

Spending Thyme with Keston- Personality Feature ...continue from page 23

some of whom are students the ease with which it can be used. "It is fulfilling to know that I'm not just making maps; I'm helping the entire agency work smarter and more efficiently to improve Jamaica's infrastructure- to Build Safe, Reliable and Quality Roads.

Some days aren't without its individual challenges. He explains that the most challenging part of his role is to convince persons who are not in the field of GIS that the possibilities are endless and that it can be incorporated in their day-to-day business needs. While the agency uses GIS and its software within the specific remits of our operations, the aim is to make it more accessible to other members of staff, an issue that can be resolved over time with the intervention of training and the involvement of other units and departments.

An agency project he is particularly proud of is the Traffic Flow Mapping. For this project, the GIS Team utilized drone technology to analyze traffic movement across specific roadways in Kingston and St. Andrew, the most densely populated areas in Jamaica. The final output was a comprehensive report prepared for presentation to the Network Planning Unit. They employed Artificial Intelligent (AI) models to analyze traffic congestion, in addition to using other specialized models to assist with the overall analysis. An impressive feat achieved by the team.

For Keston, he believes in a simple life. "I never complicate a process or the approach to life". His favorite quote is, "The less you have, the less you have to worry about," because more tends to complicate my



life processes. Life is simple, and that has prevented many people from experiencing high levels of stress. A simple "yes" and a simple "no" are just as important; nothing complicated is needed. Excessive possessions can contribute to worry and attachments. Fewer material needs reduce the necessity for desires" are wise words from Mr. Keston Thyme as we close out this issue of the Roadster's feature story.

Laugh! ... it's funny!



ROADSTER

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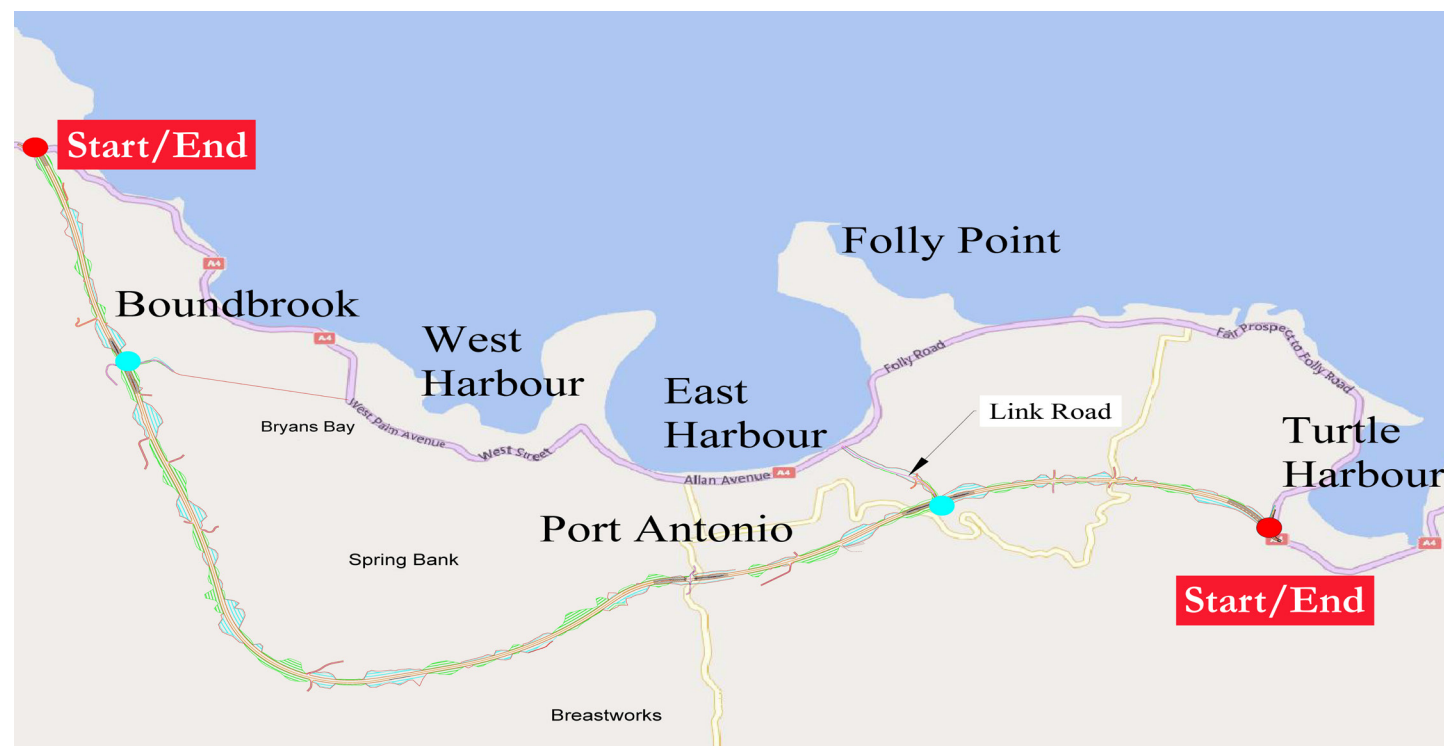
Fun, Food and Friends at NATIONAL WORKS AGENCY FUN DAY 2025 ... pg 12-13

Spending Thyme with Keston- Personality Feature ... pg 22-24

A victorious "Building Giants" (Blue house) screamed with much enthusiasm and excitement at the announcement that they were the winners at the NWA's first ever Sport/Fun Day!

