

Branson eco-resort still on the table

Talks ongoing with gov't

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Discussions continue to swirl among government agencies and developers hoping to build a multi-million-dollar eco-resort on Mosquito Island, a project originally unveiled more than two-and-a-half years ago.

While international media were hot on the idea when Sir Richard Branson announced it in February 2007, his public relations team since has remained relatively quiet, awaiting government approval before the project begins to make headway from the conception to the development stage.

The talks, spokespersons from both government and Virgin Limited Edition said, are still ongoing.

But parties involved declined to project a tentative groundbreaking date for Sir Richard's highly anticipated private residence and some 20 villas planned to run on wind and solar power on the island.

In December 2008, Sinead Kelly, Virgin Limited public relations manager, said developers hoped to start the first stage of the project — a private residence for Sir Richard — within 18 months of her announcement, making next summer the approximate groundbreaking date.

But for now, the billionaire will wait, pending a mutual agreement by his company and government, according to a recent statement.

Working with gov't

"Whilst planning permission from the [VI] government has yet to be received, the development team has been working closely with the government to enable the necessary approvals to be granted," said Virgin Limited Public Relations Manager Molly Cangemi in an e-mail. "Until then, there are no plans to start development on the island. Once approval has been received, the development timetable will be revised."

While the plan sits on the drawing board, it has not been forgotten.

The idea has drawn the attention of the international media

since February 2007, when Sir Richard announced the acquisition of his second Virgin Island for \$20 million.

Project details

In a two-phased approach, the project would encompass about five percent of the 124-acre island, according to a previous statement released by developers.

While Virgin Limited representatives still contend they will move forward, it is unclear if any changes have been made to the original plan submitted to Town and Country Planning in February 2007.

It's also unclear if delays have affected future plans for the resort, but three members of a 12-person team originally hired to work on the project were laid off in December 2008.

TCP officials deferred comment on the proposed development to the premier's office, citing ongoing government discussions as the cause of delay.

Communications Director Sandra Ward said the parties involved would remain in the "initial phases" of discussions "until they can meet a mutual agreement."