

Our Constitutional

HISTORY

Isolation, Neglect and a Constitutional Anomaly

Compared with many of the other larger islands in the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands was not such an attractive proposition for the European colonists. As a result, when England took formal control of the Cayman Islands in 1670 as a Crown colony, the people who had settled there following grants of land by the British Crown in 1734 and 1741 were largely left to fend for themselves. While, for the purposes of colonial expediency, the Cayman Islands were administered through Jamaica at this time, there was no formal constitutional underpinning of the relationship with Jamaica, or indeed the relationship between the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom. It is in this context of relative isolation and neglect that the Assembly of Justices and Vestry was unilaterally established in the Cayman Islands in 1831 in order to make laws that were sensitive to local needs.

This isolation and neglect continued through into the 1850s, during which time a sense of self-reliance became engrained. However, the informal constitutional arrangements in the Cayman Islands could not survive indefinitely and, inevitably, constitutional and administrative uncertainties eventually arose. These uncertainties included the relationship between the Cayman Islands and Jamaica, the extent of authority of the Government of Jamaica over the Cayman Islands and the relationship between the Cayman Islands and the Jamaican Courts.

Jamaican Dependency

It was only with the enactment by the imperial Parliament in London of the Act for The Cayman Islands Government on 22 June 1863 that the Cayman Islands formally became declared and administered as a dependency of Jamaica. Significantly, this Act authorised the Governor of Jamaica to exercise authority over the Cayman Islands as if it were a part of Jamaica; allowed for all British Acts or Laws which were valid in Jamaica to be applied to the Cayman Islands; and vested the Supreme Court of Jamaica with the jurisdiction to hear any legal action that could not be tried in the Islands.

However, for the people of the Cayman Islands, the most significant milestone was that the 1863 Act caused the full recognition of the local legislature. Even this belated recognition was not, however, without some difficulties, for although the 1863 Act introduced a process for validating the legislation previously passed by the local legislature, the 1863 Act effectively restricted the scope of local legislative powers thereafter. Having previously had more of a free rein, the locally elected representatives did not always feel constrained by the restrictions imposed by the 1863 Act – namely, the collection, custody and expenditure of the legislative revenue, the establishment, maintenance, discipline and powers of the Police, the management, occupation, removal of public or common land, the abatement of nuisances and the construction of works and public utility – and on a number of occasions they consequently exceeded the legislative remit stipulated in the 1863 Act.

As a result of these inconsistencies, the Jamaican Parliament passed the Cayman Islands Government Law 1893, which retrospectively validated the 15 separate occasions where local legislature in the Cayman Islands had exceeded its powers between 1863 and 1893; and sought to address the underlying tension by delegating wider powers to the local legislature, such that it was subsequently empowered to legislate for the peace, order and good government of the Islands.

Constitutional Advancement in Jamaica and the Concept of Federation

As the end of the Second World War approached, it was increasingly evident that the British Empire would undergo a significant re-structuring, with many colonies pressing for independence. Quite how the English-speaking Caribbean would navigate this process was not so clear and the position of the Cayman Islands, being a dependency of Jamaica, had an additional layer of complication. In 1944, Jamaica secured a new constitution with a number of important advances, including universal adult suffrage, a limited form of ministerial government and the recognition of political parties. However, these advances were not extended to the Cayman Islands, which, in spite of the constitutional developments between 1831 and 1893, still had no written constitution.

Alongside the constitutional advances granted to Jamaica and the increasing pressure for self-government in the region, the British government's post-war policy for the Caribbean settled on the creation of a federation encompassing a number of different islands and other Caribbean territories, which had previously been administered separately. Although not an entirely new concept, this notion came to prominence at a regional conference held in Montego Bay, Jamaica in 1947. Cayman Assembly representatives, Messrs. Ernest Panton and William Farrington, attended this meeting and, with the consent of the local legislature, they proposed that the Cayman Islands would agree to join a federation, but only if Cayman had direct representation. However, this was rejected by members of the proposed Federation, known as the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee in 1949 and instead it was recommended that the Cayman Islands should continue as a dependency under the administration of the Governor-General of the Federation.

