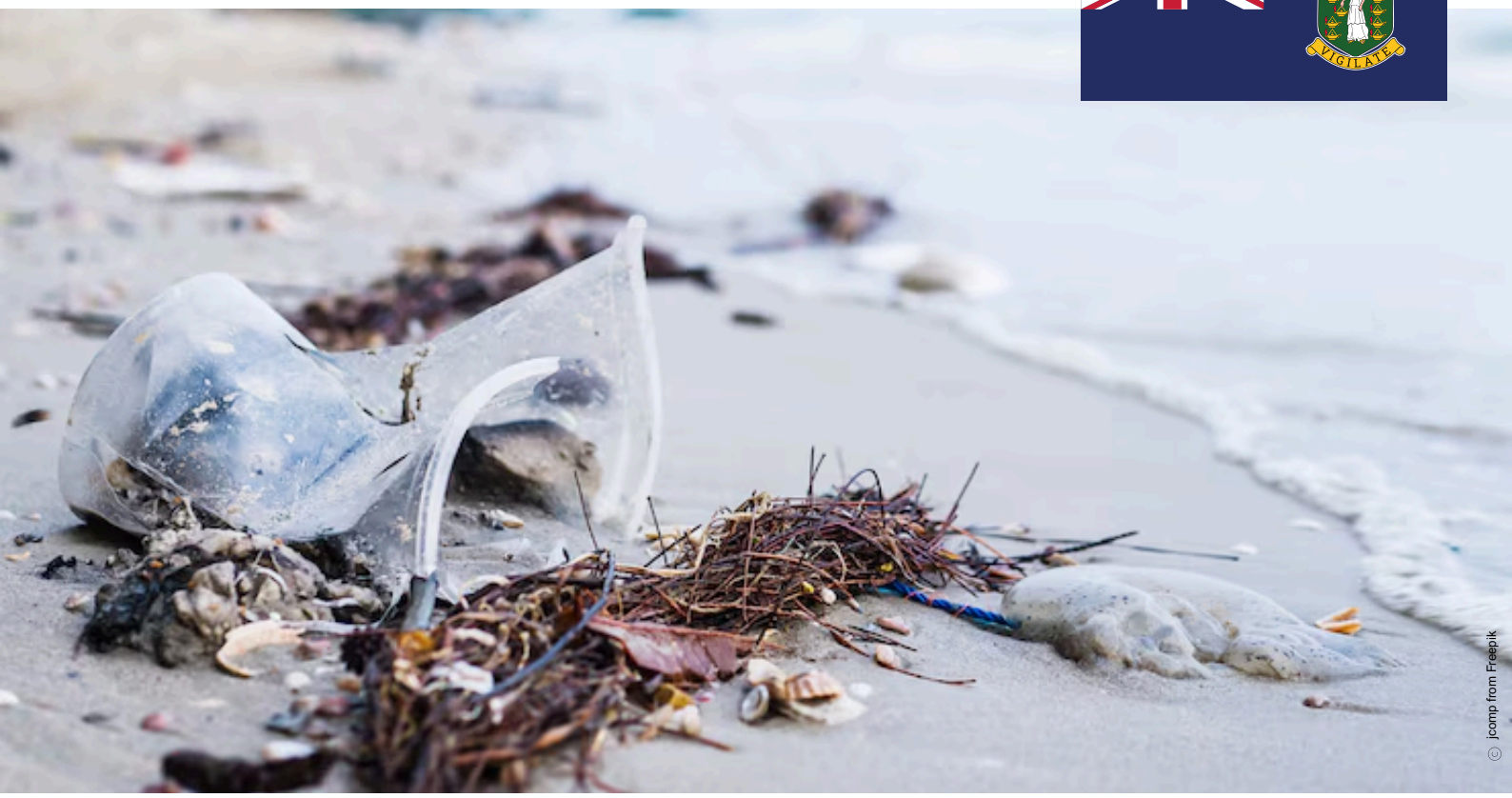
PROMAR

Policy Brief

(Input Paper)

The Virgin Islands Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean Sea



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adelphi RESEARCH

UN environment programme

Government of the Virgin Islands
Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

greenvi

Supported by:

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations

CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
DWM	Department of Waste Management
ELV	End of Life Vehicles
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
EU	European Union
GO	Green Overseas
HDPE	High-Density Polyethylene
LDPE	Low-Density Polyethylene
LLDPE	Linear Low-Density Polyethylene
PET	Polyethylene Terephthalate
PP	Polypropylene
PROMAR	Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean Sea
PS	Polystyrene
RESEMBID	Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity Programme
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SWM	Solid Waste Management
VI	Virgin Islands (British)

1. Background

This policy brief on marine plastic pollution and waste management is part of the Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean Sea (PROMAR) project that contributes to the reduction of waste streams, namely plastic packaging and single-use plastics, into the Caribbean Sea while promoting circular economy solutions in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Colombia, The Virgin Islands (British), St. Kitts & Nevis, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Suriname.

It is intended to form the basis for a national policy dialog aimed at improving the situation regarding marine litter and waste management in The Virgin Islands.

Background

The Virgin Islands is a British Overseas Territory located in the Caribbean, east of Puerto Rico. The Virgin Islands (VI) comprises four main islands – Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke – alongside over 50 smaller islands and cays, of which approximately 16 are inhabited. The capital, Road Town, is situated on Tortola, the largest island in the Territory. Tortola is home to the majority of the population, with around 23,000 of the 27,800 residents living there (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025a).

The VI spans a total land area of 151 km² and has 80 kilometres of coastline. The islands are surrounded by the North Atlantic Ocean to the north and east and the Caribbean Sea to the south, with no land boundaries (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025d).

The economy is driven by two main sectors: tourism and financial services. Tourism plays a particularly significant role, both politically and economically, as it employs a large share of the population. This reliance on tourism underscores its importance to the Territory's development and stability (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025a).

Waste Management Challenges

According to the **Waste Management Strategy for The Virgin Islands** (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d) the VI faces complex waste management challenges, largely due to outdated and fragmented legislation that inadequately regulates waste activities and fails to meet international obligations. This legal framework results in partial compliance and a lack of enforcement.

Although historical waste management data are limited, systems to track volumes and types are improving. Comparing a 2013 and a 2019 waste audit for Tortola, an increase in plastic waste from 17 % in 2013 to 22 % in 2019 was seen.

Historically, fires at waste management sites, through spontaneous combustion and illegal activities were frequently exposing residents downwind to harmful fumes. However, improved fire suppression controls implemented in more recent years have significantly decreased this problem.

Waste management is further strained by the seasonal influx of tourists, which increases waste generation without corresponding prevention schemes, resulting in high volumes of single-use packaging waste. According to the 2019 report, waste generation was high in all islands of the VI with no technical standards, emission limits, reduction incentives or legal requirements in place for monitoring, reporting, or providing public access to information

related to waste. In recent years, however, there has been a strong push by Government and local not-for-profit Green VI to change this.

More recently, initiatives by the Department of Waste Management (DWM) such as dumpsite fire suppression protocols, oil recycling, the derelict vehicles programme and the collaborative *We Recycle* Programme are having a significant impact on waste management in the VI. This is despite challenges, such as floods, hurricane and the pandemic. Progress is detailed in Section 2.