Port Antonio Bypass

— a welcome addition to this historic eastern parish



Map showing the route of the new Port Antonio Bypass

The parish of Portland was created in 1723 and named after the Duke of Portland, a Governor of Jamaica. The parish was fashioned out of parts of two parishes, namely St. George and St. Thomas. The conflict between the Maroons and the British aside, Portland is also known for its banana plantations, which were a source of income for many in this eastern parish.

Port Antonio, the parish capital, is said to have been so named in the year 1685. This township had reportedly gone through different name iterations over many years, while under Spanish rule. It was once referred to as Puerto Anton and later referred to as Puerto de San Antonio.

Fast forward to modern times the town of Port Antonio, while not being a beneficiary of banana export, this crop having being devastated by hurricanes and storm force winds over many years, remains important to the island. The town, like the parish, generally boasts a number of vistas and a bustling commercial life.

Commercial activities in the town of Port Antonio has resulted in serious congestion, which in turn has seen increased fuel costs and loss of manhours.

It is against this background and the need to expand the township that the Government of Jamaica through the National Works Agency (NWA) has developed and are implementing a plan to have traffic bypassing the town. This project as conceptualized will see the development of this four-lane corridor in two phases. The first seven kilometres will see the stretch from Norwich to Turtle River Park being done.

Senior Director of Project Implementation at the NWA, Varden Downer told the ROADSTER that the project will be completed over 24 months. The contract for the works was signed in July 2025. Downer explained that the first six months will be used to complete the detailed designs for the works and that the actual works will be done over the ensuing 18 months.

Spending Thyme with Keston- Personality Feature ...continue from page 22

The community he grew up in had a strong sense of togetherness — everyone admired his upbringing and looked out for him. This created a deep bond within the community and its members, from the Sergeant at the police station to the shopkeeper at her place of business. Some of his fondest memories growing up included traveling on a fishing boat back and forth to Port Royal or the ferry that would depart from the Kingston Waterfront. Visiting his family in rural Jamaica, seeing their farm with various animals including goats and ducks, definitely started a spark within him. The persons that were living around him also inspired him as well. Their stories made him all the more eager to explore Jamaica and possibly the world one day.

Keston's educational background ranges from geography to biology that equipped him with an understanding of the environment and how to become one with it. At Kingston College he majored in the sciences, and would go on to the University of Technology, Jamaica where he pursued studies in General Management with a focus on Information Systems Management. This gave him a great command of the ability to manage software and databases. Those institutions were the training ground for the young Keston who initially wanted to pursue a career in Information Technology, changing the world, one software at a time.

He was always a creative thinker, with a strong interest in geography and reading. However, he didn't always see himself working in his current field of employment. "I never imagined I would end up in GIS, but I've always had a passion for people and traveling. I'm also tech-savvy and have a deep love for information technology. You could describe me as an all-rounder, as my passions are quite broad. Over time, I also developed a strong interest in management, and when I began working in GIS, I realized it was the perfect field to bridge the gap and integrate many of my interests and passions". Talk about giving an opportunity a chance.

While on this career journey, positive influences came from all over. When he started his previous job, he developed a strong passion for GIS by data collection, analyses, and manipulation to present accurate results. Often, he would teleport back to his days of primary school where he was first introduced to the Atlas. To

date, it is one of his favourite books. The Atlas gave him an opportunity to see the world from the inside out and appreciate all the intricacies that help to make it up. The Atlas served as a 'Bible' and would be the catalyst in steering him to where he is currently GIS Officer at the NWA since December 2, 2024.

After stumbling on a career advertisement in the Sunday Gleaner, he applied to the National Works Agency for the post of GIS Officer because he wanted to explore the full range of opportunities where GIS can be applied. Previously, he was exposed to limited use of GIS software and tools, which restricted his ability to grow and improve in the field. Since joining the NWA, he expresses that he has been exposed to a wide array of tools and processes used to solve everyday problems. This experience has significantly increased his confidence in both his skills and his ability to present work effectively.

His role contributes to the agency in several ways. Firstly, he assists in maintaining the asset management database from where crucial information is accessed on the Agency's spatial database such as the road network, bridges and traffic signals. Secondly, Keston performs Location Analysis, on a number of ongoing major projects being undertaken by the agency. Additionally he does data collection using Global Positioning System (GPS) and drone technology to find locations in incidents such as natural disasters to make reports of landslides, scoured roadways and damage to gullies among other things.

When asked about the most rewarding part of his job at the National Works Agency, he had this to say, "I really enjoy being the person who brings precision to our projects. Whether I'm flying a drone to map a new road site or conducting a poll survey, I love knowing that I am providing our engineers with the most accurate data they need to build things right the first time. It also feels good to be out in the field visiting different parts of the island—it keeps the work interesting and ensures that our plans actually fit the places across Jamaica we aim to improve.

However, what he enjoys most about the role is teaching others. Leading training sessions and presentations is especially rewarding because he gets to take complex GIS concepts and show colleagues and invited guests,

SPENDING THYME

with Keston
Personality Feature



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Officer, Keston Thyme, engages students during a career empowerment session held recently at the NWA

Keston Thyme is a soft-spoken individual, but is much more than the introvert he appears to be. Having joined the National Works Agency (NWA) as a Geographic Information System (GIS) Officer in December 2024, the Roadster sat down with him almost a year later to check in and spend some time getting to know the man behind the maps and to chart a course for his direction at the NWA and life as a whole.

His colleagues describe him as dependable. A attribute he learned as a child from the positive influences around him during that that critical stage. Between swimming and the gym, these are a few activities that help Keston in his daily functions at work. A pleasant smile is something you will always receive from Keston as well as a willingness to assist a colleague as best as he can.