Taking matters into their own hands, on 7 April 1955, six Assemblymen sent a petition to the Colonial Secretary through the Governor of Jamaica. They stated that "while ... we look forward to strengthening ties both with Jamaica and with the other territories of the British Caribbean ... we wish to restate, as clearly and as strongly as we can, three main aims. First, we wish to retain the right to control entry to our islands. Secondly, we wish to retain our rights to decide what taxes should be imposed upon us. Thirdly, we wish to retain our right to maintain our established channels of trade and employment overseas."

The Cayman Islands and the West Indies Federation



Photo: Cayman Islands National Archive collection Justices and Vestrymen in George Town Grand Cayman on 22 June 1911

Notwithstanding the concerns of the Cayman Islands, the West Indies Federation was established on 3 January 1958. The Federation was intended as a precursor to full independence and, to this end, executive, legislative and judicial institutions were founded for the Federation. However, given the relatively small size of the Cayman Islands and its population, the Caymanian people did not get the benefit of electing even a single representative to the Federation's 45-member House of Representatives.

In 1959, the Cayman Assembly chose five delegates, Messrs Ducan Merren, Roy McTaggart, Willie Farrington, Ormond Panton and Administrator Jack Rose to participate in a series of conferences held between September 1959 and June 1961. Their instructions were to negotiate and settle all unresolved aspects of the Federation's Constitution, including the Cayman Islands position within it.

In July 1961, Jamaican Governor Kenneth Blackburne visited Grand Cayman for the purpose of announcing the proposals that had been drafted in June that year. The details were presented in a public meeting. The proposal, if accepted, was to be set out in a trial period of about five years after which a review would be carried out by the Federation and the Cayman government to decide whether the Islands should continue in an associated relationship or become a unit territory, and petition the Crown to revert it to a colony status.

The Cayman Islands and the West Indies Federation (continued)



Photo: Cayman Islands National Archive collection Administrator Jack Rose, A.R. Thomas and Sir Hilton Poynton at Lancaster House on a conference on the West Indies Federation.

The proposal for Federation membership was that once the Federation became independent, the Cayman Islands would cease to be a British Dependency and would remain a member of the Commonwealth. The Islands would enjoy full internal self-government and the Governor of Jamaica would relinquish the responsibility over the Islands.

The areas of Foreign Affairs and Defence would be the responsibility of the Federation and as a result, the Cayman Islands would contribute to their costs. The relationship between Jamaica and the Cayman Islands would be preserved through links with the University of the West Indies, medical and prison services and by the former providing periodic technical support and assistance.

The proposed arrangements meant that the Cayman Islands would have a Lieutenant-Governor as head of state, appointed by the British Government. In addition to this, there would also be a Chief Minister, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Council of Ministers would comprise of the Lieutenant Governor, the Chief Minister, two legislators selected by the Chief Minister and an Attorney General chosen by the Public Service Commission. It was expected that this proposal would have been the main issue debated in the local 1962 election. However, broader difficulties within the Federation would overtake matters. Inter-island rivalries, combined with a failure to fully capture the popular support across the various participating territories, meant that the Federation was on shaky foundations from the start. When the Foundation failed to move as quickly as some would have liked towards independence, this was seized upon as a rallying cry for those in the larger Islands who thought their prospects for independence would be more quickly realised if they went their own way. On 19 September 1961, 54 per cent of the Jamaican electorate voted to end their participation in the Federation, a vote which eventually led to Jamaican independence in 1962. It also precipitated the collapse of the Federation in May 1962. With Jamaica committed to going its own way, the Chief Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, famously proclaimed "one from ten leaves nought" and Trinidad and Tobago soon followed suit, leaving the "Little Eight" remaining territories who were unable to sustain the Federation in the absence of the two largest constituents.

With the Federation at an end and Jamaica going it alone, what did this now mean for the Cayman Islands and its own quest for greater self-government?

The First Cayman Islands Constitution

One important result of the West Indies Federation was the creation of the first written constitution for the Cayman Islands. When the Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands Act was passed by the United Kingdom Parliament in 1958, this created a direct constitutional link between the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom, which subsequently facilitated a Cayman Islands Constitution on 4 July 1959 by way of Royal Order-in-Council.