The potential for recycling and recovery is underutilized and comprehensive legislation, adequate capacity, and necessary infrastructure and systems are required. The cost of waste management is funded through taxes. Waste volumes are high per capita and although volumes are low compared to industrialised countries, the same complexity of the waste stream applies.

Additionally, a key challenge in waste separation is that, despite the Department of Waste Management's encourages or citizens and businesses to separate bulky waste, construction waste, recyclables and glass, this guidance is not always followed.

Marine Litter Challenges

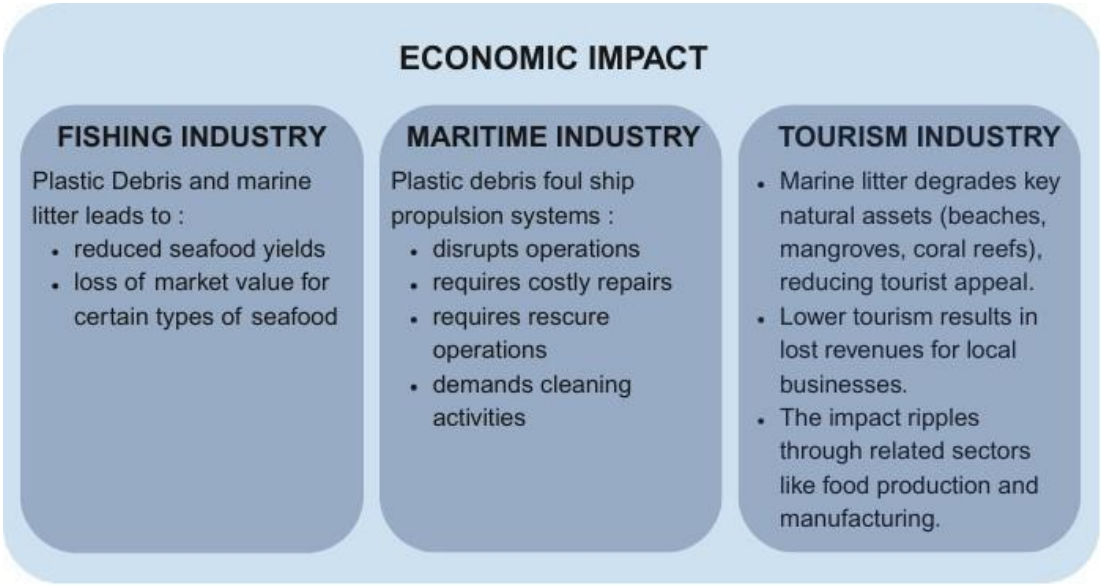
Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as the VI[1], are disproportionately affected by marine litter despite their relatively low levels of consumption and population. For instance, coastal clean-up data reveal that beaches and coastal areas in selected Caribbean countries show an average of 2,014 litter items per kilometre – significantly higher than the global average of 573. Among the most frequently found items are plastic bottles, single-use plastics, foam containers, and abandoned or discarded fishing gear. Although plastics account for only 12 percent of solid waste generated in the region, they dominate marine and coastal litter. Data from beach clean-ups in 2017 highlight that plastic beverage bottles alone made up 21 percent of recorded items, with single-use plastics accounting for 35 percent overall. Poor household waste collection services exacerbate this issue - an estimated 322,745 tons of plastic remain uncollected annually across selected Caribbean countries, with 22 percent of households disposing of waste in waterways or on land where it can easily be washed into the marine environment. Litter on the sandy southern beaches of the VI, including single-use plastics and large marine debris, is broken up by coral reefs before reaching the shore, with items like trawl nets and fish baskets indicating they originate from outside The Virgin Islands (Randall, 2022).

To combat these challenges, many Caribbean SIDS and the VI, have adopted measures to reduce marine litter. Public awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and new legislation that will ban single-use plastic items in the future are being implemented. For example, in March 2013, local not-for-profits Green VI and Worldhouse Caribbean, worked with supermarkets to introduce a 15-cent charge for plastic bags at VI grocery stores as part of a voluntary agreement (Diez et al., 2019). In 2017 a recycling pilot, We Recycle, was initiated on Virgin Gorda and expanded to the main island Tortola in 2019. Glass, plastic and used beverage cans are diverted via a network of public recycling bins and two test recycling stations on Virgin Gorda and Tortola respectively. The diversion of landscape waste has been initiated on both islands and the aim is to expand this to include food waste, cardboard and paper. There are plans to transform the Virgin Gorda dumpsite to a world class, innovative

[1] The VI is a Associate Members of the United Nations Regional Commissions according to https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/list-sids

Materials Recovery Facility that demonstrates small scale circular economy projects that utilise waste as a resource.

Economic impact: Marine litter has a significant impact on the key economic sectors in the VI and the broader Caribbean region, particularly fishing, shipping, and tourism.



- In the **fishing industry**, plastic debris and other marine litter can result in reduced seafood yields or loss of market value for certain types of fish and seafood (Watkins et al., 2015).
- The **maritime industry** also suffers from the impacts of marine pollution. Plastic debris can foul ship propulsion systems, disrupting operations, and requiring costly repairs, rescue efforts, and clean-up activities (Watkins et al., 2015).
- In the **tourism industry**, marine litter visibly degrades the natural assets that attract visitors to the region. Polluted beaches, mangroves and degraded coral reefs can deter tourists, leading to reduced visitation rates and lost revenues for local businesses reliant on tourism. These losses extend beyond the immediate tourism sector as the supply chain for tourism spans multiple industries, including food production and manufacturing (Diez et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2015).

Environmental impact: Plastic debris poses severe threats to biodiversity by harming marine species through entanglement, ingestion and integration into organisms, while also disrupting ecosystem processes and reducing essential services (La Kanhai et al., 2022). Solid waste and wastewater, primarily from land-based sources like rivers, agricultural runoff, and coastal infrastructure, are the most pervasive pollution contributors, accounting for 80% of marine litter. Plastics degrade slowly, fragmenting into microplastics, which accumulate toxins such as pesticides, further increasing ecological risks. Recent studies also link plastic debris to coral disease, highlighting its cascading and multiplying threats to marine environments in the region (Diez et al., 2019).

Human health impact: Organic pollutants, some of which have toxic and carcinogenic properties, are absorbed into the plastics in the marine environment (Diez et al., 2019). These pollutants can enter the food chain when marine organisms ingest contaminated plastics. Marine litter incurs social costs by reducing the benefits of coastal access, and limiting

recreational opportunities (Watkins et al., 2015). Furthermore, litter can accumulate stagnant water, creating breeding sites for mosquitoes and flies that transmit diseases to humans, including dengue fever and the chikungunya virus (Diez et al., 2019).

Status Quo

In VI solid waste management (SWM) is under the responsibility of the Department of Waste Management (DWM), governed by the Ministry of Health and Social Development. Waste Management facilities include dump sites, an incinerator, a waste transfer station for waste from Jost Van Dyke and two recycling centres. An overview of the waste treatment facilities are listed in Table 1. The DWM manages the disposal facilities and the collection of recyclables. The collection of waste from public skips is subcontracted as are the operations of the Transfer Station.

