



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry of Tourism, Public Transport and the Port
Suite 631
Europort
Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

No. 268/2012

Date: 24th April 2012

Bossino has twisted Minister Costa's comments for his own political ends

The latest statement by Opposition Tourism spokesman Damon Bossino is yet another repetition of the same arguments which have already been rebutted by the Government.

Neither the Government, nor the Minister for Tourism Neil Costa, have misled public opinion on the issue of flight connections to and from Gibraltar airport. When in Opposition, the GSLP/Liberals drew attention to the fact that there used to be more connections to and from Gibraltar airport in 1996 than during most of the time that the then GSD Government was in office. In Opposition, attention was also drawn to the slump in air arrivals during 2010 at a time when the previous Government was extolling the virtues of the new air terminal building. This is a perfectly legitimate political position to adopt. Mr Bossino is free to agree or to disagree. What he cannot do, with any degree of political credibility or integrity, is to interpret and twist the sentiments expressed by Minister Costa to suit his own political ends.

The reality is that airlines will come and go. This is dependent on market forces and is outside the control of any Government. Indeed, without wanting to pre-empt on-going discussions, the indications are that the "unprecedented access from the UK" may actually not last for very much longer.

It is obvious that what is firmly within the grasp of any administration is the amount of capital and recurrent spending that is allocated to any project. The previous Government embarked on the construction of a new air terminal building and relocated it next to the frontier fence as a result of a political agreement with Spain. This project has cost the taxpayer 70 million Euros instead of £24 million. The priority that the GSD Government accorded to the new air terminal and the costs that were incurred as a result were, and remain, a live political issue and a matter for political debate.

It will be recalled that the then GSD government shamelessly withdrew labour from other projects in order to be able to stage a public viewing of the incomplete air terminal just before the general election took place. Mr Bossino is entitled to think that this abuse of power and questionable use of public funds was perfectly justified. There are many people who will disagree.

It is highly ironic that someone who has been in Parliament for barely four months should accuse Mr Costa of being inexperienced, even though he has been an MP for more than four years!

Moreover, for Mr Bossino to accuse Minister Costa of attacking the messenger instead of the message must be the height of political hypocrisy. Everyone knows and countless press releases attest to the fact, that personal vilification was a worn-out tactic used by his own party when they were in Government and, particularly, by his party Leader Mr Caruana, who spent over a decade denigrating, ridiculing and criticising personally anyone who had the temerity to express a different view. This is one of the reasons why the GSLP/Liberals are now the Government and the GSD are now the Opposition.