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Opposition are in no position to lecture about fishing or waters

It is beyond belief that the Opposition should have the cheek to criticise the way in which the Government has handled the fishing issue when all that the Government has been doing for the last eighteen months is mop up the mess that the GSD left behind when they were in office.

People will never forget that the reason why Gibraltar finds itself in this situation in the first place is because the then GSD Government entered into a private agreement with a group of Spanish fishermen which allowed them to break the law with impunity in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. The fact that these fishermen were allowed to use methods that were illegal under Gibraltar law for so many years has made it more difficult for the new GSLP/Liberal administration to wind the clock back.

Moreover, if Mr Feetham now feels so strongly in favour of this, he needs to explain why his party in Government did not change the law between 1999 and 2011 and why he personally as Minister for Justice allowed the illegality to continue.

The concerns of the Government have been, and continue to be, primarily environmental and the policy remains to allow sustainable fishing in a controlled manner. The details of what will be extensive regulations to govern the use of Gibraltar's waters will be published and explained fully at the time of publication and the Opposition will have to wait for these.

The fact is that the Opposition does not deserve any better treatment, going by the way that they mishandled the whole fishing issue. Indeed, they have repeatedly intimated support for the Spanish position, even to the point when Mr Feetham said he would not be averse to removing the artificial reef, de facto giving jurisdiction to Spain over a part of BGTW.

The Opposition has been characteristically inconsistent in both voting against an earlier amendment to the Nature Protection Act, and now saying (although they were not there to prove it) that they would have supported the latest amendment. It speaks volume about their lack of judgement that they walked out of Parliament and did not come back again to discuss this important piece of legislation. The GSD Opposition are paid for by the

taxpayers of Gibraltar to put their views and their votes on record in Parliament and in Hansard, they are not paid to act out meaningless pantomimes of this kind. The press statement they have issued is purely and simply a feeble excuse to cover up their failure to put anything on the record in Parliament when they had the chance to do so because they were not present.

The Opposition repeatedly and conveniently forget that Gibraltar rejected the 1999 fishing agreement on 8 December 2011 when the electorate voted for a manifesto that clearly stated this would not be allowed to continue.

The Marine Regulations are a very complex set of rules that necessarily have taken time in formulating, given the large range of activities covered and the great deal of research and the many different considerations that have gone into it, as well as numerous meetings with stakeholders - a feature of the Government's way of working which is of course unfamiliar to the GSD. It is important to emphasise the extensive consultation that has taken place.

The regulation of the use of the seas around Gibraltar will be done in a way to ensure the long term sustainability of marine resources while allowing controlled use and enjoyment of this natural asset. Details will be released and fully explained at the time of publication.

The Regulations will in no way vindicate the GSD's policies, whichever they may happen to be at any given time. Their policy was one of doing nothing other than to allow the breaking of the law without any attempt at finding real solutions and with no regard for Gibraltar's international obligations at protection of the sea's resources. Their inability to even attempt to stop the designation of BGTW as a Spanish nature reserve is proof enough of their lack of interest and their incompetence in this regard. Given their poor record in Government, the GSD Opposition are in no position to lecture to anyone about fishing or about waters.