As GIS officer, A typical day begins when he arrives at work by 8:30 a.m. The first thing he does is check his emails for any outstanding tasks. On some days, he is assigned to analyze data for various Ministries, Departments and Agencies. Other duties include, training staff in GIS applications, or responding to client queries. Some days, he also creates maps and charts for project managers, and at times, field work to collect data using a tablet or drone technology.

His childhood was humble; spending the majority of that time in the Eastern Kingston community of Rollington Town. However, his childhood involved a lot of traveling to different communities across Jamaica. Always being on the road with his parents he developed his passion for the outdoors — exploring all of what Jamaica has to offer. There, the love for geography and love of people began to bloom and eventually blossom in Keston.

continue on next page

Port Antonio Bypass – a welcome addition to this historic eastern parish ... continue from page 2



China Harbour Engineering Company Limited preparing their machine to conduct soil testing



Soil samples collected and their results after they have been tested by CHEC

The scope of the works on this first phase which is being done by China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) at a cost of US\$81- million include:

- Four (4) lanes with 3.5 metres wide lanes, with grade separated intersections and 1.2 metres wide shoulders
- Drainage improvements.
- Bridge construction
- Smart City Elements
- Installation of surveillance and Licence Plate Recognition (LPR) cameras at signalized intersections.
- Provision of Telecommunications ducts and fibre optics.
- Provision of streetlights, road markings and signs as well as pedestrian safety and guidance features.

Over 200 parcels of land are to be acquired as part of the construction process and several structures removed from the new right of way.

CHEC has also conducted soil testing along the respective corridors as part of the design phase for the Port Antonio Bypass. Soil testing for construction helps in determining the type of foundation to be laid. It identifies potential hazards such as soil expansion due to moisture or poor drainage, ensures compliance with building codes and permits, and helps to choose the right equipment for construction. Conducting soil testing before construction analyzes how stable the construction project would turn out to be and the overall success of the project.

The second phase of the project will see similar works being undertaken along the 11 kilometres stretch of road from Turtle Crawl Harbour to Boston Bay.

With the new investment in this very scenic part of Jamaica, it is expected that the tourism industry in the parish, and the island generally, will get a fillip and may also help to renew interest in Portland as a destination for movie making. The parish has in the past being the site for such movies as "20,000 Leagues Under the Seas", "Cocktail" and "Lord of the Flies".

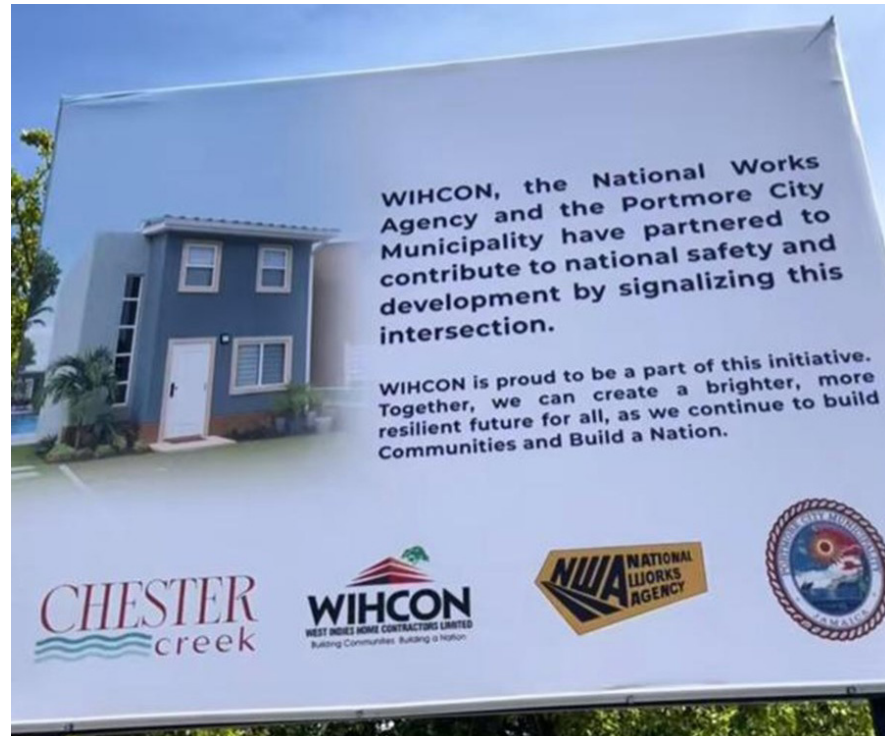
New Traffic signals for busy thoroughfare in

PORTMORE, ST. CATHERINE

Home to over 200,000 residents, the municipality of Portmore in St. Catherine, has been steadily increasing in population. With the influx of people, traffic management has become a major issue. In order to combat this, the National Works Agency (NWA) in partnership with the West Indies Home Contractors (WIHCON) and the Portmore Municipal Corporation sought to procure new traffic signals for smoother traffic flow and safer commuting in the space.

The newly installed traffic lights came at an integral time with the reopening of school for the academic year 2025/2026. They were installed at the busy intersection of George Lee Boulevard, Portmore Drive, and Western Parade.

Manager of Communication and Customer Services at the NWA, Stephen Shaw, when asked about the newly-commissioned traffic signals told the Roadster, “The residents of Portmore have long expressed concern about congestion and pedestrian safety along these busy routes. The new signals are part of our broader plan to improve mobility and safety across the municipality, particularly as we approached the reopening of schools.” With thousands of students returning to classrooms and parents resuming their regular commuting routines, the signalization of George Lee Boulevard, Portmore Drive, and Western Parade is expected to ease congestion and improve safety during peak hours.



