



**GIBRALTAR PORT AUTHORITY**  
**PORT OFFICE**  
North Mole  
Gibraltar  
Tel: (350) 77254 Fax: (350) 51513

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Statement by the Gibraltar Port Authority**

The Gibraltar Port Authority (GPA) regrets the stand taken by Unite in respect of industrial relations at the Port. The various issues highlighted by Unite are matters that are being addressed by union representatives and Port management, during the normal course of business. Matters such as job description, manning levels, recruitment, pay scales, new entrants and contracts of employment should be discussed at the GPA Forum – a working group consisting of Port management, staff and union representatives, which should meet every month. Unfortunately, this Forum has not met since 31st March as a result of union representatives being unable to attend in April, and subsequently, in May, the GGCA General Secretary not wanting to participate alongside Unite. GPA Management has, nevertheless, continued to progress dialogue with the various parties, but not under the formal GPA Forum.

Although some may question the Captain of the Port's style of management, the majority of staff considers his approach to be professional. The targets achieved by the GPA during the past year, since the signing of the Collective Agreement, have demonstrated the success the Port is achieving in becoming a profitable, competitive player in the international maritime world. The GPA has undertaken major changes in technology, staff training, health and safety, and the working environment, which have proved to be beneficial to both Port personnel and the industry alike. These changes have taken place in full consultation with the staff and union representatives, as stipulated in the Collective Agreement. This Agreement transferred Port Department employees to the GPA who were given a 15% increase in salary as part of a package for the change.

The Port today is run on commercial principles in order to meet the demands of the maritime industry, and is proving to be of significant economic benefit to Gibraltar. The GPA is a statutory body with a Board of Directors (which has a Gibraltar Trades Council representative as a Director) as is common practice in the commercial world. The Captain of the Port is accountable and reports to the Board of Directors who ultimately report to the Government through its Chairman, as Minister with responsibility for the Port.

The general meeting referred to by the Branch Officer of Unite in the press report was held on 2nd August and was attended by 23 employees of the GPA (representing 50% of the total complement of 46) when over 90% of those attending supported a vote of “no confidence” on the Captain of the Port. This shows that the Captain enjoys the support of the majority of the staff.

The Captain has never disregarded any written expressions of concern and has always acted in the best interests of the GPA and its employees. The Captain categorically states that he respects the Collective Agreement at all times. However, there are times when the GPA, in full consultation with the unions, will need to consider changes in order to meet the demands of the industry.

One of the roles of the Captain is to provide information to the Government, through the Board, in the running of the GPA and provide regular updates on the progress and development of the Authority.

The GPA is delighted that the GGCA and Unite now stand “shoulder to shoulder” and will be able to fully participate in the GPA Forum to address day-to-day practical issues and find solutions through dialogue and not confrontation, as the latest press statement by the Branch Officer of Unite implies.

In the meantime, the GPA is pleased that the Minister with responsibility for the Port, the Hon Joe Holliday, has today arranged a meeting with the Branch Officer of Unite, the GGCA General Secretary and the Captain of the Port next week in order to clarify any misunderstanding or address any issues so as to ensure the continued smooth-running of the Port.