



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Chief Minister's New Year's Message 2019

My dear friends,

For many of us, today has been the first full day back at work after a peaceful and plentiful Christmas.

Our Jewish, Hindu and Muslim brethren have enjoyed similarly peaceful and plentiful Hanukkah, Diwali and Eid festivals respectively throughout the past year.

That is the fruit of the Gibraltarian respect and prosperity that so many generations have worked hard to create for our community.

Now, as we all return to work, to school and our daily routines after the Christmas and New Year break, we must prepare for a year that will bring us as many challenges as any other.

#### **BREXIT**

In some respects, the challenges we face this year as we leave the European Union will be greater than they have been for some time.

They will shape many generations to come.

But we should not be daunted by these challenges.

For we will succeed despite them.

Just as the evacuation, referendum and closed frontier generations did.

I am determined that we will get right the choices we have to make this year.

I am determined that our work will lead to more and greater opportunities for prosperity for our people and the whole region in the future.



That is the determined work that the Brexit team, that I lead with the Deputy Chief Minister, has delivered by ensuring that Gibraltar is included in the Withdrawal Agreement, if there is to be one.

That was the responsible thing to do.

It is what our bilateral agreements with the UK guarantee.

In fact, the whole of the Ministerial Team in Cabinet has been involved in preparing for the separate logistical challenges that Brexit poses – with or without a deal.

Importantly, we have also been preparing for the opportunities that Brexit can bring.

Again, that is the responsible thing to do.

These are not opportunities that we craved or thought worth leaving the European Union for.

But they are opportunities we are duty bound to pursue now to ensure that we make the most of this situation that we have not chosen.

Now we must also ramp up the implementation of preparations for a departure from the EU without a deal.

Because, although many of us might wish that Brexit is somehow stopped by a second referendum or an outright rescission of the Article 50 notification, we must now be ready for any eventuality.

And we will be.

Because that is the responsible thing to do.

But, at the same time, we must also start negotiations, as part of the UK family, for our future relationship with the EU.

The political and geographic reality is that this will in effect recast our relationship with Spain, our immediate EU neighbour.

As usual, we will approach such negotiations in good faith but with a healthy dose of scepticism.

And we will always be vigilant to ensure that there is no encroachment whatsoever on our sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over Gibraltar in any such negotiations.

That is how we successfully negotiated our participation in the Withdrawal Agreement.

And it is how we will deal with negotiations in respect of the future arrangements with the EU.

But I want to be crystal clear again about one thing.



No one should interpret our massive vote in favour of remaining in the EU as suggesting that we will be prepared to compromise on sovereignty.

If anyone in Spain, in any part of the political spectrum, believes that we will ever compromise on our sovereignty they are wrong.

The concept of Joint Sovereignty or any dilution of our sovereignty is a DEAD DUCK.

It's as DEAD AS A DODO.

If anyone seriously thinks they can advance the concept of Joint Sovereignty, they are flogging a DEAD HORSE.

They should not waste breath talking such nonsense.

They should not waste ink writing such nonsense.

Neither through threats nor inducements will we ever waiver.

Brexit changes nothing in this respect.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR**

And our Public Sector and Civil Service is an important part of our resilience in dealing with any eventuality which Brexit will throw at us.

The Civil Service alone has been strengthened and bolstered by growth of almost 20% in the time I have been Chief Minister.

Public Sector pay in Gibraltar has risen by more than in the UK in each year since I have been Chief Minister, exceeding parity.

That demonstrates the Government's stated respect, support and commitment to the Service and to the Public Sector generally.

It is nonetheless important that all of us who draw salaries paid by the taxpayer should remain committed to efficiency.

But that is not coded language for cuts or austerity.

I do not believe in austerity, which in my view hurts working people more than any others.

But I do believe in efficiency.

Additionally, and as I committed to do in May of last year, we will be ending the use of agency workers in the Civil Service and reviewing the rules governing such contracts.



We will also introduce a Bill for new rights for workers to be enrolled for compulsory pensions in the private sector.

And a Bill for the recognition of Trade Unions in the work place.

We will also continue to review how we train our young people for jobs based on learning skills they need.

A more modern system of the old “apprenticeships”.

## **PUBLIC FINANCES**

And what we have now demonstrated repeatedly is that our spending on public services is carefully and properly calibrated.

We have enjoyed healthy surpluses year on year.

This year we will have spent on important new facilities for our community in education, health, sports and housing.

