



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Government defends its planning policy from Opposition sour grapes**

The GSD Opposition need to come out of Government mode and realise that they have lost the election and are now in Opposition. It is obvious from their public statements that they do not understand that the new Government was elected to implement our policies and our manifesto and not the policies and the manifesto of the GSD.

The recent statement on the reforms to the Development and Planning Commission by Opposition Member Selwyn Figueras is a case in point. Mr Figueras accuses the new Government in the same breath both of not having gone far enough and of having gone too far. He has said, on the one hand that the Government has performed a u-turn by not submitting Government projects to the DPC for approval. Then, on the other hand, he has said that "Gibraltar simply cannot function without the Government retaining the last word on projects it undertakes".

It is obvious that the new Opposition is on a learning curve. However, they must not fall into the habit of following their Leader who has had us accustomed over the years to interpreting what the position of everyone else should be and in the process misrepresenting it completely.

The position of the Government is as explained by the Government and not as explained by the Opposition.

The new Government has already stated that at this stage, Government projects will be submitted to the Development and Planning Commission for an opinion and for guidance. The new Government has also made clear that in the second stage of its reforms, the approval of the Development and Planning Commission will be required for Government projects.

It is therefore a bit rich for Mr Figueras to accuse the new Government of a "u-turn" or of "grandstanding" when the GSD are themselves totally opposed to increasing the transparency of the DPC in the first place and when this is something that they never did when they were in power. The Opposition cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds at the same time.

The Opposition shows unbelievable hypocrisy in expressing concern as to who would advise DPC on technical matters. When in Government, the GSD systematically failed even to inform the Town Planner of its projects, let alone ask for advice, opting instead to bulldoze them through without the advice of the Town Planning Department. In complete contrast, the Town Planning Department will now be able to fulfil its role in advising on all projects.

The Government also condemns the Opposition's personal attack on the Town Planner. Not content with questioning his role within the confines of Parliament, the Opposition has chosen to do so again, questioning his ability to effectively chair the DPC and suggesting that it is bizarre for him to do so. The Town Planner is a highly experienced professional fully capable of chairing the DPC, which he did most successfully at the first public meeting last Wednesday. Indeed the seismic significance in terms of open government and transparency of the public meeting seems to have escaped Opposition spokesman Selwyn Figueras completely.

What is indeed bizarre is that the Leader of the Opposition, who was clearly well aware as Chief Minister that he repeatedly failed to consult Town Planning or the DPC on his projects should now allow one of his junior Opposition members to criticise the new Government for not being as secretive as the last GSD administration! In a very short period of time, the GSLP/Liberal Government has opened up the planning process. There are still more reforms to come and no amount of sour grapes from the Opposition is going to derail them.