A sign unveiled in the vicinity of the traffic signals

“Each year, we experience heavier traffic volumes at the start of the school term. By commissioning these signals before that time, we aim to ensure smoother traffic movement and reduce potential bottlenecks,” Shaw added. Matters of traffic management are further compounded by the dualisation of the Grange Lane roadway, another project undertaken by the NWA.

The new traffic lights came at a cost of \$18,086,986 and were installed by contractors Diverse Services and Construction Limited. The scope of works included the installation of new overhead signals equipped with vehicle sensors, upgraded road markings to accommodate the elderly and visually impaired, and the addition of pedestrian facilities at critical crossing points such as press buttons to aid pedestrians in crossing.

In Portmore specifically, the NWA continues to respond to the area’s rapid residential and commercial growth, especially with talks about

Girder Construction Activities at Nightingale Grove Bridge Site in St. Catherine ... continue from page 20



CHEC representatives toil on the installation of formwork for foundation beams



Three of the six bases, on which the girders will be constructed, are now complete.

Girder Construction Activities at Nightingale Grove Bridge Site in St. Catherine ... continue from page 19

The girder construction activities are now progressing steadily even while weather conditions are being monitored. So far, three of six steel reinforced concrete bases on which the girders will be constructed have been completed.

More than a year has elapsed since the start of the contract and there is much yet to be done on the project. Outstanding activities include river training and protection works, the completion of the new structure, the paving of approach roads and signs and marking. The works, however, are now progressing apace and all concerned, to include project team, communities and public transport operators, look forward to a new structure that is of superior quality and that is more reliable.



A previously absent river returned to reclaim its place on site.

New Traffic signals for busy thoroughfare in Portmore, St. Catherine ... continue from page 4



Vehicular traffic accessing the intersection since the new traffic signals were installed

Portmore becoming the 15th parish of Jamaica. The number of vehicles within the space has placed significant pressure on the road network. The municipality's increasing population has led to higher vehicle volumes, making it imperative for traffic systems to evolve. By implementing these upgrades, the NWA seeks not only to improve traffic efficiency but also to enhance quality of life for residents—making daily commutes less stressful, travel times shorter, and roadways safer for all users.

The commissioning of these new traffic signals forms part of the NWA's broader commitment to creating safe, reliable and quality roads across Jamaica. As urban development continues to expand, the Agency's proactive measures in traffic management play a crucial role in supporting how Jamaica responds to its growing population, especially in areas like Portmore that has become increasingly appealing to citizens due to its fast-rising urban status.

"Every new signal, every upgraded intersection, is a step toward a safer Jamaica," Shaw emphasized. "We are building systems that anticipate growth, protect our people, and support national development."

As Portmore continues to thrive as the country's fastest-growing urban center, the physical enhancement of the traffic signals represents more of what is to come which is a larger framework that will make Jamaica comparable with our Caribbean counterparts.



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NWA partners with JPSCo. and lighting the way



Vandalised Panel Box along the Elegant Corridor, St. James

The National Works Agency (NWA) and the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPSCo.) Limited have joined forces and are illuminating several corridors in St. James, Kingston and St. Andrew. The project valued at over one billion dollars has already seen roads in both St. Andrew and St. James benefitting as they have been outfitted with new LED lights. Ten corridors are being targeted under this initiative. The roads are:

- The Elegant Corridor – Sangster International Airport to Iberostar Hotel, St. James (Phases 1 and 2)
- Bogue Road (Reading Stop Light to Vista Print Stop Light)
- Harbour View Roundabout to Rockfort
- Harbour View East (to St. Benedicts Church)
- Dunrobin Road (Constant Spring Road to Molyne's Road)
- Washington Boulevard (Molyne's Road to Six Miles)
- Liguanea to Lady Musgrave Intersection
- Trafalgar Road (Pulse to Spic and Span)

To date, works have been completed along the Elegant Corridor, Bogue Road, the stretch from Molyne's Road to Constant Spring Road (Dunrobin Avenue) and that from Liguanea Avenue to Lady Musgrave Road. Work continues on the other corridors.

continue on next page

Girder Construction Activities at Nightingale Grove Bridge Site in St. Catherine ... continue from page 18

by St. Catherine's "road pilots", aka taxi men, as well as other members of the community.

Activities included the construction of a marl platform atop the earth base which serves as a site yard for the girder construction. The area was cordoned off with a netted barrier and there was some amount of river shaping activities that became necessary. This proved to be quite timely as the river, which had taken an unofficial leave of absence in previous weeks, slowly returned following rainfall during the month of September into October.



View of site yard to the left, properly delineated, and a then thinly marled detour road to facilitate traffic movements



Strategically placed construction signs inform public about work and speed requirements.

GIRDER CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

at Nightingale Grove Bridge Site in St. Catherine create intrigue that even a river could not afford to miss



Construction of marl platform atop the earth base

The Nightingale Grove (Spring Village) bridge was officially closed by the National Works Agency (NWA) in September 2022 as it was deemed to be structurally unsafe. A contract to replace said bridge commenced, subsequently, in September 2024 and was awarded to Dwight's Construction Limited.

Inclement weather and other unforeseen challenges, to include redesigns, negotiations and preliminaries, pushed the start of the physical works to February 2025. The bridge is now being replaced at a cost of \$249 million with a contract period of sixteen months.

