



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE

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ESTABLISHMENT OF BLUE FLAG MARINE PARK



Thirty-five (35) students of the Hockett Baptist Primary School of Morvant got up close and personal with some of Trinidad and Tobago's native marine animals at the Blue Flag Marine Park at Las Cuevas Beach on **Friday April 29, 2016**. Joining them at this initiative was the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, the Minister of Tourism, who expressed "great excitement that

children were able to learn about our marine wildlife and proper handling techniques".

Trinidad's Las Cuevas Bay is currently the only Blue Flag certified beach in the Southern English-speaking Caribbean. In September 2014 Las Cuevas Beach was awarded Blue Flag certification and was re-awarded the status for a second season from November 17, 2015 to July, 2016.

The Marine Park is one of five (5) educational activities that are required under the Blue Flag programme to maintain Las Cuevas' Blue Flag status. The other educational activities include the Launch of a Children' Activity Book, Coffee Table Discussion Forum with tourism professionals, outreach program with lifeguards and schools' caravan.



Minister Cudjoe emphasised that “Blue Flag certification gives our local and foreign visitors the knowledge that our beaches adhere to international safety and other tourist standards. It is a well-known fact that beachgoers, and indeed our international visitors, value the quality assurances that Blue Flag certification offers. Blue Flag beaches increase our desirability and drive to become a world-class destination and enhance this country’s competitive edge as an internationally desirable tourist destination. The success of the Blue Flag program in Las Cuevas could not have been achieved without the support of the non-governmental tourism and environmental groups in the community of Las Cuevas and environs.”

Establishment of Blue Flag Marine Park 2016-05-02

The Blue Flag Marine Park consisted of six (6) marine care display tanks and two (2) touch tanks, from which the students could interact with some of the harmless marine wildlife and learn interesting facts about the animals. The Marine Park, the first of its kind, allowed the students to experience the beauty and magic of the ocean whilst at the same time raising their awareness of the need to have respect for the environment and all of the earth’s creatures.



The educational session at Las Cuevas was conducted by Mr. David Douglas, a specialist in the field of Environmental Science. Also attending the inaugural Blue Flag Marine Park were the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC), Keith Chin, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Mrs. Cecilia Greaves-Smith.

Commenting on the initiative, Keith Chin said that “the TDC and the Ministry of Tourism have always been dedicated to environmental conservation and the development of sustainable tourism products. Programmes such as the Marine Park provide a means through which the nation’s youth can gain a greater understanding of the impact and the role that each person plays in the protection and preservation of our surroundings.”

The Blue Flag program promotes sustainable development of marine areas and refers to the existence of good water quality, environmental education and information, environmental management safety and services, which includes presence of parking and lifeguard facilities. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization

(UNWTO), the international Blue Flag is the most well-known and oldest thriving eco-label of its kind. Currently, the programme in Trinidad is owned and run by the independent non-profit organisation, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and is coordinated by Asclepius Green, a local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO).

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