Table 1 Existing Waste Treatment Facilities

Facility	Location	Capacity	Operator	Status
Incinerator	Tortola, Pockwood Pond	100t/d	DWM	Inactive 2+ yrs
Dump site	Tortola, Pockwood Pond	Unknown	DWM	Active
End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) crusher	Tortola, Pockwood Pond	Unknown	DWM	Intermittent
We Recycle Centre	Tortola, Paraquita Bay	1.5 tons/ day	DWM & Green VI	Active
Polywood production	Tortola, Paraquita Bay	1.5t/d	VI Plastics	Active
Textile reuse & recycling	Tortola, Road Town	Unknown	Red Cross & Family Support Network	Active
Private recyclers	Tortola	Unknown	Various (informal)	TBC

Dumpsite	Virgin Gorda, Gorda Peak	Unknown	DWM	Active
We Recycle Centre	Virgin Gorda, The Valley	0.2 t/d	DWM & Green VI	Active
Private Recycler	Virgin Gorda	n/a	Green & Clean VI	TBC
Glass Recycling	Virgin Gorda	Unknown	Green Crete	TBC
Dumpsite	Anegada	Unknown	DWM	Active
Transfer Station	Jost van Dyke	15 t/d	DWM (subcontracts ops)	Active

2. Policy & Legal Framework

International, regional and local policies and legal frameworks influencing waste management in The Virgin Islands are summarized below and should be considered in local strategies and policies.

International

Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal: Regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes (Basel Convention, 1989).

MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships) addresses various forms of pollution from ships, including garbage disposal at sea (International Maritime Organization, MARPOL).

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promotes the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems and supports SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), which focus on the protection and sustainable use of marine and terrestrial environments. The call for sustainable consumption and production patterns corresponds with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), promoting resource efficiency, waste minimization, and sustainable lifestyles. The transition to a green economy—including renewable energy and waste reduction—supports SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by addressing carbon emissions and sustainable infrastructure. Of particular relevance to the challenges of marine pollution faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the NSDP underscores the importance of proactive environmental action and the strengthening of legislative frameworks for environmental and ecosystem management. This directly supports the achievement of SDG 14, which calls for the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution, especially from land-based activities. The NSDP thus reinforces the Territory's commitment to integrated, long-term strategies that protect its natural assets while promoting sustainable development.

Regional

The **Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission** is actively working to implement a circular economy, focusing on resource efficiency and waste reduction through practices like reducing, reusing, and recycling. Specifically, initiatives like the Recycle OECS project are aimed at reducing plastic pollution and fostering sustainable waste management, according to the Commission. The OECS Commission is working to harmonize policies, legislation, and roadmaps related to waste management and the circular economy.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) - The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is attempting to move toward a CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) as a method of integration to improve trade, employment and production rates.

The **Caribbean Environmental Programme (CEP)** is a UNEP Regional Seas Programme that addresses environmental issues within the wider Caribbean area through the Caribbean Action Plan. The Cartagena Convention legally supports the implementation of the Caribbean Action Plan and aims to protect and develop the marine environment. The Cartagena convention covers pollution from ships, dumping, seabed activities, air pollution and marine pollution from land- based activities and has been ratified by 23 UN member states. The Convention has been supplemented by three protocols namely: Oil Spills Protocol, Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol, and Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution Protocol.

The **St. Georges Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability** in the OECS was signed by member states in 2001 and "sets out a broad framework to be pursued for environmental management in the OECS region" (OECS, 2006). The declaration makes specific reference to the Basel convention and the management of hazardous waste in addition to the integrated waste management of solids and liquids.

Local

The Virgin Islands **Constitution Order 2007 (UK S.I. 2007 No. 1678)** enshrines a guiding environmental principle. Section 29 guarantees that "every person has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his or her health or well-being," and directs the legislature to enact laws to "prevent pollution and ecological degradation," "promote conservation," and "secure ecologically sustainable development" for present and future generations. While the Constitution itself is not an enforcement tool, it sets a clear legal principle that marine pollution is unacceptable and must be combated through laws – anchoring the Territory's commitment to protect its coastal and marine environment from solid waste.

The Virgin Islands' **Criminal Code (No. 1 of 1997)** directly criminalizes certain forms of pollution, including marine dumping. Section 292(d) of the Code expressly prohibits "deposit[ing] offal or refuse in the sea within five hundred yards of the shore", making it a criminal offence. In other words, dumping any garbage or solid waste into nearshore waters is illegal. This provision carries a penalty of up to six months' imprisonment or a fine up to $500 (or both) upon conviction. Section 292 also covers other environmental nuisances – for example, polluting any spring, stream, well or reservoir, or fouling the air with noxious substances are similarly punishable. The inclusion of marine dumping in the Criminal Code means that beyond civil fines, offenders can face criminal prosecution for polluting VI's coastal waters. This establishes a clear legal basis to enforce against anyone who dumps solid waste (such as plastics or garbage) into the ocean or on the shoreline. Notably, the Code's marine pollution offence applies to any person who intentionally or negligently causes such pollution, ensuring that individuals and businesses are accountable under criminal law.

The **Public Health Ordinance (Cap. 194)** grants the Minister responsible for health broad powers to protect public health, including authority over sanitation and the abatement of public nuisances. While the ordinance does not explicitly address marine litter or coastal pollution, it enables the development of regulations to prevent environmental pollution more generally, which can include land-based sources that contribute to marine litter. Under the ordinance, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is formally responsible for garbage collection and disposal as a public health function. However, the legal framework has not been updated to reflect the current structure, where these responsibilities are now carried out by the Department of Waste Management (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d). In sum, the Public Health Ordinance, and its subsidiary legislation, underpins VI's

ability to regulate solid waste handling to protect both human health and the environment, indirectly supporting the prevention of marine pollution by controlling land-based waste disposal at its source.

The **Litter Abatement Act (Cap. 182)** is the Territory's primary law targeting improper disposal of garbage on land and in public places. An amendment in 2009 (No. 14 of 2009) strengthened its enforcement provisions. The law designates "Litter Wardens" – defined as "a Police Officer, a member of The Virgin Islands Auxiliary Force, an Environmental Health Officer, a Solid Waste Officer or other person so appointed" – who are authorised to enforce anti-litter rules. The Act prohibits dumping litter in any public place or on private property without consent, and bans actions that would cause litter to enter the environment. For example, it is an offence to transport litter in an open or unsecured manner such that it can scatter in a public area (Section 3(1)(d)) or to discharge trash from a vehicle. The law also makes it illegal to interfere with refuse bins or to allow litter to accumulate on one's premises. These provisions implicitly protect coastal areas, since indiscriminate dumping or littering anywhere (including beaches and waterfronts) is outlawed. Violators are subject to fines (up to $500 for a first offence) or up to 3 months' imprisonment.

The **Derelict Vehicles (Disposal) Act (No. 6 of 2000)** provides for identification, removal and proper disposal of vehicles (including boats and other large "end-of-life" machinery) that are abandoned, dilapidated, disused, or written off for insurance purposes. Under this law, owners who abandon vehicles can be compelled to pay for their removal, and offences may be created for non-compliance (the Act makes it an offence to leave a vehicle in a public place such that it becomes derelict). Penalties under the Derelict Vehicles Act include fines for those who fail to remove or illegally dump derelict vehicles and boats. It establishes a mechanism for authorities to tag derelict vehicles and ultimately dispose of them in an environmentally sound manner if owners do not act. By preventing junk vehicles and equipment from being abandoned in areas where they could eventually rust and spill debris into waterways, the Act indirectly contributes to reducing marine litter, thus protecting marine ecosystems from pollution.