To facilitate the new activities, it became necessary to move the existing detour road and this, at first, presented some challenges as it was thinly covered with marl that, in true St. Catherine fashion, was quickly rained away. This prompted the need for a better surface to prevent social unrest and civil issues, particularly as this is a route used

NWA partners with JPSCo. and lighting the way ... continue from page 6

Among the deliverables for the Dunrobin intersection are the 71 aluminum pole structures along the corridor being operational and the 136 -161W LED lamps along the corridor now functioning. Regarding the Bogue Road 218 of the 220 lamps along the corridor were converted to LED and are functional. According to the JPSCo., 32 of the streetlights have been removed in order to facilitate construction works associated with the Montego Bay Perimeter Road Project. The company has also installed some 218 smart nodes and has fully rehabilitated the eight underground circuits that facilitate the lighting of the corridor.

Senior Director, Project Implementation at the NWA, Varden Downer told the ROADSTER that plans are being made to have similar works done along Michael Manley Boulevard in East Kingston. Damaged lighting infrastructure along Barbican Road, Hagley Park Road and Constant Spring Road are also slated to benefit under the project.

Mr. Downer underscored the importance of the project, but has expressed concerns about the frequent damage that has been caused to the lighting infrastructure, due to motor accidents. Poles have been knocked over and, in the process, circuitry damaged causing the lights to be inoperable. He said that the JPSCO had also reported incidents of vandalism and theft of electricity, which also are compromising the systems in some of the targeted locations.



A damaged pole along a section of the Elegant Corridor, St. James



Vandalised and Tampered Panel Box along Dunrobin Avenue, St. Andrew



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SPARK PROGRAMME ...

Upgrading Roadways, Improving Lives



Church Street to Gravel Hill, Trelawny

These children were seen happily 'driving' along the roadway, under the close supervision of their father, in their motorized toy car. The Church Hill to gravel roadway is being upgraded at a cost of \$31.2 million.

The Shared Prosperity through Accelerated Improvement to our Road Network (SPARK) Programme is having an overwhelmingly positive impact on the lives of residents and stakeholders across the Western Region. This, as several roadways are currently being rehabilitated.

Recently the Roadster visited several communities to not only see the progress of works, but also to hear from residents their views on the major road improvement works which are currently in full swing. Residents were generally happy and expressed appreciation for the projects. For many, though the projects were long in coming, they are having a real impact on the ease with which they traversed the targeted road sections.

For Wakefield, Trelawny resident Janeil Christobal, there have been marked improvements in the road surface, even though it has only been graded.



Thorpe Drive, Wakefield Trelawny
resident Janeil Christobal

continue on next page

SCHIP redefining eastern Jamaica ... continue from page 16

Under the contracts some sections and aspects of the rehabilitation were subcontracted to local companies, classified as Grade One Contractors in the Road Works Category by the National Contracts Commission (NCC)/Public Procurement Commission (PPC). These contractors were selected through a competitive process.

The contracts for the first three packages were signed in August 2019. The works through these packages cumulatively were valued at over \$2.8 – Billion. The packages were;

- Hordley to Long Road in Portland
- Manchioneal to Fair Prospect in Portland
- Morant Bay to Georgia in St. Thomas

Importantly, a separate contract was entered into with the National Water Commission (NWC) for the upgrading of water and sewer lines, along the corridors, where such infrastructure existed. This too contributed to the overall development of the eastern section of the Island.

Land Acquisition

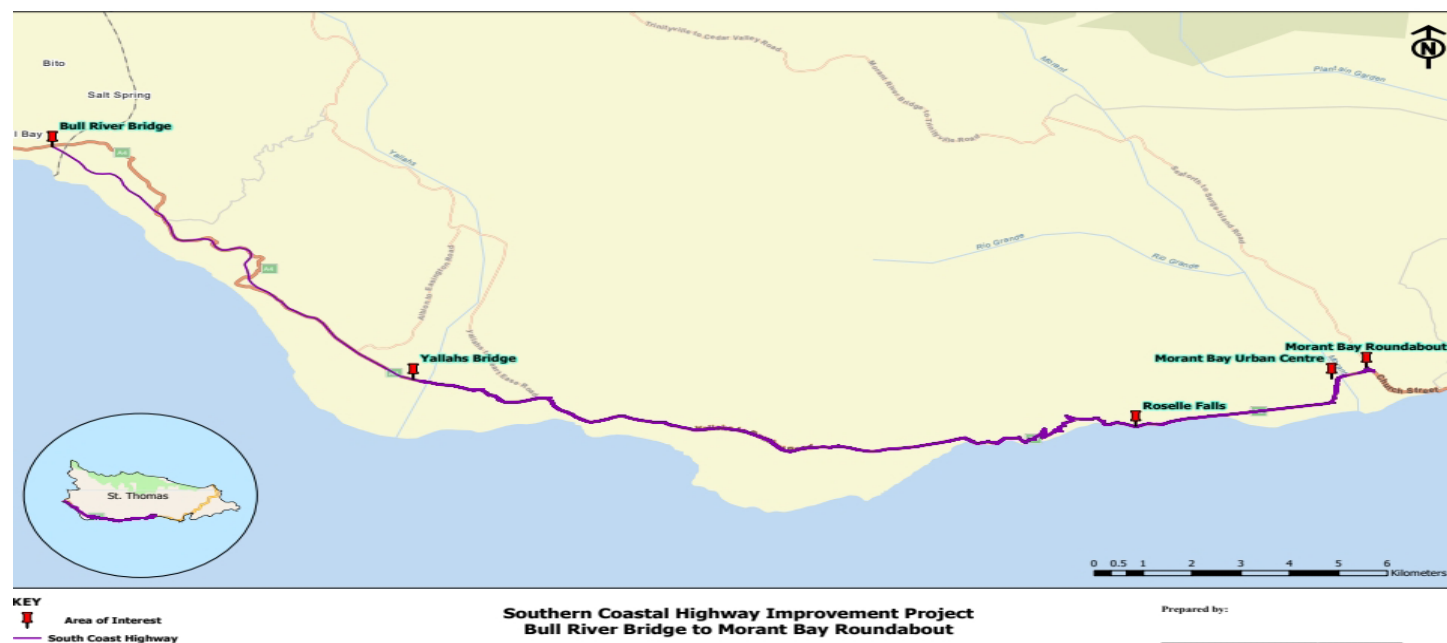
For the realization of the project, over five hundred parcels of real estate had to be acquired. This was necessary in order to maximize the benefits of this vital capital outlay.

