



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Documenting Gibraltar's Changing Landscape over the past 150 years**

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January the Minister for Heritage and the Environment, Dr John Cortes, will introduce the latest in the Gibraltar Museum Lecture Series, a talk by Dr Keith Bensusan, describing a collaborative project between the Gibraltar Museum and the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, which was initiated when Dr Cortes was Director of the Botanic Gardens. In his introduction Dr Cortes will be revealing a new ambitious collaborative initiative between the two institutions.

The Rock Model, which is one of the main attractions of the Gibraltar Museum, was completed in 1868. The Gibraltar Museum is joining forces with the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens in an exciting new project that aims to document Gibraltar's changing landscape since the time of the completion of the model. The project commences in 2017 and aims to collate, describe and analyse a wide range of material with the view to its publication during the 150th Anniversary Year of the Rock Model's completion, in 2018.

Commenting on the project, Professor Clive Finlayson of the Gibraltar Museum said: "The past 150 years have seen many changes to Gibraltar's landscape. With two World Wars during this time, these changes have at times been dramatic. From the construction of the Dockyard, the erection of the water catchments and their subsequent removal, through land reclamation this is a remarkable story that the two institutions aim to record for posterity. Not all changes have been sudden and dramatic. Some species have disappeared due to the loss of vital components of the landscape, particularly the natural habitats of the isthmus. On the other hand, the years following the removal of goats from the Upper Rock led to the regeneration of the natural vegetation and this will be documented and quantified. All of us at the museum are excited about this project."

The project aims towards the generation of a number of products that will be of interest to the local public and also to visitors to the Rock. It is expected that these will include an exhibition and an illustrated book. The project also expects to produce teaching aids that will help educators in telling this remarkable story. It will employ 21st Century techniques to do so.

"The highly accurate Rock Model gives us a unique starting point which shows us what Gibraltar looked like in 1868" said Dr Keith Bensusan, Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens. "We have the exceptional opportunity of telling an amazing story of change and



transformation of the physical and natural environment of the Rock. My team at the gardens is looking forward to the challenge that the project presents”.

Recognising the unique opportunity which Gibraltar offers, the Gibraltar Museum and Gibraltar Botanic Gardens hope to produce a comprehensive study that can become a landmark in such studies. By combining forces and looking at the whole of Gibraltar as a landscape which combines the natural and the cultural, the two institutions are confident of the project’s success.

Minister for Heritage, Environment and Climate Dr John Cortes said, “I am very keen to support this project. I began work myself on Gibraltar’s changing landscapes when I was an undergraduate and was able to continue it in my previous occupation. This is a hugely exciting project that will say a great deal about how Gibraltar has developed and will help us all understand and appreciate Gibraltar’s heritage.”