The **Physical Planning Act (No. 15 of 2004)** is a broad land-use law that includes provisions to protect the marine and coastal environment from pollution. It requires Environmental Impact Assessments for certain new developments and mandates that developers properly remove and dispose of waste, restoring sites after construction. When considering development applications, the Planning Authority must assess the availability of essential services like waste disposal. The Act empowers the Planning Authority to issue "stop orders" to halt any activity that is causing unauthorised waste deposits or environmental harm. It also allows "amenity orders" to be served, compelling landowners to clean up land that has become offensive or hazardous due to waste accumulation. Notably, the Physical Planning Act addresses coastal areas by authorizing the Government to regulate activities on beaches and seashores, including the control of waste in those areas. In the context of a **Development Plan**, the Act allows for the allocation of lands for protected purposes, such as marine parks. However, the actual declaration of a marine park falls under the **National Parks Act**, not the Physical Planning Act. The only type of protected area that can be declared under the Physical Planning Act is an **Environmental Protection Area (EPA)**. Such declarations must be justified and made within the framework of a broader community development plan.

The **National Parks Act, 2006 (No. 4 of 2006)**, together with the **National Parks Regulations, 2008**, provides an important legal framework for the protection of The Virgin Islands' terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Administered by the National Parks Trust, this legislation empowers the designation and management of national parks, including marine parks and protected coastal areas. Under the Act, specific activities within parks are regulated to prevent environmental degradation, including restrictions on littering, dumping, and other waste-generating behaviors. The 2008 Regulations further specify prohibited actions, such as the disposal of waste, discharge of pollutants, and leaving refuse in park areas, thereby directly contributing to the prevention of marine pollution from recreational and coastal sources. Offenders may face fines or other penalties for non-compliance. By controlling human activity in ecologically sensitive areas, the National Parks legislation serves as a critical instrument in safeguarding marine habitats from solid waste contamination, and complements broader environmental protection measures outlined in the Territory's waste management and public health laws.

The Virgin Islands **Climate Change Trust Fund Act, 2015** establishes an independent statutory body to mobilize and manage financial resources in support of the Territory's response to climate change. The Act creates the Climate Change Trust Fund, a legally autonomous entity governed by a multi-sectoral board, with a mandate to finance climate adaptation, mitigation, and environmental conservation initiatives across public, private, and civil society sectors. It authorizes the use of diverse funding sources - including environmental levies, donor contributions, and government allocations - to support activities such as renewable energy adoption, sustainable land and marine resource management, ecosystem restoration, and public education. While its primary focus is climate resilience, the Act explicitly supports projects that contribute to marine and coastal protection, including measures to reduce the impacts of climate-related hazards. While "pollution prevention" isn't a distinct category, the Act's support for marine and coastal protection likely encompasses such initiatives. The Trust Fund's governance structure emphasizes transparency, accountability, and apolitical decision-making, positioning it as a critical mechanism for advancing The Virgin Islands' sustainable development and environmental objectives.

The **Environmental Protection and Tourism Improvement Fund Act, 2017 (No. 7 of 2017)** establishes a dedicated financing mechanism to support environmental conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable tourism development in The Virgin Islands. Funded through a mandatory $10 environmental levy on arriving visitors (with the exclusion of cruise ship passengers), the Act channels tourism-generated revenue into initiatives in line with one of the following allowed applications of the Fund :

(a) activities related to

(i) environmental protection and improvement;

(ii) climate change, and other matters affecting the environment;

(b) the maintenance and development of tourist sites and other tourism related activities throughout the Territory; and

(c) the marketing of the Territory as a premier tourist destination.

The **Environmental Protection and Tourism Improvement Fund Regulations, 2025** provide clear administrative procedures for the disbursement and management of the Fund. These Regulations mandate that designated percentages be assigned to The Virgin Islands

Climate Change Trust Fund, the National Parks Trust, and the VI Tourist Board, supporting activities such as environmental restoration, climate adaptation, site maintenance, and destination marketing. The Regulations also require quarterly publication of fund statements and establish accountability procedures for fund recipients, including reporting on the use of disbursed monies.

The **Merchant Shipping Act, 2001** provides the legal foundation for the regulation of maritime activities within The Virgin Islands and includes provisions that support marine environmental protection. While the Act references international instruments such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), it primarily establishes a regulatory framework rather than setting out detailed environmental standards. The Act grants authority to make regulations that could require vessels to utilize port waste reception facilities and comply with restrictions on the discharge of garbage, including plastics, within VI territorial waters. Although these specific requirements are not contained within the Act itself, the legislation enables their development and enforcement through subsidiary regulations. In doing so, it contributes to the prevention of ship-sourced marine litter and supports the Territory's broader environmental objectives. Enforcement responsibilities under the Act rest with maritime authorities and other designated officers, who are tasked with ensuring compliance with both domestic maritime law and applicable international conventions.

The **Business, Professions and Trade Licences Act, 1990 (Cap. 200)** primarily regulates business operations in The Virgin Islands through a licensing framework that ensures businesses operate within defined legal parameters. By issuing licenses to businesses such as repair shops, recycling enterprises, and scrap dealers, the Act can support waste reduction and circular economy practices—particularly the repair, reuse, and repurposing of products that might otherwise be discarded. Strengthening coordination between business licensing and waste management policies could further enable the development of green enterprises and promote compliance with environmental and public health standards.

The **Customs Management and Duties Act 2010 (No. 6 of 2010)** provides the legislative authority for regulating the importation of goods into The Virgin Islands, including materials that contribute to the solid waste stream. While not an environmental statute in itself, the Act plays a supporting role in waste and pollution prevention by enabling the control or restriction of certain imports, such as single-use plastics, non-recyclable packaging, and hazardous materials. Through the application of customs duties, bans, or conditional clearances, the legislation can be used to discourage the entry of products that are difficult to manage or prone to becoming litter, thereby reducing the volume of waste that may ultimately enter the marine environment. In the context of broader waste management and sustainability goals, this Act offers a policy lever that can support initiatives such as plastic bans, extended producer responsibility (EPR), and circular economy strategies, particularly when coordinated with environmental and public health regulations.

The Virgin Islands' **Waste Management Strategy**, approved in 2024, builds on the 2013 Solid Waste Management Strategy and incorporates key lessons from Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. This updated strategy aims to enhance the resilience of the solid waste management (SWM) system to natural disasters, while promoting a long-term transition to sustainable waste practices. It prioritizes stakeholder engagement, institutional strengthening, and a forward-looking approach to governance, policy reform, and technical innovation. Core objectives include public education, waste minimization, and the development of a state-of-the-art waste management system.

The Strategy places strong emphasis on the waste hierarchy, the principles of a circular economy, and climate change mitigation, while advocating for the "polluter pays" principle and cost-recovery mechanisms to ensure financial sustainability. It also highlights the importance of social equity, public health protection, and the promotion of community-based initiatives, all underpinned by a governance model that separates policy functions from service delivery and is supported by comprehensive legislation.

Complementing the Waste Management Strategy, the *draft* **Materials Management Plan** provides a roadmap for the sustainable management of various waste streams, with the goal of transforming waste into new materials for use in the local economy or for recovery and processing abroad. The Plan prioritizes waste prevention strategies aligned with the waste hierarchy, targeting streams such as Polyethylene (PET), High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE), Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) and Polystyrene (PS). Key measures include awareness-building, prevention targets linked to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), source separation, bottle deposit systems, and waste recovery actions, including both local recycling and export. In some cases—such as plastic shopping bags—the Plan recommends a complete ban to further advance sustainability objectives (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019a).

