

The Gleaner

Jamaica WI
Established 1834

Green light for casino resort projects

Published: [Wednesday | June 17, 2015](#) [Avia Collinder](#)



Dr Lorna Simmonds, executive director of Harmonisation Limited, the state-owned partner in Harmony Cove Limited.



Robert Trotta, developer and conceptualizer of Celebration Jamaica Development Ltd.

Finance Minister Dr Peter Phillips announced last night that Harmony Cove Limited and Celebration Jamaica Development Limited have got approval to develop what will be Jamaica's first two casino resorts.

The 'provisional development orders' position the companies to begin the roll out of integrated resort developments. They are required to develop the first 1,000 rooms under the first phase of an eventual 2,000-room complex or bigger before applying to the Casino Gaming Commission for a casino licence.

The approvals for Harmony Cove and Celebration Jamaica were not unexpected. The companies were the only two left in contention for three integrated resort orders on offer under Jamaica's new and untested casino laws.

The two approved projects are expected to launch into construction by next year.

A source close to the process said Tuesday that the orders will remain provisional until the developers build "what they have promised" to deliver.

"The principle of provisional approval is that they like what you have proposed. The final grant [of Approved Integrated Resort Development Order - AIRD] will depend on performance. Until they implement the plan, approval will be provisional," the senior government official said.

The Ministry of Finance issued requests for proposals for the developments in June 2013, and received five applications by November 30.

Green light for casino resort projects

Published: Wednesday | June 17, 2015 [Avia Collinder](#)

In the bid-assessment process that followed, three dropped out during the due-diligence phase run by the Ministry of Finance and Planning, leaving Celebration Jamaica and Harmony Cove.

It is understood that under the terms of the new provisional order, Celebration Jamaica and Harmony Cove Limited will be required to start construction by the middle of 2016.

The first phase of Harmony Cove will cost US\$970 million, to be spent on at least 1,000 hotel rooms, restaurants and retail shops. The full development will span a 2,300-acre property located in Trelawny and will feature a casino, golf courses, a luxury spa, marina facilities, convention, and entertainment centres and hotels.

Resort features

At full build-out, the resort is expected to feature 5,000 rooms with a variety of lodging options.

Harmony Cove is currently a partnership of state-owned Harmonisation Limited, with 49 per cent, and private-sector partner Tavistock Group - a global investment company, with 51 per cent. It's unclear whether that ownership structure will remain intact under financing deals pursued by Jamaica with Chinese backers for the Harmony Cove project.

Shareholders in Harmonisation include Development Bank of Jamaica and National Housing Trust.

For Celebration Jamaica Development Limited, the estimated cost for Phase 1 is about US\$500 million. The development, located in Montego Bay, is the brainchild of Robert Trotta.

Celebration's complete casino resort is expected to include 2,000 hotel rooms, a 75,000-square-foot Casino & Sports Book complex, retail space, artisan village, a Caribbean World Music Entertainment Complex, and other facilities.

Companies which failed to make the cut for the development order were Fiesta Jamaica of the Spanish Palladium chain, which subsequently said that its presentation of documents to the ministry was not an application for an AIRD; Casino Royale, a partnership of Phillip Reynolds and Richard Salm of Drax Hall Limited; and Amaterra Jamaica Limited - backed by Keith Russell and partner Charles Murphy III of Arkansas - for a development in Duncans, Trelawny.

The provisional orders come more than 19 months after the bids were opened. The initial nine-month due-diligence phase was extended to more than a year.

avia.collinder@gleanerjm.com