



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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Opposition have shot themselves in the foot with criticism of Grand Battery works

The suggestion by GSD spokesperson Selwyn Figueras that there was no consultation over the works at Grand Battery smacks of political hypocrisy. It is well known that in Government, the GSD ended up completely ignoring the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) and the Town Planners in relation to Government projects which were generally bulldozed through in secret without any consultation or information.

The plain fact is that the works at Grand Battery were inherited from the previous administration and were simply continued by the new Government on coming into office. This means that because the GSD ignored the DPC in relation to Government projects, the works at Grand Battery had not been put through the planning process by the GSD themselves. The Opposition is therefore criticising a situation which they were responsible for creating when they were in Government. Mr Figueras has shot himself in the foot.

Moreover, it was only after the new GSLP/Liberal Government came into office, that the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the Department of the Environment and GONHS were all taken on a site visit to Grand Battery in order to assess the situation for themselves. The consensus was that the World War Two structures could be demolished. In addition to this, the members of the Development and Planning Commission were all consulted and asked for their views before the demolition project commenced.

It is therefore also totally incorrect for the GSD to claim that there has been no consultation with the stakeholders, given that these stakeholders were all fully consulted. Indeed, there has been more consultation, greater openness and increased accountability in relation to the planning process in six months of GSLP/Liberal Government that there ever was in sixteen years of GSD administration.

Mr Figueras is also wrong to give the impression that all World War Two structures on Grand Battery have been demolished. This is not the case. A pill box at the eastern end of the Battery has been retained and will be used for interpretation purposes. It is clear that

the Opposition do not know what they are talking about and that they are only interested in taking cheap shots at the Government without even bothering to establish the full facts in the first place.

Commenting on the matter, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The new Government has transformed the planning process in Gibraltar. In a very short space of time we have done away with the closed and secretive system that we inherited from the GSD and we have replaced this with public meetings of the Development of Planning Commission. The minutes of the meetings as well as the agenda are now available on-line. This means that both the stakeholders in the DPC and the general public are kept informed. When I was in Opposition and I used to ask the questions, there were no public meetings and the agenda and minutes were not made public.

Moreover, Government projects are now submitted to the Development and Planning Commission for information and advice, which is a far cry from what used to happen when the GSD was in Government.

The problem for the GSD is that there is clearly a serious credibility gap when they raise issues of this kind because they did not have an open planning process and it is clear that, even now, they remain against it despite the obvious benefits and the improvements carried out by the new Government. The policy of the Government is to subject its own projects to the full planning process during this term of office. The policy of the GSD is to turn the clock back to the closed and secretive planning system that they presided over for many years.

It is therefore a bit rich for the Opposition to now complain about the works at Grand Battery when this was their own project in the first place when they were in Government.”