The **National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP)** outlines a strategic vision for advancing environmental sustainability in The Virgin Islands, with Goal 6 - "The Virgin Islands Embraces Environmental Sustainability for Sustainable Islands Development" - providing a dedicated framework for the sustainable management and use of natural resources and ecosystems. This goal emphasizes the need for sustainable consumption and production patterns, and promoting shared responsibility among individuals, communities and all sectors to reduce the Territory's ecological footprint. The NSDP also calls for a transition to a green economy, supported by policies and programmes that encourage natural resource conservation, waste reduction, and the utilization of renewable energy sources. These priorities align closely with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Pending Legislation

Central to the Waste Management Strategy is the urgent call for a comprehensive **Waste Management Act** to modernize the legal framework. This proposed legislation would consolidate outdated and fragmented waste provisions, address critical legal gaps, and provide the Department of Waste Management with a clear, enforceable mandate to meet territorial waste prevention targets and drive progress toward a sustainable, zero-waste circular economy. The proposed Act is envisioned to establish a coherent strategic direction rooted in the waste hierarchy, clearly defined institutional roles and responsibilities, and support for systemic improvements such as reducing waste generation, enhancing collection and storage infrastructure, and expanding recycling and treatment capacity.

Notably, the Strategy outlines targeted actions to reduce marine litter, including setting waste reduction targets, improving collection systems to prevent leakage of waste into the marine environment, and proposing bans on specific single-use plastics, such as plastic shopping bags (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019b, 2019d).

The **proposed Environmental Management and Climate Bill**, currently under development, is intended to establish a comprehensive and integrated legal framework for environmental

protection, climate resilience, and natural resource management in The Virgin Islands. Building on existing legislation, the Act aims to address long-standing gaps in the legal and institutional landscape by introducing a Certificate of Environmental Clearance process for developments requiring an EIA; environmental standards; clear mandates for environmental monitoring, databasing and data application in decision making; pollution limits; a legal mandate for climate adaptation planning, and restricted and prohibited activities to ensure the sustainable management of sensitive ecosystems—including coastal, marine, and terrestrial environments. It is expected to incorporate principles of sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational equity, and to provide enhanced enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that the Territory can respond effectively to both local environmental challenges and global climate threats. The Bill includes sections on Waste Management, Marine Pollution and Hazardous Substances. Generally speaking, the Bill will create powers to establish standards through Regulations by which waste management authorities and entities generating marine waste must operate.

Once enacted, the legislation will serve as a unifying statute, guiding environmental decision-making across all sectors and reinforcing the Territory's efforts to uphold international environmental obligations.

Responsible Authorities

Legislative provisions related to waste management activities, such as administration, operations, licensing, financing, offences, and penalties, are distributed across several departments and statutory boards within different Ministries.

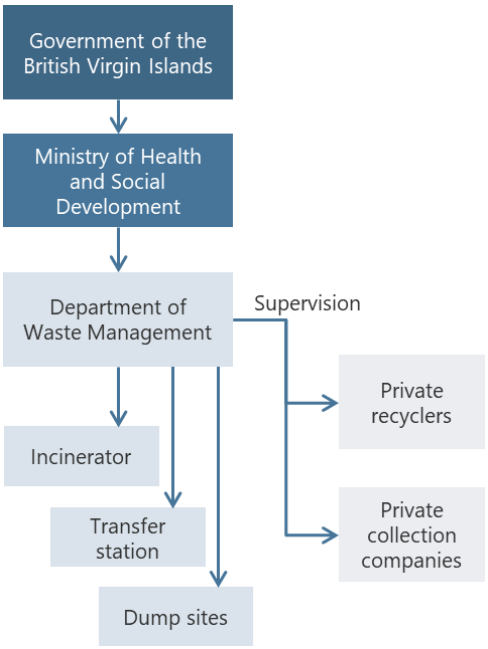
The 7R's Waste Management Strategy advocates for a clear separation of roles within waste management to enhance efficiency and accountability. According to the strategy, the Minister of Health will be responsible for policy formulation, while the Minister of Environment, in collaboration with the EU, will oversee the establishment of standards. The Waste Management Authority will handle service delivery, and the Environmental Health Division will be tasked with enforcement. Additionally, the strategy calls for a review of the Waste Management Strategy and Implementation Plan every five years to ensure continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging challenges (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019b).

The **Ministry of Health and Social Development** houses the Department of Waste Management. The Department has around 70 staff members (as of 2019), including sanitation officers focused on waste collection and litter prevention, workers at the incinerator facility and dump sites, and office staff (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d). The structure of VI waste management is shown in Figure 1.

Also within this Ministry, Environmental Health officers enforce public health regulations related to the environment (such as sanitation and litter control). By housing both DWM and Environmental Health, the Ministry of Health and Social Development oversees waste

collection services and the enforcement of regulations, linking waste governance with protection of human health.

Figure 1 Governmental Waste Management Department Structure (adapted from The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d)



The **Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change** is tasked with sustainably managing the Territory's environment and natural resources to ensure prosperity for its people. The Ministry is dedicated to ensuring conservation, implementing evidence-based environmental management practices, environmental restoration, and strengthening environmental monitoring, policy, and legislation. Its responsibilities include physical planning, environmental legislation and policy, beach management, coral reef management, and coastal water quality programmes, among other areas (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025c). This Ministry also oversees the National Parks Trust (a statutory body). The Trust manages the VI's national parks and marine protected areas, which are integral to conserving habitats and preventing pollution.

The **Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development** plays a key role in overseeing the implementation and evaluation of Government policies, ensuring they align with the social, economic, and environmental objectives outlined in the National Sustainable Development Plan (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025f).

The **Ministry of Finance**'s role is focusing on the broader economic and financial framework that supports Government operations. Its responsibilities in budgeting and fiscal management ensure that resources are allocated to environmental protection and waste management programmes. Additionally, the Ministry's role in regulating treasury systems and supervising financial reporting can help ensure that funds dedicated to waste management are properly accounted for and used effectively. Since 2017, the Ministry established an environmental and tourism levy of $10.00 on arrival at the ports of entry. The money is used to facilitate environmental protection and improvement, climate change, and the maintenance and development of tourist sites.

The Customs Department is an arm of the Ministry of Finance and is critical to environmental governance from a border-control perspective. Customs officers enforce import/export laws, collecting duties and preventing illegal or harmful materials from entering the Territory. In doing so, they influence waste streams by, for example, controlling the importation of vehicles, electronics, or plastics that eventually become waste. The Ministry of Finance's oversight of Customs means that trade and tariff policies can be aligned with environmental goals – such as higher duties on non-biodegradable single-use items or outright bans on certain pollutants (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025e).

The **Ministry of Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation**, through its oversight of the Department of Trade, Investment Promotion and Consumer Affairs, plays a critical role in supporting the transition to a circular economy and the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks in The Virgin Islands. As the authority responsible for regulating business activity and promoting sustainable economic development, the Ministry is well-positioned to integrate environmental compliance into trade licensing and business registration processes, ensuring that importers and retailers - who function as de facto "producers" in the VI context - adhere to emerging EPR requirements. The Ministry can also help stimulate green entrepreneurship and innovation, encouraging investment in waste reduction technologies, recycling ventures, and sustainable product development. By aligning trade and investment policies with the Territory's environmental and climate resilience goals, the Ministry supports the creation of sustainable markets and helps ensure that economic growth is compatible with long-term resource efficiency, pollution prevention, and environmental stewardship.

