

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 80/2006
3 July 2006

The announcement by the Government on Friday that they intend to target tourists directly in the Costa del Sol would indicate that they are concerned, as they should be, at the continuing drop in coach arrivals to Gibraltar.

The Opposition has for many years pointed to the drop in coaches and coach passengers visiting Gibraltar. The assessment of the Opposition has been based on the figures provided by the Government itself.

The campaign announced by the Government on Friday is a belated attempt to arrest the drop in coaches and recover the position in that sector of the tourist market so that the numbers go up.

The latest figures show that the number of tourist coaches coming into Gibraltar has fallen by about 1000 coaches a year since the year 2000. There were 14763 coaches in 2000 and only 9805 in 2005. The number of coaches last year was the lowest and lower than the number for 1996.

The same can be said for coach visitor arrivals, who are the number of persons in coaches. This figure fell from 528,228 in 2000 to 349,345 in 2005. There has been a drop of 34% in the number of persons and 33% in the number of coaches in that period. In the first four months of 2006, we are already 155 coaches down compared to the same period in 2005.

During his recent budget contribution in the House of Assembly, the Minister with responsibility for Tourism Joe Holliday said that the Government did not attach importance to the drop in coach arrivals.

The latest marketing campaign in the Costa del Sol is in flat contradiction with the statement made by the Minister to the House of Assembly. Given that they attach no importance to the drop in coach arrivals, the Government has not explained why they have just launched a billboard and press campaign, a leaflet distribution in all major hotels on the Costa and a destination presentation for tour operators. These actions suggest that the drop in coach arrivals is important, and that the Minister tried to minimise this importance at budget time.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Trade and Industry, with responsibility for tourism, Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“It does not make any sense. If the Government do not attach any importance to the drop in coach arrivals, as they said in the budget, then instead of spending money on this they should be spending it on another area of tourism which they think is important.”

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