| SCOPE OF WORKS | SCOPE OF WORKS | TOTAL |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| 2-lane Roads | KM | 123.62 |
| 4-lane Roads | KM | 17.4 |
| Bridge Rehabilitation Works | No. | 17.00 |
| Box Culverts (length) | M | 1,706.56 |
| Pipe Culverts of various lengths (600mm, 1200mm, 1800mm etc.) | M | 25,235.77 |
| Volume of Base Course | M ³ | 403,522.09 |
| Asphaltic Concrete Works of various thickness (37.5mm, 50mm, 75mm etc.) | M ² | 1,233,755.01 |

| Part B (iii) – Yallahs Bridge to Port Antonio | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Packages | St. Thomas Works | Length |
| 1 | Yallahs Bridge to Luoden Hill | 6.72 kilometres |
| 2 | Louden Hill t(Salt Pond) to Pamphret | 4.90 kilometres |
| 3 | Pamphret to Morant Bay Roundabout | 9.48 kilometres |
| 4 | Morant Bay Roundabout to Prospect | 8.95 kilometres |
| 5 | Prospect to Arcadia District | 9.05 kilometre |
| 6 | Arcadia District to Amity Hall | 7.40 kilometres |
| 7 | Amity Hall to Hordley | 6.98 kilometres |
| Portland Works | | |
| 8 | Hordley to Long Road | 4.16 kilometres |
| 9 | Long Road to Manchioneal | 5.56 kilometres |
| 10 | Manchioneal to Fair Prospect | 8.80 kilometres |
| 11 | Fair Prospect to Boston | 6.86 kilometres |
| 12 | Boston to Drapers | 7.44 kilometres |
| 13 | Drapers to Port Antonio | 9.52 kilometres |
| Part B (iv) – Morant Bay to Cedar Valley, St. Thomas | | |
| 14 | Morant Bay to Serge Island | 14.70 kilometres |
| 15 | Serge Island to Cedar Valley | 11.74 kilometres |

SCHIP

redefining eastern Jamaica



Over 123 kilometres of two-lane road rehabilitated, 17.4 kilometres of four lane road built, 17 bridges rehabilitated, 1,705.56 kilometres of Box Culverts built, 25,253.77 metres of new pipe culverts of varying sizes laid, 403,522.09 cubic metres of base course put down, and 1,233,775.01 square metres of Asphaltic Concrete works done. This sums up the impact made by the Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project (SCHIP) on the eastern parishes of St. Andrew, St. Thomas and Portland.

On June 28, 2016, the Government of Jamaica entered into a multi-million US\$ contract with China Harbour Engineering (CHEC) Limited. This contract was to see, among other things, the rehabilitation of over 140 kilometers of road spanning the parishes of St. Andrew, St. Thomas and Portland -these being the most eastern parishes of the island of Jamaica. For ease of management, the works were placed into distinct packages. Fifteen such packages were formulated and the works placed into three tranches for execution. The project is now weeks from being completed.

The plans for the roads in the east were made from as early as 2014 and were revised. This revision saw different iterations being put forward, with the government settling on the alignment seen as the best fit for the country based on information available.

Nine years after the contract was signed the benefits of this monumental investment in people, communities and infrastructure continue to shine through. Nicely paved roads aside, the project has assisted in spawning the Morant Bay Urban Centre, housing developments by private sector interests and a growth in micro and small business in all three parishes.

As part of the Contract, the section from Harbour View to Yallahs Bridge was widened to four (4) lanes to include new and improved alignments while the existing main roads from Yallahs Bridge to Port Antonio and from Morant Bay to Cedar Valley rehabilitated. Some realignment was also done on selected sections of these corridors.

SPARK Programme ...Upgrading Roadways, Improving Lives.. continue from page 8

“The road was in a deplorable condition, even to walk because the road surface was so uneven and many times we would fall and damage ourselves. Taxis didn’t even want to come down to my street, so I would have to walk a distance to get a taxi to take me into Falmouth,” stated Christobal.

She added that she is looking forward to the completion of the project and hopes that other similar projects will come on stream. Similar sentiments were expressed by many other residents including Tyron Gayle of Legs Lane in Flankers, St. James. Gayle expressed that he was so happy to see the improvement of the roadway in his community.

“The road was like a track, and we could not even get taxis to take us into the lane. Now we have a highway which even upgrade the looks of the community. It is a real blessing,” expressed Gayle.