The Department of Disaster Management is responsible for coordinating and integrating disaster management into the VI's sustainable development policies and programming. Its primary focus is on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The Department also manages equipment for disaster risk management and response.

The **Attorney General Chambers'** role is to uphold good governance and ensure the proper administration of justice in the Territory. They provide legal advice and representation to the Government, address community needs for law reform, and promote a fair and just administration. Additionally, they focus on defending the public interest and delivering efficient legal services (Government of The Virgin Islands, 2025b).

Financial Mechanisms and Enforcement Framework

Waste management in The Virgin Islands is currently entirely funded through general taxation, with the Department of Waste Management (DWM) receiving its annual operating budget as an appropriation from the Consolidated Fund. There is no legislation in place enabling the DWM to recover service fees from residents or businesses, making the system fully dependent on Government subsidies. In 2018, the Department's operating expenses were estimated at US$3.48 million (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019c). The total operational cost of solid waste management was approximately US$73 per ton, with incineration costs around US$18 per ton—a relatively low figure attributed to the absence of flue gas treatment systems (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d).

The current legislative framework imposes penalties for littering, illegal dumping, and related offences under several laws, including the Litter Abatement Act (Cap. 182), the Public Health Ordinance (Cap. 194), and the Derelict Vehicles (Disposal) Act, 2000. These laws prescribe

fixed fines ranging from $100 to $500 for minor offences—such as improper disposal of litter or vehicle abandonment—and up to $2,000 or imprisonment for more serious or repeat infractions. Courts may also order offenders to perform community service or undertake remediation measures, such as cleaning up affected areas. While these provisions provide a foundational legal deterrent, enforcement capacity remains limited, and fines have not been regularly updated to reflect the true environmental and economic costs of pollution. This highlights the need for an updated regulatory and financial framework to improve compliance, increase accountability, and operationalize cost-recovery mechanisms.

In recognition of these gaps, the draft **7R's Waste Management Strategy** proposes a modernized enforcement and financing framework designed to improve compliance, increase accountability, and operationalize the polluter pays principle. It recommends the implementation of waste collection fees, whereby residents would pay US$30 per household per month, and commercial entities would be charged based on waste type—US$100 per ton for inert waste, US$150 per ton for mixed waste, and US$200 per ton for hazardous waste. In line with the polluter pays principle, the strategy also calls for the establishment of a legislative framework empowering the Minister to impose Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), introduce recycling deposit systems, create a Recycling Fund, and set user fees for door-to-door and bulky waste collection services.

To support effective implementation, the strategy outlines a strengthened enforcement framework. Key measures include updating the Litter Abatement Act and related provisions, increasing fines, and introducing stricter obligations for land clean-up and derelict removal. The Department of Environmental Health is designated as the lead agency for monitoring and enforcement, with additional tools such as CCTV surveillance at waste bin locations and expanded authority and legal protections for enforcement officers. Proposed penalties include a US$100 fixed penalty for depositing litter outside of receptacles, a US$250 fixed penalty for littering from moving vehicles, and fines ranging from US$10,000 to US$100,000 for unauthorized or illegal waste disposal.

Key Stakeholders

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) serve as key implementation partners in the waste management sector by advancing public education, fostering community participation, supporting the development of circular economy initiatives, and providing technical expertise to complement governmental policies and programmes.

Green VI is a non-governmental entity with a mission to demonstrate, facilitate, and catalyse environmentally friendly systems through practical projects, education, and innovation, with a focus on waste, energy, and water. Two Test Recycling Centres on Tortola and Virgin Gorda have been established, successfully building partnerships, infrastructure, and education programmes, while implementing monitoring and evaluation tools. These Centres gather essential data on system vulnerabilities, best practices, and costs, which will be shared with the Government to aid in setting up Material Recovery Facilities on each main island, aligning with the new SWM Strategy. The *We Recycle* programme diverts recyclables and offers alternatives to burning waste such as plastic, glass, and aluminium cans and promotes circular economy initiatives.

Beyond the Reef is a local NPO that focuses on creating aquatic habitats and promoting ocean health. They achieve this by building artificial reef systems, educating the local community about marine ecosystems, and engaging in scientific research, particularly on

shark and cetacean populations. They also engage in clean-up activities, e.g. regarding abandoned fishing gear.

H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS) offers training programmes and research initiatives related to marine technology and sustainable development in The Virgin Islands. They offer programmes like Marine Technology (A.S. or C.A.) and Marine Professional Training Level 1. CAMS also focuses on advancing marine research and contributing to the sustainable development of the VI.

The **media** can play an important role in educating communities about plastic waste and marine litter, empowering individuals with the knowledge needed to address these issues.

The private sector plays a critical role in the implementation of waste management and circular economy policies, both as service providers and as key contributors to waste generation. Relevant actors include:

- Private waste management operators who are engaged in the collection and transportation of household and commercial waste and the processing, sorting, and preparation of recyclables for export or reuse
- Importers and retailers, particularly large-scale operators, who serve as the primary entry point for goods that ultimately contribute to the waste stream**.**
- Commercial entities that are significant waste generators, including businesses in the tourism, retail, marine, and construction sectors

Several **business and industry associations** represent sectors with a high impact on waste generation and are essential partners in shaping sustainable practices. These include:

- The VI Chamber of Commerce and Hotel Association
- The VI Tourist Board
- The VI Yachting and Tourism Association
- The VI Marine Association
- The VI Charter Yacht Society

Households and communities play a critical role in addressing marine litter and plastic waste by adopting sustainable practices and participating in local initiatives. Community clean-ups and educational programmes empower individuals to take responsibility for their local surroundings, fostering a sense of environmental stewardship (Chen et al., 2024). Monthly clean ups are organized by Green VI. These clean ups are dovetailed with reducing mosquito breeding sites and improved data collection methods. Green VI also facilitates the annual International Coastal Clean Ups where volunteers sort and weigh the collected trash and publish the information online using the organisation's Clean Swell app. This platform allows participants from around the world to compare their contributions to global clean-up efforts (Skinner, 2024).

Current and future initiatives

We Recycle Programme

The *We Recycle* Programme has established an island-model recycling system that promotes collaboration, materials management, and circular economy practices in The Virgin Islands. The partnership programme between DWM and Green VI has successfully:

- Diverted over 8,8812 tons of recyclables from open burning

- Converted more than 84 tons of plastic waste into locally produced Polywood which is used to manufacture furniture, recycling bins, etc
- Exported 11.3 million plastic bottles for recycling
- Established 53 recycling stations and 2 Test Recycling Centres (Green VI, 2024)
- Diverted 350t of glass waste 2024, that was recycled into aggregate
- Supported collaboration with the Departments of Waste Management and Agriculture to develop an Organics Management System, which is expected to divert an additional 40–60% of waste from incineration by producing valuable outputs such as mulch and compost
- Employed and provided training opportunities for a diverse team of 42 individuals, ranging in age from 17 to 77 years.
- Facilitated a Materials Management Workshop in the Turks and Caicos Islands
- The programme was featured on the U.S. television series “The Fixers”

SMART Schools Programme

The SMART Schools Programme is a national initiative that enhances the resilience, health, safety, and environmental sustainability of educational institutions across The Virgin Islands. The programme integrates climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and green practices into school operations. The programme is led by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Green VI, the VI Red Cross, and the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) Centre for Applied Marine Studies.

