



PRESS RELEASE

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GSD AGAINST FESTIVAL SUBSIDY FOR FAMILIES & YOUNG PEOPLE

The GSD Opposition have decided to embark on a nit-picking campaign against the music festival for reasons best known to themselves. This is exactly the same negative and destructive approach that they have adopted over the years across a number of policy areas in a desperate effort to make themselves relevant.

It needs to be pointed out that holding an annual music festival for our young people, and for the not so young, was a manifesto commitment of the GSLP/Liberals in 2011. This became the policy of the Government when we won the subsequent general election and a highly successful festival has taken place ever since. Members of the Opposition have attended the festival, at the invitation of the Government, for many years, including last year, without raising any kind of issue. The only sour grapes was uttered by Mr Clinton after he was elected where he was good enough to let it be known that he did not enjoy that kind of music anyway. This meant that handing back his invitation tickets was a hollow gesture. It is important to note that even then his Opposition colleagues have continued to attend, regardless.

No doubt if this were a violin concerto or the Royal Philharmonic, then Mr Clinton may well have kept silent. Everyone is entitled to their taste in music.

This year, however, the leader of the GSD has decided to pick on the music festival in a misguided and feeble attempt to boost his popularity and to make up for doing little else since he took over the reins of the party. He continues to display a remarkable lack of knowledge by asking the Government to publish the accounts of the festival. The Government ALREADY fully publishes details of all the revenue and expenditure that relates to the cost of the music festival. It is only the amounts that are subject to contractual commitments of confidentiality that are not published. This is normal in this kind of industry.

Moreover, in questioning the cost of the festival, what the GSD is really questioning is the fact that there is a Government subsidy which makes the event affordable for young people and families. It is this that have allowed ticket prices to remain low and accessible to the public. The logical extension of the views expressed by the GSD is that they would increase the cost of the tickets.

The normal way of fixing a ticket price is to look at cost and then ensure that the costs are covered by the prices of the number of tickets available for sale. The Government has not done that. We have fixed the price to ensure that the Festival is accessible to all in Gibraltar, regardless of the fact



that venue size and catchment area are smaller in Gibraltar than in other countries. We have in particular had in mind affordability for young people and for families. For that reason we have kept ticket prices well below the amount required to cover the cost of the Music Festival.

This is the responsible and socially-aware approach by the Government which applies now with the current arrangements with MTV as it applied previously with the former local organisers.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "The Music Festival was created by the GSLP/Liberal Government for young people in particular. We wanted it to be affordable and we have ensured that we have kept ticket prices down. The Festival has also become a great 'family event' for many and we have wanted to ensure that we keep the ticket price accessible enough that it can continue to be a family event. I am very pleased that people have now heard black upon white from the GSD that they would be putting ticket prices up massively. In fact, if the Music Festival is to be self financing as a commercially viable event, the prices would be more than double for the standard of acts that we have been able to attract to Gibraltar for the current and previous years.

The GSD cannot have it both ways. Their criticism can only mean that they will put up the prices or water down the quality of the acts.

I am not surprised. Mr Azopardi and the GSD did not bat an eyelid when they lost some £10 million on the doomed Theatre Royal project in which there was reckless abandonment and no regard for affordability. They lost more public money than any other Government in Gibraltar's history. This included un-paid loans they made in respect of the Cumberland developments.

With such a record of waste of taxpayers' money, the GSD should be the last people to complain when prices are kept low so that young people and families can enjoy this excellent annual event. In order to be consistent, GSD Opposition MPs should have some shame and agree to pay for the tickets they previously were happy to have for nothing.

It is curious to note that Mr Clinton and his colleagues have no qualms in accepting invitations to other types of events and concerts without the slightest hesitation. The fact that this one event has been singled out by them betrays their double standards and their political hypocrisy.

Over 8000 tickets were sold for the 2016 and 2017 editions of the festival and this year the figure is already close to that. Clearly nobody is interested in what Mr Azopardi has to say."