Obtaining a written constitution was a significant political advancement for the Cayman Islands, as the Islands were now specifically exempt from the control of the Jamaican legislature and were, for the time-being, placed directly under the authority of the Jamaican Governor.

The First Cayman Islands Constitution (continued)



Photo: Cayman Islands National Archive collection Opening of The Legislative Assembly in 1972.

There were also radical changes to the Legislature. After 129 years, the body of Vestrymen and Justices was replaced by a Legislative Assembly, the membership of which was reduced from thirty five to eighteen members, comprised of twelve elected members, three nominated members and three official members.

The most obvious change experienced by the average Caymanian through this new Constitution was that all adult Caymanians were now given the right to vote and stand for election. However, for women the road to universal adult suffrage was not straightforward. In 1948, twenty four George Town women had written to the Commissioner at the time, stating that there was nothing in the 1865 Act of the Cayman Islands denying women to vote and that they intended to exercise their right in the forthcoming election. Unfortunately, the response of the Attorney General of Jamaica was that whilst the 1865 Act did not specifically exclude women from exercising their right to vote and their right to stand for election, the Act did not specifically include women either.

The question of women's suffrage resurfaced even more vociferously just over ten years later, when, on 29 May 1957, Caymanian women came together to demand their political rights. The signatures of three hundred and fifty eight women were submitted in the form of seven identically worded petitions which came from seven different districts to the legislature.



Photo: Courtesy of the Cayman Islands National Archive.

Sir Kenneth Blackburne, Governor of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands at a public meeting of the first legislative meeting under the Cayman Islands first written Constitution at George Town Town Hall.

These actions concerned both the Commissioner and Governor so much, that on 20 September 1958, a draft bill was forwarded from the Governor to the Commissioner. The Select Committee unanimously recommended the granting of the petition on 16 October 1958. As a result of this, the Cayman Islands saw the swift passage of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Law on 8 December 1958.

With a written constitution now in place, the next question for the Cayman Islands to address was what it would do in the wake of the collapse of the West Indies Federation and the impending independence of Jamaica.

Constitutional Options

The three options for consideration were a) whether the Cayman Islands would seek to retain historical links with the newly independent Jamaica, b) whether the Cayman Islands would instead remain in a colonial relationship with the United Kingdom, or c) whether it might be possible for the Cayman Islands to pursue independence in its own right.

The political parties of the day took centre stage in discussing the issue. The National Democratic Party, which was led by Mr. Ormond Panton and Mr. Warren Conolly, campaigned for greater self-government above all. Most of the party thought that greater self-government could only be achieved if the Cayman Islands remained with Jamaica.

On the opposite side of the fence, were the leaders of the Christian Democratic Party. Party members such as Ducan Merren, Willie Farrington and Burns Ruddy felt that the Cayman Islands

Constitutional Options (continued)

should remain with Britain and thought that the Islands' quest for greater self-government could be achieved this way.

The issue became heated and as a result Governor Blackburne revisited Grand Cayman on 17 January 1962 to see if a consensus could be reached. Upon his arrival to the meeting, the Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Sister Islands, Capt. Keith Tibbetts and Mr. Nolan Foster, presented Governor Blackburne with a petition signed by 345 of the 435 registered voters of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. The Petition stated that "if Grand Cayman chose to remain with an independent Jamaica, the Sister Islands would seek separate Crown Colony status under Britain".

The issue was finally brought before the elected members of the Legislative Assembly where it was debated and voted upon. To Governor Blackburne's surprise, a unanimous resolution had been reached. It was resolved by the Assembly members that "It was the wish of the Cayman Islands 1. To continue their present association with Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom; 2. To negotiate with her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for internal self-government taking into account the wishes of the people of the Cayman Islands as to timing."

With the overarching question of what option, regarding independence, the Cayman Islands would pursue now settled, it remained to be seen the extent to which negotiations with the United Kingdom would give rise to internal self-government for the Cayman Islands.

The 1972 Constitutional Arrangements

After the unanimous resolution in the Legislative Assembly for the Islands to remain a dependency of the United Kingdom, a new Constitution was enacted by Order in Council in 1962. This Constitution did not, however, differ substantively from its 1959 predecessor.