A core component of the programme is the “Greening Schools” initiative, led by Green VI, which focuses on waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and sustainable living practices. Green VI has played a central role in establishing and revitalizing school gardens, conducting energy and water audits, and implementing school-wide recycling systems. In 2023, waste audits were conducted across 14 public schools, revealing that a significant proportion of waste was composed of plastic materials, much of it originating from school operations. This data informed the introduction of targeted interventions, including school-based recycling systems and the installation of drinking water refill stations to reduce single-use plastics. Follow-up waste audits are scheduled for 2025 to assess the impact of these measures.

Beyond infrastructure and waste management, the SMART Schools Programme integrates curriculum-linked environmental education, among other components. It aims to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and awareness needed to become environmental stewards and resilient community members. The programme is supported by funding from the Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity Programme (RESEMBID), and has been internationally recognized as a model for building resilient, climate-smart education systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Green Pledge and Green Certification Programmes

The voluntary Green Pledge Programme encourages all businesses and organizations in the Territory, including Government agencies, NGOs, service groups and church groups, to “Go Green” by reducing their environmental impact and enhancing their environmental stewardship. Pledgers are encouraged to take actions in the areas of Energy, Water, Waste,

Responsible Purchasing, Eco-friendly Development/Practices, Eco-Action, Eco-Education and Advocacy.

The Green Pledge Programme was launched by the former Conservation and Fisheries Department in June 2012 in celebration of Environment Month. Over 50 businesses and organizations made a Green Pledge in 2012, including some individual Government ministries and departments. The Green Pledge Programme is now managed by the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change in partnership with Green VI.

The Ministry created the Green Pledge Programme in 2012 - this targeted not just Government agencies, but private sector, NGOs and community organizations. Green VI expressed an interest in partnering with the Ministry to further develop the Programme. The Green Certification programme evolved from the Green Pledge Programme and remains a partnership between Green VI and the Ministry.

In celebration of Environment Month, June 2024, Government launched the Green Pledge Drive to accelerate “greening” through the Green Pledge Programme. The Drive generated an additional 30+ private sector and civil society pledgers. Government led the drive by launching the Public Service Green Pledge - a unified green pledge by all Ministries and Departments across the Public Service focused on reducing its energy and water use, promoting renewable energy, eliminating plastic water bottles, mainstreaming recycling, and encouraging green procurement. Government agencies are supported in keeping the Pledge and generally fostering an environmentally conscious workplace culture, including through resources in the Public Service Green Pledge Guide and guidance from Green VI.

Is a voluntary initiative designed to promote and recognize environmentally sustainable practices across The Virgin Islands. Targeting businesses, schools, and organizations, the programme provides a structured pathway for participants to evaluate their operations and adopt eco-conscious measures in areas such as waste management, energy and water conservation, responsible purchasing, and community engagement.

Participants undergo an environmental assessment, followed by customized guidance to implement practical improvements - such as introducing recycling and composting systems, eliminating single-use plastics, improving energy efficiency, and integrating sustainability education into staff or student activities.

Both programmes emphasize education, behavioural change and institutional accountability, reinforcing the Territory’s broader commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development. By empowering both private and public sector actors to participate in meaningful environmental action, the Green Pledge and Green Certification Programmes together represent a model of inclusive and locally driven sustainability governance in The Virgin Islands.

The “**Developing The Virgin Islands Climate-Resilient Solid Waste Infrastructure and Operation**” initiative, implemented under the Green Overseas (“GO”) Programme and funded by the European Union (EU), aims to strengthen the resilience of The Virgin Islands' solid waste management (SWM) sector to climate change impacts by 2030. Recognizing the vulnerabilities of SWM infrastructure and operations to extreme weather—such as intensifying rainfall, rising temperatures, and more frequent hurricanes—the initiative takes a proactive approach to climate adaptation. Core components include conducting a climate risk assessment of SWM infrastructure, operations, and legal frameworks; reviewing and recommending policy reforms to enhance sector resilience; and building technical and institutional capacity within the SWM workforce. In addition, the programme emphasizes the

importance of public engagement to reduce disaster-related waste generation and promote more climate-conscious waste practices (Expertise France, 2025).

Policy Gaps and Challenges

The draft 7R's Waste Management Strategy (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d) identifies a range of policy, legal, institutional, and operational challenges that constrain the development of an effective and sustainable solid waste management system in The Virgin Islands (Mc Devitt, 2008) (Georges, 2004):

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

- Existing legislation - including the Litter Abatement Act, Derelict Vehicles (Disposal) Act, and Public Health Ordinance - is limited in scope, outdated, and unevenly enforced.
- There is currently no comprehensive or unified legal framework governing the full waste management cycle - from generation to final disposal- or consolidating existing provisions. Additionally, there is not a framework that clearly defines the strategic direction, roles, and responsibilities of the various ministries and agencies involved in the sector. The proposed Waste Management Act seeks to address these gaps.
- There are no enforceable technical standards, emission limits, or legal requirements for waste-related monitoring, reporting, or public disclosure, limiting transparency and accountability.

Enforcement and Compliance

- The Department of Waste Management (DWM) lacks dedicated enforcement authority and relies on the Department of Environmental Health for issuing fines and ensuring compliance.
- Penalties under current legislation may not be sufficiently deterrent, and enforcement efforts are constrained by limited staffing, coordination, and legal powers.
- Strengthening the institutional enforcement framework, including the designation of roles and the empowerment of officers, is a key priority.

Financial and Economic Challenges

- Waste management operations are entirely subsidized by the Government, with DWM's budget drawn from the Consolidated Fund.
- There are no mechanisms for cost recovery, such as user fees, levies, or polluter-pays instruments, apart from the limited deposit system under the Derelict Vehicles Act.
- Political reluctance to introduce new charges or taxes hinders the establishment of sustainable financing models.
- The absence of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes or recycling incentives further limits private-sector cost sharing.

Lack of Reliable Data

- There is a significant data gap in waste generation and composition.
- The lack of systematic data collection and reporting hampers planning, investment, and the monitoring of progress toward national and international waste reduction goals.

Collection and Transport

- Waste collection by the private sector is not monitored, and there is no control over bulky or hazardous waste to prevent damage at disposal sites.
- Inter-island waste transport relies on private barges, which operate at high cost, creating inefficiencies.

Public Awareness and Behavioural Change

- Public awareness of waste prevention and proper disposal practices remains low, partly due to the limited availability of accessible, sustainable alternatives.
- While community clean-ups and education initiatives are underway, a more coordinated, sustained public engagement strategy is needed to cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship and shared responsibility.

