



Deputy Chief Minister

PRESS RELEASE

No. 473/2015

Date: 1st July 2015

Works continue to progress at Northern Defences

The cleaning and refurbishment works at the Northern Defences continue to progress. This follows the completion of the first phase and the start of phase two with the welcome assistance of the Royal Engineers.

The clearing operation has led to the discovery of several artefacts including 14th century catapult and trebuchet shot. Defensive structures such as fire steps have been unearthed and musketry loop holes have been exposed. These items allow us to gain further knowledge of this unique historic site and the punishment that it received at the hands of attackers over the ages.

The works have also allowed the Government to obtain further information on some of the structures which were previously thought to date much earlier such as the boundary wall to Road to the Lines. The wall, which is in a very poor state, was presented to the Development and Planning Commission for demolition in February of this year on the strength of two structural engineer reports. A further assessment was subsequently made by the Technical Services Department of the Government and UK specialist building conservation engineer was also flown to Gibraltar for the same purpose.

The wall was originally believed to date back to the early nineteenth century. However, on close inspection and following intrusive investigations, there is structural evidence to suggest that there has been considerable re-modelling of the wall since then.

The Government has started recording and removing those elements which are unsafe following expert advice and after consultation with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust. The wall is now rendered safer following the controlled removal of these loose elements and by taking it down to a lower height.

It is relevant to note that sizeable elements have come off without any effort. These were in danger of collapsing and impossible to detect should the Government not have acted.

The Government has consulted a number of experts before coming to this decision, a process which has taken several months.

‘The long-term project to restore the Northern Defences will continue in order to raise the profile of this important heritage site which has been overgrown and neglected for many years,’ said the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia. ‘This is another example of the Government’s commitment to our heritage, thereby contributing to a better tourist product.’