



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
**MINISTRY FOR HOUSING**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
City Hall  
Gibraltar

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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The GSLP/Liberal spokesman for Housing, Mr Charles Bruzon, has made statements in relation to ongoing works at Maidstone House, Laguna Estate, that are inaccurate and misleading to the point of insulting the intelligence of the general public and in particular of the tenants he purports to speak on behalf of. Mr Bruzon, in his now customary holier-than-thou style, once again demonstrates the ease with which reality and truth can be put to one side for the sake of criticising Government at all cost.

Mr Bruzon correctly states that the roof to Maidstone House was damaged in the severe storms that hit Gibraltar on 10<sup>th</sup> October last year and that scaffolding was erected thereafter. That, unfortunately for Mr Bruzon's credibility, is where the truth of his statement comes to an abrupt end. Mr Bruzon then goes on to state that "the scaffolding has been in place for nearly a year and nothing has happened." That is a lie. More worryingly, Mr Bruzon (who says he has been approached by tenants) will know, as any casual observer will also know, that his statement is untrue.

The Minister for Housing, Fabian Vinet, has reacted by saying:

"The true facts are as follows:

Firstly, the damage caused to Maidstone House by the October 2008 storms was very severe and resulted in major parts of the flat roof – housing encapsulated asbestos tiling – being literally torn off. Tenants will recall that large sections of the roof were hanging precariously over the sides of the building. The Ministry for Housing took immediate steps to tackle and remove these as the prime concern was towards ensuring the safety of the tenants. The removal operation was concluded over the same weekend.

Secondly, as large sections of the roof were subsequently left exposed to the elements, immediate remedial repairs were undertaken to reduce water ingress. The necessary scaffolding was erected to assist in this process.

Thirdly, the scaffolding has remained in position so that sections of the roof could be subsequently and continually monitored.

Fourthly, arrangements to undertake the permanent repairs through a specialised contractor have been concluded and the necessary procurement and mobilisation of specialist materials has been carried out. Mr Bruzon expresses specific concerns about the cost of the scaffolding. Presumably the Opposition Spokesman on Housing would have preferred all the scaffolding to have been dismantled and then erected once again. In fact (and quite apart from the fact that, as explained previously, the scaffolding has had to remain in position to

assist with necessary monitoring), as the scaffolding is already in place, any additional related costs of erection are excluded from the contract, which has actually produced overall savings!

While regrettably some inconvenience to tenants has been inevitable, these arrangements have prevented further serious water ingress whilst at the same time enabling the Ministry for Housing to plan and commission works for the long-term solution of constructing and fitting an entirely new roof. Incidentally, preparations have also already been concluded to undertake similar major repairs to the roof of Sortie House.”

Mr Vinet has also commented on the timing of Mr Bruzon’s statement. “The contract for the total re-roofing was signed several weeks ago,” explains Mr Vinet, “and all the preparatory work has been carried out, including the ordering and delivery of materials. In fact, actual on-site work has already started. The timing of Mr Bruzon’s statement, therefore, in the full knowledge by tenants and even the most casual observer that works have already commenced, is at best curious and at worse smacks of dishonest political opportunism.”

The Minister for Housing, Mr Vinet, who has kept the Laguna Estate Tenants’ Association fully informed of progress at all times, further explains: “I meet with the Laguna Estate Tenants’ Association regularly. We have an excellent working relationship and I am grateful to the members for their always constructive approach. They have been fully consulted throughout and have supported the Ministry during the process.”

Mr Charles Bruzon has urged Government “to show some humanity”. He has also asserted that “once again this Government ignores the concerns of the ordinary citizens.” As the long suffering residents of Harbour Views will know, it is not possible to learn lessons on humanity from the GSLP. Government is however happy to provide Mr Bruzon with lessons on how to improve the living conditions of all government tenants and in particular the elderly and infirm. Tenants of Laguna Estate will be pleased to learn that the successful lift-installation programme, which was recently completed at Varyl Begg, will soon commence at Laguna Estate. This will enable elderly tenants to enjoy their homes for as long as possible. They, and all objective citizens of Gibraltar, will have been able to see through the smokescreen of Mr Bruzon’s apparent concern.