

# IRONWOOD FOREST.com

173,895 HITS, 3,159 VISITORS, 886 SIGNATURES  
YOUR SITE – YOUR VOICE

**UPDATE – 12<sup>th</sup> MAY 2008**

Dear Friends

**WELCOME** to your second Ironwood Forest Update.

These past weeks have been bitter fare for the natural heritage of the Cayman Islands. In addition to the ongoing Government antics regarding the Ironwood Forest, the violent slaughter of seven precious Blue Iguanas at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park has cast a lengthy shadow over the Blue Iguana Recovery Program ([www.BlueIguana.ky](http://www.BlueIguana.ky)).

Our thoughts go out to the dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters.

At first glance, the pending loss of the Ironwood Forest and the death of the Blue Iguanas may appear to be unrelated incidents. In fact, both are victims of the same crime – a lack of protected areas in our Islands.

Until a law exists to establish protected areas in Cayman, ill-conceived projects such as the Government's high-speed short-cuts through the Ironwood Forest, the Mastic Trail and the Salina Reserve, will progress with no opposition, unless the combined outcry from disenfranchised landowners, misinformed press, and concerned members of the public is sufficient to make our politicians recount the cost of their actions in the common currency of votes.

Until a law exists to establish protected areas in Cayman, the Blue Iguanas, given a break from extinction by the Blue Iguana Recovery Program, will face a stark choice: languish at the captive breeding facility indefinitely, were their restricted confines make them continually susceptible to natural catastrophe, fire, disease and random attack OR release into a country with no protected area of sufficient size to support a population in the wild.

With no protected area for the Blue Iguanas, our children will probably never see one in the wild.

**NEWS!!!** According to a **Cayman News Service Special Report - People Power and the Ironwood Forest** (12<sup>th</sup> May 2008) [www.caymannewsservice.com/new-page-85.htm](http://www.caymannewsservice.com/new-page-85.htm)

Minister for Environment, Mr. Charles Clifford has been quick to respond to the news of the Iguana deaths, referencing the importance of the long-pending National Conservation Law, and stating that “*As united as we are in our grief, Caymanians stand together in our resolve to protect our endangered and endemic flora and fauna*”. This would indeed appear to be a golden opportunity to take positive steps in the wake of such tragedy. However, **ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS**, and, according to the **Special Report**, the ACTION that the Ministry has taken to-date has been to issue a gagging order to its own Department of Environment, instructing staff that no public comment may be made on the subject of the Ironwood Forest.

*Perhaps they know something that the rest of us do not?*

# PUBLIC GATHERING

Images courtesy of [www.patrickbroderickphotography.com](http://www.patrickbroderickphotography.com)

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April, 12.00-2.00, a **PUBLIC GATHERING** was held on the West Lawn of the Glass House. Approximately **200** people broke their lunch-hour to come along, meet, talk and discuss the value of the Ironwood Forest, and suggest alternative options to the proposed road.

Marilyn Conolly and Katrina Jurn opened the proceedings with a brief thank you to supporters and attendees. There was no formal speech-giving; with the forum being one of open discussion, ideas and debate. The only speakers were two children, who presented short pieces they had prepared, describing in simple and heart-felt terms, what exactly preserving the Ironwood Forest means to them – they will, after all, have to live with the results of our decisions longer than we.



While some attendees were in support of routing the road along the northern boundary of the forest, many others agreed that the forest was simply too precious for any road to pass through it at all. Discussions covered a wide range of topics including alternative routes, curbing rush-hour, reducing numbers of cars, and improving public transport.

*Who exactly are we developing this island for?  
What is the final objective of this “plan”?*

Many new signatures were added to the petition to save the forest, which is fast approaching **900** names, including **72** individuals who have added their names and cell-phone numbers to the **Bulldozer List** - committing themselves to physically blocking the bulldozers, should they threaten the forest.





## THANKS:

Thanks to everyone who supported the **Ironwood Forest Public Gathering:**

Food was provided by:

BACCHUS  
BODDEN BEVERAGES  
CAYMAN IMPORTS  
CHAMPION HOUSE II  
FOSTER'S FOOD FAIR  
HURLEY'S  
KIRK SUPERMARKET

Photography of the event:

PATRICK BRODERICK PHOTOGRAPHY

Provision of tent:

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

Provision of tables and chairs:

LANDS AND SURVEY DEPARTMENT

Provision of microphone:

ROYAL CAYMAN ISLANDS POLICE SERVICE

## NO THANKS:

According to an article appearing in the *Caymanian Compass* entitled *Government waffling on Ironwood*, (Thursday 8 May 2008, page 2) Government now appears to be giving the impression that they are reconsidering the road through the Ironwood Forest.

*“We still haven’t decided, one; whether we’re going to go ahead with the extension or two; which direction the extension is going to take,” Mr. McLean told the Legislative Assembly’s Finance Committee.*

*Leader of Government Business Kurt Tibbetts added that government wants to ascertain the environmental impacts of building the highway extension along its preferred route.*

Sounds like great news!

What **ACTIONS** will follow these **WORDS**?

Is this simply cynical lip-service designed to satisfy angry landowners and a misinformed public, who feel like they have been left out of, and misrepresented by, the decision-making process?

It would be nice to think this was a genuine initiative from our Government...

