



## PRESS RELEASE

No. 122/2015

Date: 27th February 2015

---

### **Government's aim is the Restoration of Gibraltar's Marine Environment**

The Opposition, in concentrating on trying to score political points, has once again exposed its lack of understanding of the environment. At least, in its latest statement, they have the decency not to deny that the problem was one of their making by having agreed to the 1999 fishing agreement in the first place.

This Government's aim is the restoration of Gibraltar's marine environment. If and when this strategy is successful it may one day result in sustainable fishing once again being possible. This is consistent with the experts' "Fishing Report", and with the strategy that Government announced at the time of its publication.

The Opposition's 'expectations', (for which one could easily read 'misinterpretations'), of a change in the law to allow fishing with nets, are irrelevant. What matters is the action that the Government is taking to properly manage Gibraltar's marine resources. This the GSD government never did in the slightest way.

The Opposition is clearly annoyed that the Government's strategy is working. Enforcement of the marine regulations is being introduced gradually and sensibly, with the full agreement of the Fishing Working Group, which meets monthly and is kept up to date with developments. This Working group is made up of representatives a wide range of organisations, including anglers, divers, spear fishermen, big game anglers and conservation bodies. Within it there is discussion of all relevant matters relating to conservation of marine resources. The Working Group has supported the stepwise approach to enforcement of the Regulations, which has resulted in equitable treatment of residents and non-residents, all of whom have accepted the jurisdiction of the Gibraltar authorities. The Government will continue to discuss all relevant matters with this group, set up for the purpose, and continue to progress its actions in discussion with these legitimate stakeholders.

It is these stakeholders whose opinions are the most valuable, and not those of the GSD and its supporters, who are clearly trying to undo to excellent work already done by the Department of the Environment, for their own selfish and political ends.

The GSD Opposition clearly wants a return to fishing with nets, and to the unlawful 1999 agreement, an agreement that started the problem in the first place. Everybody knows what they



did but nobody knows what they would do in the future. One thing is certain, however, and that is that, by their own admission, had they won the 2011 election, they would have continued with the 1999 fishing agreement even though this purported to allow Spanish fishermen to fish in Gibraltar's waters in breach of the law. It smacks of political hypocrisy that the Opposition should complain that there are instances of fishing with nets in BGTW when they were the ones who, not only allowed it to happen but who actually institutionalised it in breach of the law.

Therefore the Opposition will repeatedly and predictably raise the issue of fishing even when things are settled and progress is being made. They just want to create trouble and unrest. They do not care about Gibraltar, or about the fish or the marine environment. They only care about themselves.

The Government has a wider responsibility and has assumed it.

Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes commented, "It is not just my view, but my passion, that Gibraltar's marine life should return to what it once was. We have seen the success of reef creation, we now have Regulations that show that we take marine life seriously. I am convinced that, with time, we will be successful in restoring much of our marine life, despite the best efforts of those who say they want that, but really just want to get in the way of what we are trying to do."