



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
PRESS OFFICE
No.6 Convent Place
Gibraltar
Tel:20070071; Fax: 20043057**

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Opposition approach to "Sunborn" project is contradictory

The approach of the Opposition to the "Sunborn" floating hotel project continues to expose the contradictions in their policy because they adjust their views accordingly each time that the Government addresses one of their arguments.

The Opposition first gave the impression that they were against the floating hotel. When the Government reminded them that in office the GSD had recognised some value in a floating hotel that they had even held discussions to bring one and that they actually did so for a particular sporting event, the Opposition then changed their tune. Now they say that they welcome the investment and have shifted the argument to other matters.

The Opposition also expressed concern for existing hotels. When the Government pointed out that the GSD once announced plans for seven new hotels in Gibraltar and that they have until recently pressed the Government for new hotels, the Opposition then changed their tune again.

The Opposition then complained that the floating hotel had gone to the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) as a done deal and suggested that the vessel had left for Gibraltar before the DPC had even met. When it was pointed out to them that there was no done deal because the DPC meeting was two weeks before the vessel left, the Opposition again changed their tune. They now say that the Government has paid lip service to the planning process even though it was precisely the Government that ensured that the vessel went to planning in public in the first place and if the GSD had been in office Government projects would not go to the DPC at all.

The Government has already explained that there was an argument to be had as to whether the berthing of a boat in a marina represented a material change of use which would have triggered the need to go to planning. This means that by taking it as a Government project the argument was avoided and the DPC was given the opportunity to debate the issue in front of the public and the media. It also meant that affected parties could make representations, as indeed some chose to do.

The Opposition have also accused the Government of flouting environmental considerations. The planning application form for the project, which is available on-line, makes it clear that an environmental statement is underway. Therefore far from paying lip service to the environment, such considerations are at the centre of Government thinking and an EIA is being produced. The Opposition simply do not know what they are talking about.

The point is that the Opposition cannot run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. It is not credible that they should welcome the investment but then choose to nitpick on aspects of it at the same time.

The reality is that the Opposition continue to repeat the same inaccurate statements about the "Sunborn" project in the hope that in this way they can mislead and confuse public opinion. The Government will not allow them to get away with it.