During the 1960s the local legislature established select committees to consider further constitutional change. A British constitutional expert, the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, was also appointed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to facilitate this process. In conducting his work, Lord Oxford and Asquith observed that the Islanders desired greater participation by the elected representatives in government business and for the abolition of nominated members.

After Lord Oxford and Asquith produced his report, a new Constitution came into force in the Cayman Islands on 22 August 1972. Some of the changes that resulted from this new Constitution were that the Administrator was re-designated as the Governor; the Governor would chair an Executive Council in which of four elected members would be officially assigned portfolios; the term of the Legislative Assembly was extended from three to four years; the system of nominated members was abolished; and the number of official members was set at three, namely, the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General.

The new constitution also made provision for the Legislative Assembly to be presided over by a Speaker. The appointment of a speaker did not take place until 1989, some 17 years after the 1972 Constitution came into force, when Mrs. Sybil McLaughlin was appointed as the first speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The 1972 Constitution did therefore realise some important incremental advances. However these revised constitutional arrangements still fell some way short of internal self-government and the quest for greater control by the elected members continued.

The 1972 Constitutional Arrangements (continued)

The limitations of the 1972 Constitution was evidenced by the fact, that although the members of the Executive Council were bound by “collective responsibility” to support all its decisions in the Assembly, the Governor was vested with special responsibilities and reserved powers which excluded him from being bound by the collective will. The 1972 Constitution also vested the Governor with special responsibilities, which did not require the Governor to consult with elected members; and with reserved powers, which permitted the Governor to go against the advice of Executive Council in certain circumstances. Compared with other Overseas Territories in the region, it was apparent that the 1972 Constitution and the minor amendments thereto did not provide the Cayman Islands with many of advances that others had managed to achieve. In Bermuda, for example, the powers of the Governor were significantly curtailed, in contrast to the greater powers that the Governors in the Cayman Islands, and indeed the other Overseas Territories in the region, continued to possess. All of the other Overseas Territories in the region had a Chief Minister or equivalent, while the Cayman Islands Constitution made no reference to such position at this time. The Cayman Islands, like the Turks and Caicos Islands, had three ex officio members of Executive Council, which was the most out of all of the Overseas Territories in the region; while, at the other end of the scale, Bermuda did not have any ex officio members and was thus considered to be the Overseas Territory with the greatest measure of self-government. Perhaps most strikingly, the constitutions of the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands were peculiar in that neither made reference to the protection of fundamental human rights.

Constitutional Modernisation

The 1972 Constitution was the subject of some periodic amendment. While resulting in some further entrenchment of the Westminster system of government, with the formal appointment of Ministers and the creation of the post of Leader of the Opposition as a counterpoint to the Leader of Government Business, the Cayman Islands continued to lag behind comparative jurisdictions in terms of the relative powers of the elected representatives versus the official arm of government. Further constitutional advancement was therefore advocated in order to achieve, at the very least, a more appropriate or modern balance and to better reflect the democratic will of the people.

At the same time, the absence of a fundamental rights chapter in the Cayman Islands Constitution was also identified as a major deficit. Some impetus for the adoption of a Bill of Rights came from the United Kingdom, who were keen to ensure that the United Kingdom’s international human rights commitments were reflected in the constitutional arrangements of its Overseas Territories. The interests of the United Kingdom, should not, however, discount the local support for the inclusion of fundamental rights in the constitution. The Report of the Constitutional Commissioners, who undertook a review of the constitutional arrangements of the Cayman Islands in 1991 concluded that “there was almost a unanimous request for Fundamental Rights and Freedoms ... to be included in the Constitution”. Similarly, the Report of Cayman’s own Constitutional Modernisation Review Commissioners in 2002 found that the inclusion of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution was the issue that attracted the most widespread support in that review process.

Following an extended period of public consultation, the Constitutional Modernisation Review Commissioners produced a draft constitution annexed to their 2002 Report, which included a Bill of Rights based on a model provided by the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This draft constitution, however, failed to attract the requisite support from Caymanian politicians or the broader populace. Some felt that this draft did not sufficiently advance the constitutional arrangements in terms of the development of local governance beyond those that had been first promulgated some thirty years earlier in 1972. On this basis there was a sense that, having waited so long for a new constitutional framework, this opportunity needed to be maximised so as to obtain the greatest possible advances in local autonomy.

