

**SPEAKING NOTES
FOR
PRIME MINISTER
RT. HON. P.J. PATTERSON
AT
GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY
FOR
BEACHES WHITEHOUSE
ON
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 5, 1998**

Salutations

This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

I lay claim to being the happiest person here today to witness and participate in this historic ground-breaking ceremony.

Beaches Whitehouse, is an idea whose time has come, and the people of Whitehouse and Westmoreland in particular, and of the entire South Coast area, welcome this new development with a resolve to ensure that it be crowned with success.

SOUTH COAST DEVELOPMENT STRIDES

This development heralds a new dawning and will be the precursor of more good things, as additional development moves to this part of Jamaica.

The South Coast of Jamaica can be a major catalyst for economic growth and represents a substantial part of the country's tourism potential.

In order to ensure that the country reaps maximum benefits from this sleeping giant, a South coast Sustainable Development Study, is being prepared for the Government of Jamaica.

The study places particular emphasis on the evaluation of the potential for sustainable tourism development and will determine the optimum use to be made of the vast physical and human resources of the area.

TOURISM ASPECT

Interestingly, the tourism aspects of the study indicates that the people in the area have expressed a desire to maintain the environmental integrity of the area and to develop tourism resources, in a way that is compatible with conservation of the natural environment.

It takes note of the fact that the existing product in the area, has developed around small and medium sized enterprises in the accommodation sector, catering to a market segment that focuses less on attributes like the sea, the beach and the sand, and more on environment, culture and history.

FONT HILL

The Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica has just completed a Beach Park in Font Hill (which adjoins Whitehouse) that will complement other developments in the area, like the Beaches project.

The Park, which is said to be the best public Beach Park in the Caribbean, is to be officially opened in November, and PCJ is now in the process of selecting an operator.

The property is being upgraded to make it more attractive for divestment. Some of the activities taking place on the property include a tree project (using quick-growing wood), and the cultivation of mangoes, cassava and cashew.

There are also plans to develop a wildlife sanctuary.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The Fishing Beach in Whitehouse was recently developed by the UDC, and this project, it is hoped, will have spin off benefits for tourism. The project seeks to regulate the marketing and disposal of fishing products and will incorporate a tourism component.

Additionally, the Tourism Product Development Company is to implement a tree-planting project on the beach and this should help to minimise beach erosion.

Further afield, the Tourism Product Development Company, is to upgrade the Milk River Bath in Clarendon, as a complementary attraction for visitors to the South Coast.

The adjoining community of Farquhars Beach is also to receive some assistance from TPDCo., to provide some basic social amenities.

These developments are good news to hoteliers and other tourism interests on the South coast.

BEACHES : WHITEHOUSE

This expansive, ambitious and futuristic Beaches Whitehouse project, is a significant addition to what is shaping up to be a major, far-reaching and all-embracing hospitality environment, encompassing the entire South Coast area.

Its investment cost of US\$60 Million is the most substantial to be made in the Jamaican economy in recent years.

The 600 persons to be employed during the construction stage and the 400 operational employees, will prove a shot-in-the-arm for the entire country.

More importantly, there are overwhelming opportunities for the acquisition of expertise and skills, particularly by local residents.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Another real benefit to the area will be the modern infrastructural improvements, which will, of necessity, be developed to support this and other future developments.

These additions will contribute substantially to the improvement of the quality of life, which is the driving motivation, for all our economic development initiatives.

There is no question that the existence of this hotel will have a ripple effect throughout the local economy, quite apart from its overall national impact.

Today, wearing my two hats as Member of Parliament for this Constituency and as Prime Minister, I wish to give an assurance of maximum assistance, so that this project can proceed to fruition, and in good time realise its true potential, as a major player in the country's tourism environment.