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Feetham Lies Again Without Compunction

Mr Feetham's surprise at the marine regulations is clearly focussed on the fact that the Government has been able to produce such a robust, yet sensible, set of regulations that will, at the same time, assist the protection of marine life whilst allowing legitimate activities such as rod and line fishing to continue. There is also the creation of protected areas, the ability to introduce closed seasons, the delineation of anchoring exclusion sites to protect reefs, and many more aspects that the GSD totally failed to address in all its years in office. Independent bodies such as the GFSA have recognised this themselves, no doubt to Mr Feetham's eternal chagrin!

What is also becoming abundantly clear is that Mr Feetham doesn't have the courage, or perhaps the understanding, to acknowledge and welcome the huge strides made in all the different aspects of the new laws, including for the first time ever the creation of a statutory working group of stakeholders to discuss and further improve the use and protection of Gibraltar's marine resources. This is a key element in developing policies and laws further in the future as and when the time is right. Nor does he bother, in the face of Spanish criticism, to defend the Government's right to legislate in BGTW - which is what any really "loyal" Opposition would at least have pointed out. All he wants to do is deflect attention from this hugely positive and significant step.

In his press reaction, all that Mr Feetham has done to the new regulations is to repeat his old and tired accusations about the entirely discredited GSD fishing agreement that discriminated against Gibraltarians, when events have proved without a doubt, that the present Spanish Government's attitude towards Gibraltar is deep rooted and independent of any single cause. In fact, Sñr Margallo went off saying "Gibraltar Espanol" and "se acabo el recreo" long before any fishing related issue had arisen. In siding with Spain, Sñr Margallo and Sñr Landaluce on the fishing dispute, Mr Feetham does Gibraltar no favours whatsoever!

The reality is that the new fishing Regulations do not ignore the issue, they are about something else.

The GSD's statement is full of conjecture and assumptions. It is not true that Spanish fishing vessels are fishing more than ever before. This is an outright lie which the Leader of the Opposition continues to repeat. Indeed he repeats so many lies that his political

credibility is in tatters and is dragging his previously proud party down with him. Mr Feetham does no credit to the many honest politicians who have previously made up the ranks of the GSD, with whom the parties that make up the present Government may not have agreed on policy grounds, but who defended their political positions without the need to lie repeatedly to the electorate to create an alternate reality for their arguments to prosper. The public has and will continue to see through Mr Feetham.

Minister for the Environment, the Hon John Cortes MP said: "These regulations are important in the context of Gibraltar's obligations under the EU and international conventions, and clearly too in the context of Gibraltar's jurisdiction over BGTW and the EU-protected areas claimed by Spain. It seems, Mr Feetham cannot or will not see this, nor grasp the significance of these facts. In fact, the only one caught in headlights is the Leader of the Opposition who doesn't know which way to turn in trying to create problems for Gibraltar for his own, narrow, personal ends.