

Sint Eustatius, June 9, 2022.

Dear Chairman and members of the Committees KR and EZK,

With interest I have taken note of the D-66 motion - which received almost parliamentary support - to stimulate ecotourism in the Dutch Caribbean. With regard to St. Eustatius I would hereby like to feed you with a thought. The degree of usefulness I would like to leave with you or the government.

Although beautiful and special, neither the beach (with black volcanic sand) nor the volcano (with a hiking-accessible crater) can be seen as a *unique selling point*. The fact that St. Eustatius was the first "foreign country" to recognize the United States in its current capacity on November 16, 1776, is of course! Consider further that the recently found slave-era cemetery on St. Eustatius, is one of the largest in the Caribbean region. In short, "history" as a central theme in the plan to be developed, seems a good thing.

So, my plea is, make history the guiding principle of the (eco)tourism to be developed on the island. The market is immense: hardly any American has any knowledge of this aspect of the history of his country (incidentally: I think that few (European) Dutch know this piece of history as well). Exploiting this almost infinite market (especially in relation to the "capacity" of the island) seems to me both possible and worthwhile.

By the way, I can see a few hurdles that have to be overcome:

- The first and most important pitfall is the thought "*good plan, let's do it*". And then a project manager and whatever else comes along and they get to work. Consultation with the local population and the Island Council is conveniently omitted (after all, participation is only a nuisance) and the misery begins. No, it takes (perhaps even a lot of) time and good information to develop support. It must be clear how the Statian also benefits from this. This information should not be given just once but several times (to determine the thoughts: easily once every three months).
- This information is all the more important because it may not be considered necessary from an efficiency point of view, but it is precisely the pitfall that in recent years has given rise to the idea that everything that comes from the European Netherlands has an odor that leads to the thought "*you should keep that to yourself*". Well, think of it what you will, but the European Dutchman is now not automatically welcomed.

- Another easy thought is "those islanders are no good: they are lazy and can't do anything". Let's say first of all that this idea is of course reprehensible and one that you don't easily make friends with, but even if you can't completely get rid of this idea - although it is not expressed - then I say "*do something about it*" and make training an essential part of the project. This concerns both technical skills and administrative skills (e.g. with regard to planning and finance). Then you really are making an improvement! Where possible, integrate these courses sustainably into the existing training infrastructure (i.e. at schools).
- Split the project into sub-projects *that fit together*. An example: it is great when the Makana Ferry seems to be meeting a need, but as long as travelers arrive at the port without being able to find a cab or other means of transport, the one does not connect well with the other.
- In Cuba there is the 'Casa Particular' where you are a guest of people on the island rather than in hotels or resorts. If this is a good idea at all, it can easily be objected that the housing of Statians does not lend itself to this, or less so. Well, then include that housing in the project and let individuals benefit from this progress. Moreover, they can earn something with it.

It is perhaps not difficult to continue with points of interest. At the same time, I have - I think - made my point clear. Invest in support and let the local population benefit from the project and make Statia a kind of pilgrimage site for Americans ("you must have been there"). The appearance of the (historic) center should also receive attention. And the services (I already mentioned transport, but also guided tours, walks, etc.).

Well, so much for some "thinking along". I wish you much creativity and wisdom.

Kind regards,

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J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MSc MBA,
Bellevue Road 4, Upper Round Hill,
St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.

Cc: *(deputy) government commissioner St. Eustatius*
members of the Island Council of St. Eustatius
National Ombudsman
Chair and members of Committee of Kingdom Relations in the Senate