



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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Opposition should examine their own record over new buses

The Opposition are playing a dangerous game over the new buses which will backfire on them. They continue to behave as if they were newcomers to the political scene who do not have a track record of their own which is open to public scrutiny.

There was a litany of mismanagement and of wrong decisions taken in relation to the Bus Company during the GSD's time in office. It is therefore the height of political hypocrisy that the GSD Opposition should have the gall to complain about decisions taken now after the mess that they presided over in relation to these same issues.

The Opposition now complain about works to Europa Road. It is clear that they do not remember that works had to be carried out to Gibraltar's roads in 2004 in order to allow the Dennis Dart buses to be able to operate safely. This included works at Cumberland Road, in the St Joseph's School area, also in parts of Europa Road, in the junction between Main Street and Governor's Lane, in "Lover's Lane", in the area of Alameda Kiosk, Grand Parade, in Trafalgar Road, in the area of John Mackintosh Hall and Ince's Hall, in the area of Europa Road at The Mount, in Transport Road, in South Pavilion Road, at Brympton and at Windmill Hill junction. The cost of these works run into tens of thousands of pounds.

Moreover, the then GSD Government was warned at the time in relation to Smith Dorrien Bridge and they dismissed the warnings in a flippant and irresponsible manner. The reality is that it fell on the GSLP/Liberal Government to carry out reinforcement works to Line Wall Road and particularly to Smith Dorrien bridge precisely as a result of the buses that the previous administration had ordered.

It is entirely contradictory that the Opposition should complain about such matters now when the responsibility for this falls squarely on their shoulders.

It is also relevant to note that there were at least 37 car parking spaces and 6 motorcycle spaces lost at the time as a result of the works to accommodate the new buses.

The GSD announced that the life-expectancy of their bus fleet was between 15 and 20 years provided that a regular service programme was maintained. In this context,

the contract for the provision of maintenance to the buses was directly allocated to A M Capurro and Sons Ltd and workshop facilities were made available to them for this service to be provided.

These maintenance costs spiralled from £9142 per month in 2005 to £31,299 per month in 2011. The original service contract which run from 2005 to 2009 cost the taxpayer £736,314 in payments made for the maintenance of the bus fleet. It was put to the then Government that this service should be put out to tender in 2009 and the then Government refused.

The result was that the GSD Government entered into a second contract directly with the same company outside the tender process. This cost £793,651 for 2010 and 2011 alone was more than the previous five years put together. Indeed, the total cost of the maintenance of the bus fleet from 2004/5 until 2014 was £2.7 million, which is approximately the cost of ten new buses!

What is clear is that the announced life-expectancy of the buses of 15-20 years proved to be wishful thinking, even though millions of pounds have been spent on their maintenance.

The Opposition has already been told that the details of the tender for the new buses are confidential. However, it was a policy established by the GSD themselves when in office, that when tender recommendations are considered, a whole range of criteria is taken into account of which the price is only one. This includes wider issues like past experience with a given supplier, after-sales service and buy-back options.

It is clear that the GSD Opposition on this question, as with on a host of other issues, have nothing valid to complain about and much to answer for. Their policy is simply to moan about everything that the Government does without the slightest thought of what they themselves used to do when they were in Office.