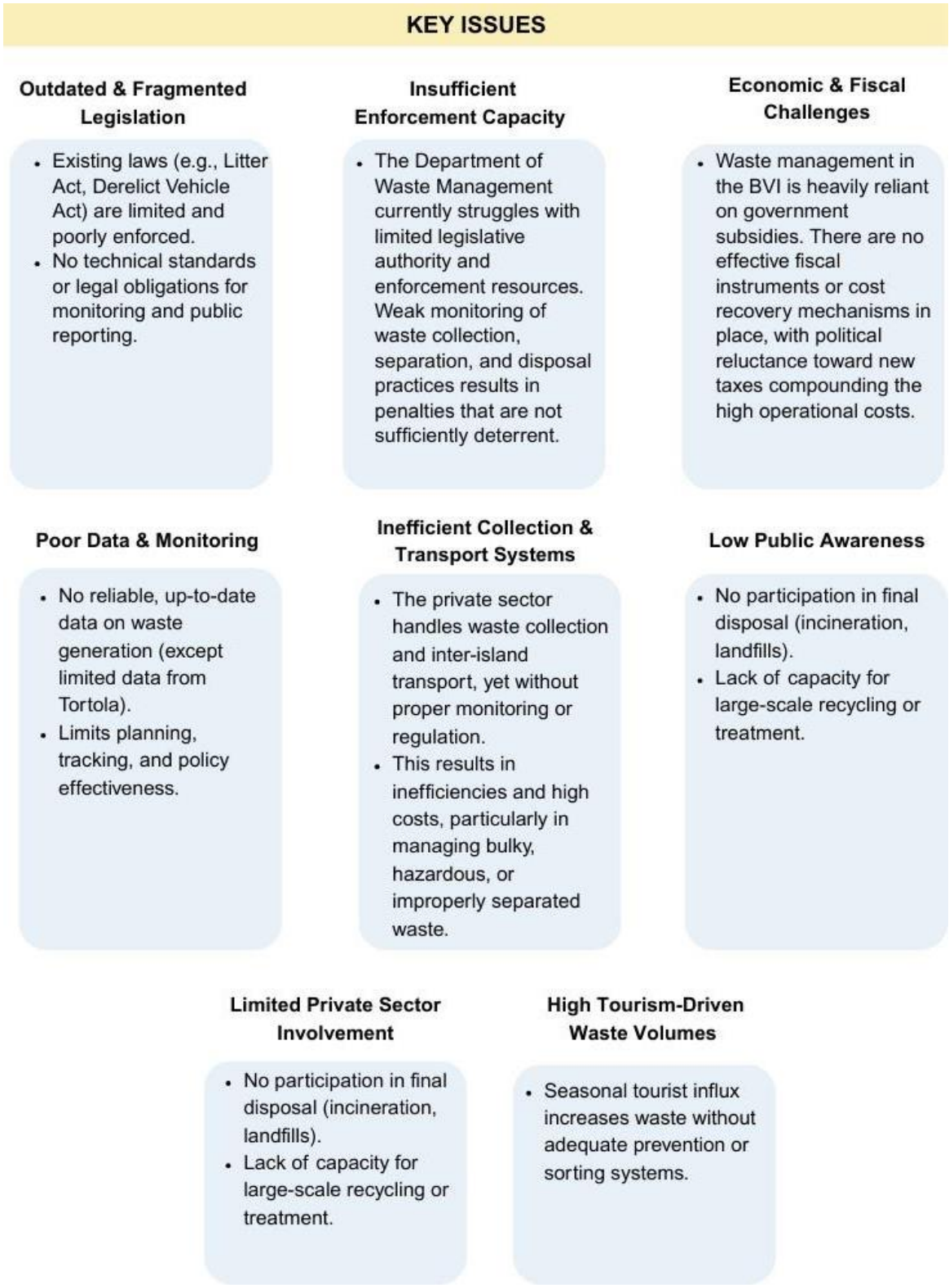


Fig. 2: Key issues summarized

3. Recommendations

The Virgin Islands has made meaningful progress in strengthening solid waste management (SWM), notably through the drafting of the 7R's Waste Management Strategy and the proposed Waste Management Act. These foundational documents outline key regulatory, financial, and behavioural reforms to establish a modern, resilient SWM system. It is recommended that the Government enacts and implements these strategic frameworks with a particular focus on materials management, circular economy principles, and enforceable policy instruments. A comprehensive territorial policy should also clarify institutional roles and responsibilities across agencies, as far as this is not covered by the 7R strategy.

Plastic pollution, in particular, requires a comprehensive mix of policy instruments targeting production, consumption, and disposal practices. These can be categorized as follows below and as in Table 2 (Alpizar et al., 2020):

- **Price-Based Instruments** alter the relative price of goods or inputs associated with plastic pollution, either by taxing them or subsidizing less polluting alternatives.
- **Rights-Based Instruments** set a cap on the total pollution that can be emitted
- **Regulatory Instruments** establish specific limits on how much pollution is permitted.
- **Behavioural Instruments** leverage people's social preferences to influence behaviour towards reducing plastic pollution.

Table 2: Policy Instruments

	Targeting the plastic industry	**Targeting consumers (households/businesses)**	**Targeting disposal of plastics**
Price-based instruments	Tax based on the environmental performance of plastics (higher polluting product is taxed higher)	Deposit-refund schemes Increasing the price of plastic products Waste charge, disposal of sorted waste cheaper than mixed household waste	Weigh-based pricing of waste Subsidizing waste treatment in accordance to waste hierarchy
Rights-based instruments	EPR (long term goal)		EPR Provision of waste collection that supports separate collection and recycling
Regulatory instruments	Bans on single use plastics and plastic bags	Mandatory recycling laws	Discontinuing use of landfills and dump sites

			Mandatory recycling laws and targets Performance-based waste collection contracts
Behavioural instruments	Information provision on environmentally friendlier alternatives to plastics	Information provision Educational campaigns on environmental harms of plastics and better alternatives	Educational campaigns on separate sorting and collection

Together, these measures can support the VI's transition to a circular economy while addressing the pressing challenges of plastic waste and marine litter. The following recommendations are aligned with PROMAR's 4 main focus areas:

1. Improve Data and Information Management

- Initiate annual waste accounting to establish a reliable baseline for waste generation and material flows
- Set binding waste reduction targets, particularly for plastic waste and marine litter, supported by legislation
- Track progress through indicators such as:
  - Total waste generated (by weight)
  - Waste segregated by material type (e.g. plastics, paper, glass)
  - Volumes of material recycled or recovered
  - Revenue collected through waste collection or recycling fees
  - Number of green initiatives funded through waste-related revenues
- Incorporate marine litter monitoring into national waste data systems, capturing information on sources, volume, and impacts (UNEP, 2012).

2. Strengthen Circular Economy Initiatives

- Launch and scale up reuse, repair, and recycling enterprises through public-private partnerships.
- Create a Recycling Fund to support local recyclers and exporters.
- Expand composting and organics diversion programmes for households, institutions, and the agriculture sector
- Integrate circular economy principles into public procurement, trade, and economic development policies

3. Strengthen the Policy and Institutional Framework

- Enact the Waste Management Act and accompanying regulations
- Establish a multi-agency coordination mechanism for oversight and policy alignment
- Link solid waste-related fees to utility billing systems for more consistent revenue collection (The Virgin Islands Agency for Resilience, Empowerment and Development, 2019d)
- Strengthen the enforcement capacities of the Department of Waste Management and the Environmental Health Division

- Develop clear operational policies, standards and procedures for waste handling, facility operation, and data reporting.
- Implement a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework to assess performance and guide continuous improvement.

4. Strengthen Outreach and Education

- Expand public education and awareness campaigns on waste prevention, recycling, and the environmental impacts of marine litter.
- Reinforce and scale up school-based waste education and integrate environmental topics into curricula across all levels.
- Promote community engagement through local clean-up campaigns, incentive programmes, and youth leadership initiatives.

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