HOWEVER:

In tandem the Ministry of Environment instructing its own Department of Environment that they are not at liberty to provide any public comment on the subject of the Ironwood Forest ([www.caymannewsservice.com/new-page-85.htm](http://www.caymannewsservice.com/new-page-85.htm)) the Ministry of Roads and the National Roads Authority have scheduled a “public meeting” - *to discuss the Ironwood Forest*.

**GIS BULLETIN BOARD 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2008: In the wake of mounting opposition to the development of the Linford Pierson Highway extension through the Ironwood Forest, behind the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) in George Town, the Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure, and the National Roads Authority officials invite residents to a public discussion regarding the proposed Linford Pierson Highway extension on Wednesday, 14 May, at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Sir Vassell Johnson Multipurpose Hall on the UCCI campus. Residents are encouraged to attend, hear about the latest developments, and voice their opinions about the road.**

Given the cultural, environmental and educational value of the Ironwood Forest, one wonders how effectively the Ministry for Roads and the NRA will be able to field questions from the public on the impact of the road in these areas. Perhaps they simply wish to restate their position that “no road” is not an option, or their scare-tactic that the narrower, more-winding alternative route will somehow cost millions of dollars more to build, and strangely destroy many more homes than their wide, straight-line highway.

**We encourage EVERYONE to attend this meeting and hear what EVERYONE has to say. If you do not, you might find SOMEONE has used this opportunity to speak on your behalf!**

## MORE COVER-UPS?

Those who have read our first update will be familiar with our COVER-UP? question.

*Is Government involved in a cover-up, designed to mislead all the parties associated with the Ironwood Forest into thinking that everyone else is in favor of their proposed road project?*

### COVER-UP No.1?

In a Cabinet Press Briefing, Thursday, 17 April 2008, Leader of Government Business Mr Kurt Tibbets stated: “*we have explored and exhausted almost every available alternative and **all the parties involved** - after much discussion - **are in agreement** that this is the most practical way forward.*”

[http://www.gov.ky/portal/page?\\_pageid=1142.2712218&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://www.gov.ky/portal/page?_pageid=1142.2712218&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

However, it seems that this simply is **NOT TRUE**.

Several of the landowners most affected by the proposed road have since appeared in the local media, to definitively state that they are DEFINITELY NOT in favor of the proposed road.

**IN FACT** several have added their names and cell-phone numbers to the **Bulldozer List** – **prepared to defend their private property against the Government’s plans**... plans which, according to Mr Tibbets’ statement, they are apparently “in agreement”.

### COVER-UP No.2?

The *Department of Environment* still has yet to issue any public comment on the subject of the Ironwood Forest road. Strange, don’t you think? As detailed in our first update, following comments by the Minister for Roads, Mr. Arden McLean, in which he claimed to outline the position of the Department of Environment, during the *Talk Today* program on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, we posed a simple question to Ms. Gina Ebanks-Petrie, Director of the Department:

*Did you or did you not repeatedly submit an email clarification to the Talk Today program, to address inaccurate commentary by Minister Arden McLean regarding the position of the Department of Environment with respect to the Ironwood Forest road project?*

AND

*What exactly is the FULL and DETAILED position of the Department of Environment regarding this proposed project?*

To-date, the Director has failed to answer this question.

In the wake of the revelations in today’s **Cayman News Service Special Report**, the Director’s silence in this matter seems rather more understandable.

**Perhaps Talk Today’s presenter, Mr. Dwayne Sterling Ebanks, or his guest of that day, Mr. Arden McLean, would be willing and able to shed some light on this matter – in the interests of better informing their listening public?**

Leader of Government Business, Mr. Kurt Tibbetts, opened his Cabinet Press Briefing, [http://www.gov.ky/portal/page?\\_pageid=1142.2712218&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://www.gov.ky/portal/page?_pageid=1142.2712218&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL) of Thursday, 17 April 2008 with a comment under the subject of:

**“Need for More Responsible Reporting and Commentary by the Media”**

Mr Tibbetts stated that:

*“We are witnessing in the Cayman Islands the emergence of a worrying trend, specifically in relation to a particular talk show. Hearsay, speculation and opinion are being passed off as fact. Unsuspecting listeners can be easily misled.”*

Mr Tibbetts, these are strong **WORDS** indeed.

What **ACTIONS** will follow -

- should it be discovered that a Government Minister misinformed the people of the Cayman Islands the following week, misrepresenting the position of a Government Department on a public radio talk show, and that attempts to issue a clarification towards better informing the general public about the facts of the matter are now being suppressed - keeping this country’s listeners misguided and in the dark, on matters of significant public interest?

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE **72** AND TO ALL WILLING TO TAKE A STAND

### **IRONWOOD FOREST LETTERS IN THE PRESS:**

Careen Ebanks	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030392">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030392</a>
The National Trust	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030358">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030358</a>
Jerry Burton	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030359">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030359</a>
Mary McField	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030324">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030324</a>
Brittanni Seymour	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030258">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030258</a>
Editorial	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030256">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030256</a>
Satina DaCosta–Cottam	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030291">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030291</a>
Laura A. Ebanks	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030122">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030122</a>
Morris Swaby	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030155">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1030155</a>
Lois Blumenthal	<a href="http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1029918">http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1029918</a>

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