



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

PRESS RELEASE

No: 298/2014

Date: 13th June 2014

Double standards for the use of sand from Valdevaqueros Dune in Tarifa

According to the Mayor of Algeciras, the use of sand from Valdevaqueros to regenerate the beaches of Algeciras is “fantastic, a joy, a gift”, but when it is to be used for the same purpose in Gibraltar, environmentalist groups describe it as a “plunder”, tantamount to “selling a part of the Alhambra”

According to recent reports in the media of the Campo area, the Mayor of Algeciras, Mr José Ignacio Landaluze, stated that “the beaches are a crucial element for us, both for the citizens and to promote tourism”. These words were used by Landaluze to announce the arrival of between 1,200 and 1,300 trucks with 30,000 cubic metres of high quality sand in Algeciras from Valdevaqueros dune in Tarifa (Cádiz).

Furthermore, Mr Federico Ramos, Secretary of State for the Environment, whose ministry is financing the operation, commented in Algeciras that “it is important to maintain these beaches in excellent condition so the public can use and enjoy them”. He added that the initiative aimed to cover two objectives: firstly to give a purpose to the “excess” sand from Valdevaqueros dune and secondly to regenerate the nearby beaches.

Mr Ramos was referring to the fact that the dune grows at a rate of between 15,000 and 30,000 cubic metres per year and threatens to block a road connecting several population centres¹.

This atmosphere of optimism has been reflected by local media since last week; however, no mention has been made of another project to regenerate beaches with the excess sand of Valdevaqueros which took place last year.

In June 2013, Gibraltar undertook the purchase of the excess sand of this dune with the purpose of regenerating Sandy Bay.

Even though the purchase of this sand was carried out after obtaining all relevant permits, the environmental association Verdemar-Ecologistas en Acción filed a complaint for “aggravated theft”² and described the intentions of the Government of Gibraltar as a plunder, stating that it was “tantamount to selling a part of the Alhambra or the Guadalquivir River”³.

Gibraltar was initially going to use 10,000 tonnes of sand (approximately 7,800 cubic metres) from Valdevaqueros to regenerate Sandy Bay, but, ultimately, less than 3,000 could be supplied.

The Government of Spain, contrary to the EU's free commerce legislation, barred the export of this sand to Gibraltar. Before the ban came into effect, however, Sandy Bay was regenerated using sand from a quarry in Cadiz. It is not known whether the Spanish government compensated the Spanish company transporting the sand to Gibraltar.

It is interesting to note the double standards used to qualify the regeneration of beaches depending on which side of the Bay of Gibraltar they are on.

Footnotes:

¹ http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2014/01/17/actualidad/1389989320_048204.html

² EFE newswire from 23 July 2013: Verdemar presents a legal complaint for "aggravated theft" of sand from Valdevaqueros for its sale.

³ ABC newspaper, 22 August 2013