sport became the most popular spectator sport and especially during the August Festival, on the Tuesday following August Monday, the race track at Sea Cows Bay would attract large crowds (residents and visitors). The horses used for these races were reared locally and as time went by horse owners began importing horses from abroad (USA) that were reared specifically for racing. However, because the course was not constructed of material and did not have the proper width that could accommodate the new type of horses, many horses succumbed to injuries and had to be destroyed. This caused the sport to decline and eventually the track to close.

Several entities, including Mr Ellis Thomas, made attempts to restore the race track but were unsuccessful in doing so mainly due to lack of funds and the required expertise in race track development. This only added further anguish to horse racing fans and horse owners who had already begun an outcry for the construction of a proper facility. This outcry was heard and heeded by both Government and Opposition of the Legislative Council as a Resolution seeking for the restoration of horse racing in the Territory was passed on 1st April, 1997. Government agreed to the construction and realized that if the race track were to be improved, it would be necessary to hire someone expert in that field to advise on that as well as to supervise the construction. Such services were not available in the Territory and so Government engaged the services of a Mr William S Greene of Kentucky, USA who had prepared race tracks internationally. The advice given was that a five furlong course, stables, grand stand, and concession stands should be constructed.

Project Rationale:

The development of the race track is expected to result in the following economic benefits:

- maintenance of a tradition which is embedded in Emancipation celebrations
- increase in business activity in and outside the district
- promotion of tourism as the sport provides an additional recreation
- increased revenue for Government (through new business and lease of facilities)
- increase in employment

The cost of the five furlong course and stables is \$2,569,588.00 and the estimated cost of the grand stand and concession stand is approximately \$700,000.00.