To date the programme has been dedicated to the upgrade of local, community roadways, which are traditionally the domain of the Municipality. However, further phases of the programme will be dedicated to improvements along the main road network. The projects involve significant drainage improvement, the construction of retaining walls, the enhancement of road safety mechanisms and resurfacing. Among the roadways to receive attention are the Greenwood community road in St. James; the stretch of road from Wakefield to Friendship in Trelawny; the Blackness roadway in Westmoreland; and the Malcolm Heights Parish Council roadway in Hanover. The projects are being undertaken through a series of Work Orders.



Church Street to Gravel Hill, Trelawny



Greenwood, St. James



Legs Lane, Flankers, St. James

SPARK

making landfall in the South East Region

The National Works Agency (NWA) flagship project, Shared Prosperity Through Accelerated Improvement to our Road Network (SPARK) programme valued at \$40 billion Jamaican dollars, continues to redefine how public works are undertaken. With its mission to improve the roadways across the island, SPARK is not only about fixing potholes or patching trouble spots. Instead, it is a comprehensive approach to modernising roadways to meet current and future demands as Jamaica continues to develop as one of the top players in the Caribbean in terms of economic growth.

In the southeastern region of the island, specifically in Kingston and St. Andrew, residents and commuters are already reaping the benefits of these upgrades to the roadway. Locations such as Bustamante Highway in Tivoli Gardens, Collie Smith Drive in Trench Town, Liguanea Avenue, East Road, and Mulgrave Road have become active sites of real work. Each project has been carefully engineered by chief contractors China Harbour Engineering Company Limited (CHEC) to ensure longevity, functionality and safety for the many individuals who travel daily across these corridors.

Bustamante Highway is a busy road in the Downtown Kingston community of Tivoli Gardens, linking residents to the Coronation Market and the wider Downtown area. Here, the NWA has embarked on extensive works that involve the removal of the existing base—essentially peeling away the weakened foundation of the road to start afresh. This is followed by the laying of a new base course, which serves as the sturdy backbone beneath the asphalt. By reinforcing the foundation, the new surface has become far better at withstanding heavy laden vehicles and weathering.

The project also includes compaction density of the subgrade, which is simply the process of pressing down and tightening the soil layers beneath the road. This prevents shifting or sinking over time, ensuring the road stays smooth and stable. For residents along Collie Smith Drive, the changes are visible and exciting. The NWA has introduced new sidewalks and paving of the roadway. This is especially important as there are several schools within the area including the Trench Town Polytechnic college and basic schools scattered in and around where the majority of the students and staff walk to and from school.



A roller aids in the smoothing of the surface along Bustamante Avenue in Kingston



Work being undertaken along Collie Smith Drive

St. Mary Communities being lit up under SPARK ... continue from page 14

Regarding the Camberwell road, Mr. Reynolds said that the project which is being done at a cost of \$60.5 – million was 13% complete at the end of the quarter. Kerbs were being laid and drainage features improved as part of the works up to the end of September.

The works currently underway form part of Work Orders 1 – 4 of the SPARK. Two additional Work Orders – 5 and 6 were issued to contractors China Harbour Engineering Limited (CHEC) during September. Work Orders are used to advise the contractor of the roads to be targeted under the \$45-billion project, which is to be completed over two years plus a 12 month defects liability period.

Through Work Orders 5 and 6, an additional \$400 million is to be spent on roads in the parish. The corridors to be targeted are Hibiscus Avenue, Highgate, the road from Friendship to Joe River, that from Pembroke Hall to Carron Hall, Hunts Town to Crescent, Gibbs Hill Road and the Brenaird main road. Over \$120 – million has been budgeted for the road from Friendship to Joe River, while \$80 million has been budgeted for Hunts Town to Crescent. A similar amount is to be spent on the Brenaird main road.

The government, as part of its thrust to ensure that residents receive maximum benefits from infrastructure works, has implemented a policy decision wherein aged waterlines must be replaced as part of road works. New lines are also laid where the National Water Commission (NWC) has plans to establish systems in the targeted areas.



Camberwell Main Road: The Contractor erected formwork for the construction of kerb and gutter



St. Mary Communities being lit up under

SPARK

The parish of St. Mary is known for, among other things, its plethora of bridges, owing to a number of rivers and its tourism product, mainly through its attachment to St. Ann. St. Ann is known for among other things the Dunns River Falls, Mystic Mountain, Dolphin Cove among others. Just a few minutes from these renowned attractions is the parish border of St. Mary. In fact, some of the better-known hotels in this section of Jamaica are in St. Mary, but the parish often does not get the credit.

The SPARK project under which the government seeks to improve infrastructure in all parishes is alive and building in St. Mary. The parish is now benefitting from projects valued at over \$215 million in several communities. The targeted roads under construction, at the end of September, under the project were:

- Jacks River
- Kilancholy
- Tremolesworth and
- Camberwell

According to Construction Manager with responsibility for works in St. Mary, Orville Reynolds, at the end of September significant progress had been made on these projects. He told the ROADSTER that the Jacks River to Eden Hill corridor had been paved and that overall, the Kilancholy works had been 44% complete. Roadworks along this stretch had been delayed to allow for waterline replacement works. The works at Tremolesworth had also been put at 44%. This too experienced delays due to the need to replace aged waterlines.



Kilancholly: Contractors conducted backfilling on the surface



Tremolesworth Drive: Contractors carried out repairs to damaged pipelines

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SPARK making landfall in the South East Region ... continue from page 10

The construction of kerb and channel is another vital upgrade there. A kerb is the raised edge you see at the side of a road, and the channel works like a built-in gutter. Together, they guide rainwater safely off the surface, preventing flooding and extending the life of the pavement. This means fewer puddles, less erosion, and safer walking conditions for school children and adults alike.

