

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Group Buys St. Croix Solar Farm Damaged By Hurricane Maria

Business / **Published On August 09, 2018 11:50 PM /**

Staff **August 09, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- Billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Group has bought a solar farm on St. Croix that was damaged by Hurricane Maria last year, according to reports on Bloomberg and other mainland outlets.

According to a statement Virgin's BMR Energy unit issued Tuesday, the company plans to restore the 4-megawatt farm in St. Croix and take over a power-purchase agreement, according to a statement issued Tuesday. The solar farm is said to be producing less than 45 percent of its capacity since Hurricane Maria ravaged St. Croix last year. Bloomberg said terms of the acquisition from NRG Energy Inc. were not disclosed.

Virgin's BMR Energy unit owns and operates clean-energy projects in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The overhaul of the solar farm in Spanish Town, St. Croix (located near Estate Profit just above the Melvin Evans Highway), should be complete by October, BMR Chief Executive Officer Bruce Levy said in an interview, according to [Bloomberg](#). Mr. Levy said while many of the panels survived, BMR is replacing damaged inverters with salt- and moisture-resistant equipment. BMR also owns a 36-megawatt wind farm in Jamaica and a 5-megawatt solar farm in Guatemala and is working to buy another undisclosed solar project in the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to Bloomberg.

"Developing new projects is a challenge and takes time," Levy said. "Putting broken projects back together goes faster."

The Spanish Town solar farm [opened late October 2014](#). At the inaugural event, which was attended by former Governor John de Jongh and former WAPA Executive Director Hugo Hodge, Jr., dignitaries hailed the farm as a step in the right direction.

"From this day forward, we will no longer be able to say that we're a hundred percent fuel-oil generated," Mr. Hodge said at the event, which received loud applause from the large crowd.

Mr. Hodge went on to say that he'd read an op-ed in a local newspaper suggesting that "WAPA was killing the solar industry in the Virgin Islands." Then, looking out over the expansive solar plant to his right, he said, "I beg to differ."

He also acknowledged the authority's high prices.

"We understand at WAPA that as long as the rates are where they are, it will be hard for the public to digest all the rest of what's going on," Mr. Hodge said.