

Devon House Jamaica Undergoes Major Upgrades

Devon House Jamaica, Kingston's iconic landmark has been undergoing major renovations, over the last few years, to develop and preserve the heritage site.

Following a tour of the facilities on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, the Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Hon. Dr. Wykeham McNeill announced that the ministry, through its agency, the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) has funded projects at Devon House Jamaica to the tune of \$128 million from 2012-2014. The property, which is now celebrating its 134th anniversary, has undergone several changes to not only generate more income, and make it financially sustainable but to also transform it into the culture and entertainment Mecca of Kingston. To accomplish this, a \$10 million multi-purpose facility was built on the east lawn, which is able to host a variety of cultural events and festivals. "I want to ensure that we have a timetable of cultural events at Devon House Jamaica. We have been making changes that will enable us to do that and for it to become a cultural and entertainment centre," said Dr McNeill. The general aesthetics of the heritage site have also been improved, with in excess of J\$16 million spent on the renovation of the mansion and \$1 million annually on landscaping. The property reportedly developed major electrical issues that severely impacted the functionality of the shops, so this was included in the renovations. "We had to do a lot of work on the re-roofing of the shops. This was very critical because shops were leaking and it was interfering with the electricity at Devon House. It has been a very technical exercise because everything that's done here has to be done in association with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust. So J\$34 million was spent on this and as well as J\$9 million on the rewiring of the property," shared Dr McNeill. To address growing public concerns about the waiting-time to purchase ice-cream, especially on weekends and public holidays, the Minister also announced that ground will soon be broken for the construction of another ice-cream shop. Construction is slated to begin in January 2016. Devon House Jamaica marketing and events manager, Andre Reid, also shared that plans are already underway to capitalise on the quality and popularity of its world renowned ice-cream. He shared that the brand and recipe have been trademarked and the group intends to expand the brand to an overseas market in the near future.