



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR TRAFFIC, HOUSING AND
TECHNICAL SERVICES
Joshua Hassan House
Secretary's Lane
Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

No. 97/2014

Date: 3rd March 2014

Opposition display complete hypocrisy on housing issues

It is complete political hypocrisy for the GSD Opposition to preach that the approach to housing should be an evolving strategy and not a reactive one when their policy in Government was precisely to have no such strategy and merely to be reactive.

It is clear that the Opposition have been stunned by the community's hugely positive response to the launch of the Government's new housing schemes and, rather than maintain a prudent silence on the matter, they have felt compelled to comment in order to find something to be critical about. The plain fact is that whatever they may say now, the GSD lacked a coherent housing strategy to ensure a timely supply of houses for our people when they were in office. Indeed, they neglected the housing issue to such a degree that the then Chief Minister practically apologised for this inaction after the 2003 general election. This inaction was reflected in a spectacular 350% increase in the housing waiting list during the tenure of the GSD administration. It grew from about 400 people in 1996 to about 1400 when they left office.

This Government's first priority is to house those who were on the housing waiting list on the date that we came into office. There were 1415 applicants on the housing waiting list on that day, a few hundred of whom have already been housed. This leaves just over 1000 remaining on the list. The key to affordable housing is precisely that the homes should be affordable. The prices of the housing at Mons Calpe Mews and Beach View Terraces are genuinely affordable. This is markedly more so when the 50/50 scheme is taken into account which means that a one bedroom can be purchased for about £ 27,000 and a four bedroom for under £ 100,000.

The Opposition suggests that the Government appears to have no intention to build homes for rental. However, they fail to draw the obvious conclusion that many current tenants will now be able - and delighted - to buy their own homes, thus making many flats available for those on the waiting lists.

The Government is therefore confident that the new Affordable Housing Schemes and other measures will reduce the housing waiting list, both directly and indirectly through the release of Government accommodation by people on the waiting list. It is all very well for the Opposition to now come up with secret magic formulas to resolve the housing problem. This begs the question as to where these formulas were during their fifteen years in office.