



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
Joshua Hassan House
Secretary's Lane
Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

No. 789/2012

Date: 28th November 2012

Problem with apes stem from 15 years of mismanagement by the GSD Government

In response to the Government's detailed, factual statements, both on the recent reports of bites and on the Barbary Macaque Management Plan, it is obvious that the Opposition clearly feel they must say something, anything, whether it makes sense or not. Dr Cortes is a life-long expert on macaques and to suggest that he would use them as a 'vote-winning strategy' is totally ridiculous.

Mr Figueras refers to the time that the Minister was part of GONHS. What Mr Figueras does not mention is the number of times that GONHS' advice was provided to the GSD administration but not heeded. If this advice had been implemented at the time, many of the problems we see today would have been prevented. For instance, in 2009, a proposed Management Plan was prepared and agreed and then passed on to the then Chief Minister. Regrettably, this Plan never saw the light of day. There are many other such instances, recorded in correspondence, which, if he wishes, could be shown to Mr Figueras.

Mr Figueras is asking to be given dates of Ministers' scheduled meetings and details of everything that is discussed in their meetings. Were such details ever published when the GSD were in power? How often did the GSD government make secretive promises without Gibraltar's public ever being made aware?

The fact that no progress had been made on the export of monkeys when Parliament last sat does not mean that progress has not been made since. Once again, it seems that Mr Figueras wants immediately to be made aware of every step of Government business: he cannot seem to realise that he was not elected into Government.

On the subject of macaque bites, they are all hugely regrettable, regardless of where they take place. Once again we should stress that they result from the way in which the monkeys have lost their fear of humans. It seems almost as if Mr Figueras is glad that there has been a bite in an urban setting so that he can use it for his political ends. Instead, he should try to show some political maturity by welcoming and supporting the forthcoming campaign.

Commenting on the matter, the Minister for the Environment Dr John Cortes said:

“Clearly neither the Opposition now, nor the GSD when in Government, had any understanding of macaque biology. Could I suggest that Mr Figueras reads “The Barbary Macaque: Biology, Management and Conservation”, edited by Keith Hodges and John Cortes and published by Nottingham University Press. He might learn something.”