That is investing in our future generations and guaranteeing economic growth.

But at the same time, I am confident that the Budget for next year will once again show very healthy public finances.

Our economy and our public finances are strong.

And we will continue to grow & prosper this year also, despite the many challenges ahead.

That is what, we, the Gibraltarians, have repeatedly shown we are capable of!

## **OTHER AREAS**

In fact, this year, we can also all look forward to some very positive moments too.

The Island Games return to us in July.

Fabulous new sporting facilities that will completely recast sport in Gibraltar will be ready by then.

These new facilities are literally a game changer for all our sports.

They are being diligently overseen by Steven Linares.

Our sports facilities will be second to none as a result of this investment.



New schools are already coming on stream.

Notre Dame was delivered last year.

A new St Martin's and two new Comprehensive schools will be delivered this year.

The new Bishop Fitzgerald and the new Governor's Meadow will see work commence this year also.

Tonight I can also announce, that the Government has started negotiations to seek to deliver a new St Mary's School as its current home in Town Range is becoming challenging to manage.

All of these are being delivered through the tenacity and commitment of John Cortes.

John will also deliver a new power station and LNG storage facility, which are both already in trials.

He will also oversee the start of work on a sewage treatment plant this year.

Work on the new affordable homes will also start this year.

Already over 1,500 applications have been received for the 600 homes on the Eastside Reclamation.

Make sure you get your application in before the end of the month.

Two new estates will be marketed before the summer.

We will also complete sales to Gibraltar families on the purchase of the ex-MoD properties.

These projects are being carefully and successfully overseen by Housing Minister Samantha Sacramento.

In the health service, a new paediatric Primary Care Centre will be ready before the summer.

This is going to be a hugely important step forward that we will deliver in the care of our most precious - our children.

And at the same, a new Primary Care Centre for the adults will be completed during the course of this year as part of the St Bernard's complex at Europort.

All of this, together with other innovations in our health services, is being driven by the selflessly determined Neil Costa.

Neil has shown his boundless commitment to delivering these new facilities for our people as Minister for Health.

New traffic and parking arrangements will be made to accommodate these new facilities.



These will be just some of the new parking facilities and arrangements coming on stream this year.

Additionally a more expansive road-resurfacing programme will come into effect.

Paul Balban is delivering on these solutions, unbowed by the criticism of the few as he progresses the transport and parking plan that is designed to improve the lives of many.

And internationally, Albert Isola and Gilbert Licudi continue to promote Gibraltar incessantly in their respective areas.

Albert as a jurisdiction for business in financial services, gaming and as the world's premier jurisdiction for crypto currencies and DLT Block Chain regulation.

Gilbert as a tourist destination and as the premier port in the Mediterranean for admiralty services and bunkering.

Both have travelled around the globe marketing our products and services to make sure that we continue to attract business to our shores despite our impending departure from the EU.

And Sir Joe Bossano continues to plan for Gibraltar's economic development as we leave the EU.

In the same way as he planned for the successful repositioning from dependence on MOD spending, Sir Joe is confident of our economic future beyond membership of the EU and its single market.

## **ELECTION**

And 2019 will be an election year in which I am looking forward to be judged on our track record in Government so far.

We have all worked diligently to deliver a growing and prosperous Gibraltar.

We have work to do still this year.

And I sincerely believe that we have built and are building strong foundations for our future since the last election.

And that we are delivering on our key commitments.

And this despite the drain on our time and human resources that Brexit has necessarily represented.

What I can tell you is that there will not be a General Election before the 29th of March this year.

We have to concentrate on getting Brexit right.



It would be irresponsible of me to call an election when we should be preparing for our exit.

And I will never put partisan advantage over the national interest of Gibraltar as a whole.

I therefore hope that the other political parties in Gibraltar will allow us to work constructively towards the final departure of the UK and Gibraltar from the EU.

With Brexit on the near horizon and an election looming, it is going to be an exciting political year.

And rest assured, it will be a successful year for our nation.

My team of Ministers will work to deliver that success.

With humility and all the ability and energy I can muster, I will work to ensure that success.

We will continue to deliver economic growth.

And our Nation will be prouder, stronger and fairer at the end of 2019.

That is my commitment to you.

And so, as we start the work of this Brexit and election year,

on behalf of my wife Justine and our children, Sebastian, Oliver and Valentina.

and on behalf of all of my ministerial colleagues and their families.

Let me wish you all a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2019.

Thank you and

Goodnight.