Liguanea Avenue, a vital connector in the corporate area benefitted from excavation of the roadway as part of the upgrades. Due to the high volume of traffic that the roadway accommodates it only made sense that the existing structure had to be removed to make room for a new surface that has a superior quality preventing depressions which eventually leads to potholes.

Along East Road, work men have engaged in the excavation of the kerb and channel there along with laying of the base course. This was more than just 'digging up the road'—it was a deliberate process of removing weak soil and replacing it with materials capable of bearing heavy loads. By doing this, the NWA eliminated the root cause of many potholes and uneven surfaces, a constant complaint for the motoring public. Once excavated, layers of strong, compacted soil and asphaltic concrete were laid, this meant a new road built with motorists in mind.

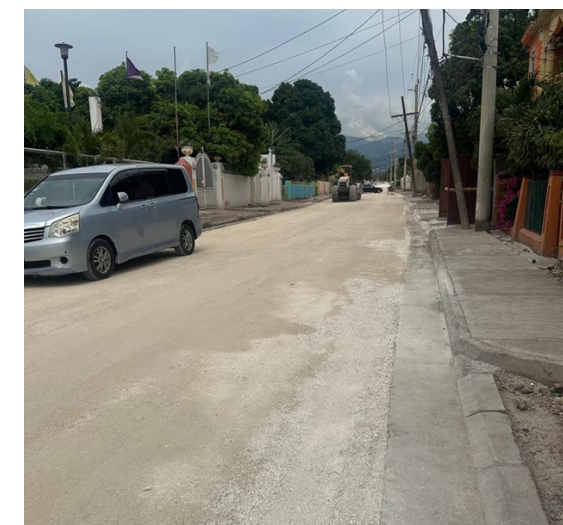
Mulgrave Road has also experienced a full facelift under the SPARK programme. In addition to the technical processes of base course laying and compaction, the introduction of new sidewalks, kerbs, and a new surface greatly improved mobility within the space. These features are important as the roadway connects the public to the Comprehensive Health Centre which serve hundreds of citizens with vital health care that is provided there on a large scale.

Each of these projects demonstrates that SPARK is more than a road improvement programme. It is about listening to our citizens—connecting people and making communities more liveable. From the technical aspects to the visible features such as sidewalks, drainage channels, and street furniture, every detail is part of a strategic approach to nation-building.

As the SPARK programme advances across the island, the southeastern region stands as a shining example of what's possible when infrastructure is treated as a true investment in Jamaica. Bustamante Highway, Collie Smith Drive, Liguanea Avenue, East Road, and Mulgrave Road are evidence of the tenets of what the project promises to deliver.



Road works along Liguanea Avenue



Kerb and channel transformation along East Road



Kerb and Channel upgrades and excavation works on Mulgrave Road

Fun, Food and Friends at NATIONAL WORKS AGENCY FUN DAY 2025

Returning after its last staging in 2019, the National Works Agency's long-awaited Fun Day made its exciting return this past summer on August 23, 2025 — and it was nothing short of spectacular! Held at the beautiful Pearly Beach in St. Ann, the event brought staff, their families, and friends together for a full day of laughter, competition, and celebration.

The setting could not have been better. With the sun shining, the waves rolling softly in the background, the atmosphere was set up for a good day from the very start. The day kicked off with a series of lively competitions that had both participants and onlookers in stitches. Prior to the fun day, things were already firing up as Blue house better known as Building Giants, Yellow house (Traffic Eagles), Red House (Asphalt Knights) and Purple House (Project Kings) were already collecting points through sporting activities including football, netball and basketball going in with their respective points. All teams had their eyes set on the championship trophy.

Festivities began with the long-anticipated cheerleading event. When the dust settled Blue house walked away winners. In second place was Red house followed by Yellow in Third and Purple House at fourth place. Track and field events were another highlight with the 100-metre dash represented by Office Management, while the lime and spoon race tested balance and nerves. The one-legged race was a crowd favourite, with participants hopping and some dropping across the sand while supporters cheered and laughed. Of course, no Jamaican fun day would be complete without the bun-eating competition, which had contestants going head-to-head to see who could munch their way to victory the fastest.

The grand finale of the competitive segment was the tug-o-war. The energy was high as teams gripped the thick rope and pulled with all their might, muscles



straining and feet digging into the sand. Blue House walked away with bragging rights. All that activity certainly worked up an appetite, but no one went hungry. Guests were spoiled with an array of food — from classic Jamaican favourites which were also served at breakfast to lighter options like burgers and hot dogs. Plates were filled with jerk chicken, curried goat, rice and peas, fish, salads, and delectable desserts. With so many options, second (and even third) rounds were unavoidable!

The music kept the vibe going throughout the day. The DJ delivered hit after hit — from old-school reggae to the latest dancehall— this had many on their feet showing off their dance moves. Giveaways added to the festive vibe, with patrons walking away with prizes. Guiding the fun from start to finish was the vibrant master of ceremonies Daidra Harrison who kept the crowd entertained, engaged, and laughing. Perhaps the most heart-warming part of the day was seeing staff from across the island come together. From the South-Eastern region to the Western region, employees mingled freely, taking the opportunity to catch up until the next time.

As the sun set on Pearly Beach, tired but happy patrons packed up, some full of disappointment while others exited the venue with bragging rights. The final points standing of the day were Building Giants in first place with 324 points, Project Kings in second place with 271.75 points, in third place was Traffic Eagles and closing out the day's activities in fourth place was Asphalt Knights. The return of Fun Day was a success, leaving everyone eager for the next staging.

This year's staging was not just about games and entertainment — it was about camaraderie and teamwork!