Constitutional Modernisation (continued)

Efforts to modernise the Cayman Islands Constitution were rejuvenated with the establishment of a Constitutional Review Secretariat in March 2007. These efforts, which once again involved extensive public consultation, gave rise to a new draft constitution, which contained some significant modernisation and a Bill of Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities. While the Bill of Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities did not go as far as some had hoped, it met the benchmark that the United Kingdom had set and exceeded this in respect of the rights of children, environmental rights, the right to lawful administrative action, and enhanced rights to education. This compromise was ultimately agreed by the United Kingdom in constitutional talks in London in February 2009 and approved by the people of the Cayman Islands in a referendum on 20 May 2009.

The 2009 Constitution

The 2009 Constitution came into effect on 6 November 2009 and consists of nine parts and 125 sections. A comprehensive educational guide has been published by the Constitutional Commission and should be consulted for a full review of the contents of the 2009 Constitution. In summary for present purposes, the 2009 Constitution enshrined human rights in the constitution; established various institutions to support good governance, including a Constitutional Commission and a Human Rights Commission; established greater local autonomy in government, including the allocation of the finance portfolio to an elected Minister; placed limits on public debt; sought to curtail some of the Governor's executive powers; put in place a local Deputy Governor; provided locally elected government with a role in external affairs; and also provided for local participation in internal security via the establishment of a National Security Council.

These are all significant advances. However, the 2009 constitutional arrangements nevertheless fell short of full internal self-government; a step that the United Kingdom appeared reluctant to consider without some commitment on the part of an Overseas Territory to proceed to independence. For the time-being at least, this seemed to be the extent of the modernisation process without a fundamental change in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Cayman Islands. This is not to say that there were not issues that needed refining, to which end there has been on-going debate concerning, amongst other matters, the implementation of Advisory District Councils as envisaged in the Constitution; the enactment and implementation of legislation to properly give effect to the work of the Commission for Standards in Public Life, which is also contained in the Constitution; the operation of the National Security Council and the effective local participation therein; and the functional practicalities of a Cabinet in which the elected Ministers and the Premier have an enhanced role and where the Governor still attends and presides but is not formally a member.

Other significant constitutional events post-2009 include the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in March 2016^[9] and, most notably, a 2016 constitutional amendment, which modified the administration of the judiciary by extending the tenure of Grand Court Judges from age 65 to age 70 and revising the arrangements for discipline of the judiciary.

Further Constitutional Reform

The enactment of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 by the United Kingdom Parliament and local concerns that the provisions therein relating to the manner in which public registers of beneficial ownership information were to be

Further Constitutional Reform (continued)

established in United Kingdom Overseas Territories (such as the Cayman Islands) did not accord with the level of autonomy that had been assigned to the Cayman Islands under the 2009 Constitution have resulted in recent proposals for further constitutional reform, particularly regarding clarification of the constitutional relationship between the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom.

The Hon. Premier and the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. D. Ezzard Miller, initially advanced six potential revisions involving:

1. The powers reserved to Her Majesty under section 125 of the Constitution;
2. The extent of the United Kingdom's power over "international affairs";
3. The extent of the power of internal self-government in the Cayman Islands;
4. The power of disallowance;
5. The power of Cabinet in relation to, for example, the National Security Council; and
6. The route to the Cayman Islands achieving "Associated Status".

These proposals were conveyed to the Constitutional Commission, along with a request for advice as to any other areas of the Constitution that would also benefit from concurrent amendment. At the same time, the Constitutional Commission was contacted by the then Governor of the Cayman Islands, His Excellency, Mr. Anwar Choudhury, for comments on the six potential revisions proposed and, where possible, for examples of these potential revisions in operation.

In response to these requests, the Constitutional Commission produced its *Constitutional Commission's Responses to Requests from His Excellency the Governor and the Hon. Premier and Hon. Leader of the Opposition for Comments on Potential Revisions to the Cayman Islands Constitution*, dated 27 June 2018, which largely endorsed the revisions that were proposed.

