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PRESS RELEASE

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MOORISH CASTLE RE-OPENS

Following an extensive refurbishment programme, the Tower Of Homage of the Moorish Castle complex will be officially opened by the Minister with responsibility for Tourism, the Hon Joe Holliday, on Monday 11th June 2007 at 6.30pm.

The complete restoration works of the inside of the building were carried out by the Gibraltar Museum of the Government's Heritage Division, under the direction of Prof Clive Finlayson. The archaeological and restoration works were supervised by Don Francisco Giles Pacheco, the Chief Project Archaeologist, from the Museo El Puerto Santa María and by restorer Don Manuel Jaén.

The project involved a process of research that led to exciting new discoveries and the confirmation that the present Tower, built between 1333 and 1374 by the North African Merinids, was an expansion of an earlier tower. The remains of the earlier tower, built in the twelfth century by the Almohads, were discovered during the research phase and are visible in parts of the site. The fourteenth century works included, it now seems, a substantial expansion of the Tower to include an internal stairwell and a new, upper, floor in which accommodation facilities were provided for the governor in times of siege. A secret escape passage was also discovered and it appears that this had been adapted for later use during the Second World War.

The research work aided the process of conservation and, where necessary, restoration. Many chambers and rooms had been plastered with a thick layer of portland cement, as had been done in the Museum's Moorish Baths, which required delicate removal by hand. Although the cement, which had been laid

in the 1970s, had caused significant damage to the original brickwork the present works prevented further deterioration and much of the internal fabric of the structure has been rescued. The works have permitted a good understanding of the function of the Tower and its rooms as well as its evolution. The experience gained will be applied to future phases of the project once the civil prison is relocated.

Once these internal works were completed, the Gibraltar Tourist Board carried out the necessary enabling and landscaping works to allow visitors to enjoy this unique heritage site.

It is also envisaged that new toilet facilities will be provided in the grounds of the Castle in the autumn.

“What has been achieved at the Moorish Castle is indeed impressive”, said the Hon Joe Holliday, Minister with responsibility for Tourism. “The refurbishment works have completely transformed the inside of the Castle and have brought to light all the unique features that were previously covered in plaster. This site will now become a focal point of all visits to Gibraltar and we are confident that it will become a favourite with our visitors. I also urge Gibraltarians to visit the Moorish Castle and re-discover this dominant feature of our landscape which is part of our common heritage.”

The Moorish Castle will re-open to the public as from Tuesday 12th June.