

PRESS RELEASE

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The Shadow Minister for Traffic fails to grasp even the most basic of concepts.

HM Government of Gibraltar takes the Opposition's inexorable probing into the release of information ahead of the final Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan report as complimentary; the Opposition is clearly keen to see the results of the thorough and professional report in order to include its suggestions in their next manifesto. Mr Figueras has already stated publicly that the GSD would not do away with the Plan if elected into Government.

The Opposition had 16 years to prepare its own Traffic Plan. When this term of office expires, the final STTPP document will have been published, with tangible results, in less than four years. As records stand this will make the STTPP the most thorough plan ever produced for Gibraltar in a quarter of the time it took the GSD to produce their Integrated Traffic & Transport brochure: a strategy that destroyed the pedestrian attributes of the Trafalgar area and that launched the doomed-to-fail GIBI Bikes scheme. Traffic and Transport are taken very seriously by this Government and the only amusement lies in Mr Figueras' apparent lack of understanding of the Government's continued assurances that the whole STTPP document will be published when it is ready. He need not fear a repeat of the GSD's ill-fated 'King Report into GBC'.

The STTPP is of significant importance to this Government and to Gibraltar as a whole; important to the environment, road users, pedestrians and politicians alike. It is not a list of ideas; something coined or thought about one lazy afternoon. The STTPP is a scientific, well researched, well-thought-out piece of work done in conjunction with Mott MacDonald - renowned experts in traffic and transport matters - that will effect lasting change.

The STTPP's methodology has involved an exhaustive public consultation process. Regarding the Gibraltar Cycling Association in particular, Mr Figueras must get his facts right before making incorrect statements: as per all letters of suggestion, a standard letter is sent out in the first instance thanking the stakeholder for their contributions. In cases of very thorough submissions, every effort has been made to send a more substantive reply. This was sent to the Gibraltar Cycling Association, copied to the Chief Minister, on the 29th May 2015. In this respect, the Government notes that the Opposition has never, at any stage in the consultation process,

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brought suggestions or proposals of its own to the forum.

The Opposition are well aware that a Draft Plan has already been published, which summarises what will be the bulk of the final document. Given the Opposition's apparent failure to recognize the achievements of the Ministry of Traffic to date, however, the Government takes this opportunity to point them out:

1. New public car parks have been inaugurated at Eastern Beach and South Pavilion, a parking scheme has been established at Chilton Court, parking at Glacis estate has been upgraded and now includes a visitor zone, and temporary car parks have been installed at the ex-Naval Ground and at Coaling Island. There has also been an increase in the provision of parking bays for the disabled and a pilot drop-off scheme is being tested at St Joseph's school.
2. The public transport system is being extended. Two new bus stops are in place on Europort Road, and Queensway Quay and a request stop at Flat Bastion Road will soon be set up.
3. New zebra crossings are in place outside the New Harbour's Promenade Park, and at Europort Road, Glacis Road and King's Bastion. The zebra crossings at Portland House and Glacis Road have been upgraded to Pelican crossings, and the infrastructure for a new crossing at Ragged Staff has been laid down. Countdown timers are being piloted at near City Hall.
4. A comprehensive speed limit review has been conducted and, speed indicators and road calming measures have been implemented in numerous locations.

For clarity, the Government reiterates that the provision of parking spaces underneath Commonwealth Park was a viable option, but one which would have carried a significant cost that the Government did not feel would represent the best value for money to the taxpayer. The promised parking spaces will be provided elsewhere within the vicinity and a full feasibility study is underway, with the road to the south of the Park in mind.

The Minister for Traffic, Transport and Technical Services, the Hon Paul Balban MP, said: "The Government has made good progress on the STTPP and there are many exciting new schemes to be put to the test in the very near future. Mr Figueras needs to understand that a Traffic Plan is not simply about creating more parking spaces, as the GSD believed when preparing their simple booklet of a plan; it is so much more than that. There is nothing amusing about the plan itself, only his blinkered approach to it and his acute lack of understanding of the basic issues. Yet, he is correct about one thing: I do not have difficulty finding parking as I decided a long time ago to not use a car and I either walk or cycle to and from work. Occasionally, I will also use public transport and this is the overriding principle of the STTPP; it's not to discourage people to use their cars or motorbikes, it's about encouraging people to adopt more sustainable forms of transport."