Welcoming clarification of the uncertainty surrounding some provisions in the 2009 Constitution for increased local autonomy and local involvement in the Governor's special responsibilities of defence, external affairs and internal security, the Constitutional Commission supported the proposed revisions to the Constitution in respect of: (i) reserve powers and disallowance; and (ii) internal and external affairs. As regards to associated status and the right to self-determination, the Constitutional Commission provided guidance on how this right may be realised and, while acknowledging that what was being proposed were merely "discussions" as to the "route" to "Associated Status", the Constitutional Commission also noted that: "Any substantive proposal to actually move in this direction would involve a fundamental change in the constitutional arrangements of the Cayman Islands and would, necessarily, require more consideration and consultation".

In reply to the specific request from the Hon. Premier and Hon. Leader of the Opposition for other potential areas for reform, the Constitutional Commission again limited its recommendations to matters where the 2009 constitutional arrangements had given rise to confusion and uncertainties and would accordingly benefit from clarification and greater precision. The other potential areas for reform identified by the Constitutional Commission were:

1. The appointment and role of councillors;
2. The appointment of the Premier;
3. The qualifications for electors;
4. The disqualification of electors;
5. The qualification and disqualification for elected membership of the Legislative Assembly; and
6. The process by which the Cayman Islands Constitution may be altered in the future.

The Constitutional Commission did not therefore undertake a total review of the Constitution for the purposes of the Report. In the cover letter that accompanied its

Further Constitutional Reform (continued)

June 2018 Report, the Constitutional Commission concluded by reaffirming its offer to provide further assistance should any additional input required. Following the submission and publication of its Report, however, the Constitutional Commission was not engaged in the constitutional talks that took place at the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office ("FCO") in London in December 2018; nor was it a party to the discussions between the Governments of the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom, which it is understood then took place in the course of 2019, all of which culminated in a draft Order in Council ("the Draft Order"), which was annexed to a letter sent from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the then Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN in the FCO, to the Premier of the Cayman Islands, the Hon. Alden McLaughlin, on 10 November 2019.

The Hon. Premier and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition jointly responded to Lord Ahmad's letter on 20 November to confirm that a consensus had been reached by members of the Legislative Assembly on a package of reforms presented in the Draft Order, subject to delaying provisions relating to an additional Minister taking effect after the next general election. Subsequently, the Draft Order was approved (with the aforementioned qualification) by unanimous resolution of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly on 6 December 2019, following which the Draft Order also received public expressions of support from the Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce, Cayman Finance and the Cayman Ministers' Association. In summary, the Draft Order contains the following provisions and amendments to the 2009 Constitution:

1. changing the name of the Legislative Assembly to Parliament;
2. abolishing the power of disallowance and introducing some pre-legislative controls;
3. replacing the Governor's reserved legislative power with a right for the Governor to address the Cayman Parliament in defined circumstances;
4. clarifying Cabinet's autonomy regarding domestic affairs;
5. changing the circumstances in which the Governor must consult the Cabinet;
6. providing for Parliamentary Secretaries;
7. providing for a Police Service Commission; and
8. providing an obligation for the UK Secretary of State to notify the Premier of proposed Acts of the UK Parliament that would extend directly to Cayman or Order in Council extending any provisions of an Act of the UK Parliament to Cayman.

In a letter to His Excellency the Governor, the Hon. Premier and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on 17 February 2020, the Constitutional Commission presented an explanatory note in which the Constitutional Commission provided its support for the Draft Order, along with a commentary on the reform process. The Constitutional Commission's explanatory note is, available in full on the Constitutional Commission's website.



Photo: Cayman Islands Government Information Services.

Official unveiling of the House of Parliament naming ceremony at the State Opening of the First Parliament of the Cayman Islands held Friday 4 December, 2020.

The Cayman Islands Constitution (Amendment) Order 2020, was approved on 11th November 2020 and came into effect on 3rd December, 2020. The Order makes several amendments to the Constitution of the Cayman Islands. Most notable amendments include the name change of the Legislative Assembly to the Parliament, abolishment of the power of disallowance and introduction of some pre-legislative controls, more defined autonomy of the Cayman Islands Cabinet with respect to domestic affairs, the provisions for Parliamentary Secretaries and a Police Service Commission and an obligation for the Secretary of State to notify the Premier of proposed Acts of the United Kingdom Parliament that directly extend to the Cayman Islands.