

PRESS RELEASE

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GSD Blind to a Better Gibraltar

It is increasingly clear that the GSD are blind to the needs of modern Gibraltar, and ignorant of the failed legacy that the last GSD government left in town planning for the current government to rectify. In repairing the GSD mistakes of the past, the Government has, in just 6 years, provided for Gibraltar's future whilst safeguarding and preserving our valuable Heritage. From the Northern Defences to the Gibraltar International Bank and the University of Gibraltar, proper, effective town planning has enabled the old to enhance and give our unique character to the new modern Gibraltar of today.

The Government had to move quickly after being elected into office in order to begin the work of reversing the mistakes of the GSD administration. As a result, the Government successfully reduced the height of the MidTown towers (with a similar reduction now achieved for King's Wharf Phase 2) as well as reducing the overall footprint of the site, thereby creating enough space for both car parking and a green area. Furthermore, the Government successfully saved the area that is now the Commonwealth Park, a much-loved oasis in the heart of town, from becoming tower blocks, as had been planned by the GSD. The Government has since created an Act to protect it for future generations. Thanks to this Government, the town area's only open green space is here to stay. Contrary to the GSD's belief, development can mean much more than utilitarian buildings; this Government is committed to purposeful planning that meets the needs of the community in a much more meaningful way, including providing for and protecting our limited green and open spaces.

In fact, despite their claim to protest the current rate of development in Gibraltar on public health grounds, it was the GSD to who planned to construct a dirty diesel power station in the heart of the nature reserve, which would not only have jeopardised the integrity of the reserve itself, but would have obscured the world-famous views of the Strait and had a significant negative impact on Gibraltar's air quality. To add insult to injury, the GSD Opposition failed to support the Government's provision of legal protection to Gibraltar's other green gem, the Alameda Botanical Gardens.

In addition to implementing a holistic plan to re-invigorate the Upper Rock Nature Reserve, the Government has undertaken extensive work to restore the Northern Defences and Wellington Front. The Government's sensitivity to important Heritage issues is reflected in the winning of four Heritage Awards in 2017 alone, and one last year for the conversion of the old Royal Naval Hospital. But heritage is not just about buildings and sites, and for this reason the Government has abolished



fees for Gibraltarians to enter the Gibraltar Museum. Furthermore, this Government's work in Heritage has been recognised worldwide, and Gorham's Cave has been designated by none other than UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The opening of the new Gorham's Cave interpretation centre and viewing platform is just one example of how the Government is maximising both the heritage and tourism values of our investment in this area; a huge contrast to the GSD administration's misguided and short-sighted withdrawal of Gibraltar from the World Heritage Site qualification!

Under this Government the bill for a new Town Planning Act is almost ready for publication after extensive consultation, Development and Planning Commission meetings are public – the minutes of which are also publicly available – and the Government fully submits itself to all planning procedures as appropriate, for example as announced last week for the proposed Europa Walks project. After 16 years of GSD neglect, Government estates have either been refurbished or are currently under refurbishment, and the urban renewal of the Upper Town is well under way, breathing new life into long-forgotten areas.

The GSD seem to be blind not only to their own legacy that they left for Gibraltar, but as to how this Government has reversed that legacy for the better. Whilst this blindness leads them to a defensive stance of deflecting 'blame' the reality is that this Government has spent 6 years correcting the errors and making up for the excuses that the GSD left behind. In doing so, our holistic, sensitive and forward-looking approach to planning and development will create a better future than the GSD could ever have hoped to provide. In fact, this was recognised by both their current Party Leader and their current Leader of the Opposition when both were members of another political party. The GSD, as it stands, seem ignorant of their past, blind to the future and confused as to their own policies towards both!