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DESPITE recent furore over Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's planned \$200m expansion of Coco Cay, the Bahamas Environmental Science and Technology (BEST) Commission has been aware of the plans for "some time now".

Philip Weech, director of the BEST Commission, yesterday said his office is aware of all expansions at the cruise cay.

He also cautioned critics, insisting aspects of the development were proposed, reviewed and approved under two separate environmental impact assessments (EIA). The first of which was carried out between 2015 and 2016.

Local environmental activists last week slammed the massive upgrade for its impact of the ecosystem of the Berry Islands, where Coco Cay is located.

Activist Heather Carey, of Raising Awareness about the Bahamas Landfill (RABL), denounced the project in a Facebook post, calling it another example of how the cruise ship industry does very little to benefit the Bahamas.

She wrote: "Royal Caribbean plans Massive Overhaul of Coco Cay. Dredging in order to accommodate the world's largest cruise ships. A massive marine park. Helium Air Balloon Rides. A fresh water pool."

"Sad. We cannot give away any more of our beautiful Bahamas to these bottomless pits."

However, responding to those concerns, Mr Weech insisted the dredging needed to facilitate the new pier expansion was approved and carried out "some time back".

Mr Weech indicated that operators of Coco Cay first contacted the BEST Commission in late 2015 on plans to expand its docking facility.

He said the operators insisted the existing dock could no longer service the cruise line's operations, which he said they claimed was expanding at the time.

"The problem of course was providing access to the cay," he said.

Mr Weech said the operators submitted its first EIA on the proposed expansion between late 2015 and early 2016; and received approval a few months later.

He added officials from his office, including himself on a few occasions, visited the small cay to ensure all terms agreed to were being adhered to.

Further clarifying Coco Cay's expansion Mr Weech said a second EIA was carried out in May 1st year after Royal Caribbean submitted plans to expand the existing operations and facilities.

"This is the proposal we are still working through," he said.

"There is an existing landscape that they want to make adjustments to. There are facilities on the island that they want to improve on and they've approached us," Mr Weech added.

That expansion, according to Royal Caribbean, includes "Daredevil's Peak," which will become North America's tallest slide at 135 feet; a fully vertical, high-speed slide called the Screeching Serpent; 1600-foot-long zip line ending in a splash water landing; sports amenities and several beach areas.

Royal Caribbean president and CEO Michael Bayley, in the same USA Today article confirmed the project has been in development for three years.

He added once completed, Coco Cay will be unique for a cruise ship private island.

Royal Caribbean is expected to present its full plan for Coco Cay this evening during a town hall forum in Great Harbour Cay, Berry Islands.

Officials from the BEST Commission are expected to attend.