



**March 13, 2017**

### **Trust Members Speak up for Saint Lucia's Heritage**

**By: SLNT Communications & Advocacy Officer  
Karetta Crooks Charles**

The atmosphere was charged as 222 members and staff of the Saint Lucia National Trust and 70 non-members gathered for the first Trust membership meeting for 2017. There was hardly any standing space in the Bougainvillea Conference Room at the Bay Gardens Hotel for the attendees who came from all across the island to discuss pertinent issues affecting Saint Lucia's heritage. SLNT's Director, Mr. Bishnu Tulsie gave an overview of a few of the Trust's projects such as Walcott Place; a coastal stabilization project to benefit



*SLNT Members & non-members express concerns about Saint Lucia's Patrimony*

Pigeon Island National Landmark (PINL) and the Pointe Sable Environment Protection Area (PSEPA) in Vieux Fort; our continued advocacy for the Government to sign on to the Principle 10 declaration which seeks to promote access to information, access to public participation and access to justice in environmental matters; the recent development in the Desert Star Holdings Limited: Pearl of the Caribbean Project and the proposed Dolphin Park at the PINL.

Thereafter, Dr. Vasantha Chase – SLNT Chairperson stated that many of our 'big ticket' projects are at risk and some have been placed on hold. She made reference to the Walcott Place project for which the Trust was advised that funding has been suspended for phase 2 under which an interpretation centre, gift shop, café, workshop and lecture room would have been constructed. One of the main highlights of the meeting was a presentation on the proposed Dolphin Park at the Pigeon Island National Landmark. The presentation was made by Dolphin Discovery Inc. who was accompanied by Mr. Ausbert d'Auvergne of Trident Consulting. Following their presentation, the members vehemently opposed any such project on the grounds that it would desecrate the historic value of the only National Landmark on the island. They also indicated that they will not stand for the captivity of dolphins

which are highly intelligent species and that this would affect employment for existing industries. For clarity the attendees were also asked if they were in favour of a Dolphin Park anywhere else on the island and to this they unanimously voted 'NO'. Both members and non-members stated that Saint Lucia has more to lose from such a project than it has to gain, for example, they said Virgin Holidays has announced that it will boycott any other country that sets up a dolphinarium. Another member also stated it would be foolhardy for Saint Lucia to go in this direction when the rest of the world seems to be moving away from dolphinariums, as many dolphin parks are closing.



**Team from Dolphin Discovery Inc. & Mr. Ausbert d'Auvergne of Trident Consulting addressing the gathering.**

Following that intense discussion, Mr. Lyndon John – Conservation Biologist and Trust member presented on the importance of wetlands such as Ma Kote Mangroves. He pointed out that mangroves are essential in protecting our coastal communities from storm surges, hurricane winds and floods. Mangroves are also important to our fisheries sector as they serve as a nursery for a variety of fish, shrimps and crabs. Mr. John pointed out that the Indonesian authorities said that the impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that devastated that country, killing thousands of people would not have been so severe if they had not destroyed most of its mangroves and coral reef. This presentation set the stage for the next major issue - Phase 2 of the DSH project which will negatively impact the Maria Islands Nature Reserve, home to the world's rarest snake, the Saint Lucia Racer and the Saint Lucia whiptail lizard.

In the final analysis, members mandated the SLNT to do everything in its power to (i) prevent the development of the Dolphin Park at the Pigeon Island National Landmark or anywhere else in Saint Lucia; (ii) to prevent the building of the proposed causeway from the mainland to Maria Islands in Vieux Fort and (ii) to explore whether the works that have already been started by the DSH is legal considering that the Environmental Impact Assessment process has not been completed.

The Trust reaffirms that it is not anti-development, and understands the need for economic growth and job creation. However, there must be a balance to ensure the protection and sustainable use of our natural resources for the present and future generations. The Trust calls on the public, members and non-members alike to support its efforts and that of any other group that seeks to safeguard our unique yet fragile heritage.