

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 33/2007
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The Opposition consider that the manner in which the Government has handled the proposals to construct a concrete plant on the East Side is an absolute scandal. This follows the publication last week of an application for a trade license for such a plant this time at the old aerial farm site in Devil's Tower Road.

The company that has applied for the trade license, Solidmix Ltd, is linked to the developers OEM and the application is "to import, supply and sell concrete aggregates and all materials and plant necessary and/or ancillary to such operation."

It will be recalled that the Minister for Trade and Industry told Parliament that OEM had been granted a license over a site at the base of the talus slope near Catalan Bay for the purposes of the construction of a concrete plant. It is therefore very peculiar, to say the least, that the trade license application that has now been published mentions the old aerial farm at Eastern Beach as the site for the plant.

In answer to parliamentary questions from both the Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano and Shadow Trade and Industry Minister Dr Joseph Garcia Mr Holliday made no mention of the aerial farm at Eastern Beach in connection with this project.

It is clear from the trade license application that the company intend to sell the concrete to other developments and not just to use them on the projects which are controlled by OEM. The Minister gave the impression in Parliament that this was a matter for future negotiations. It is clearly one issue to own and operate a plant for the supply of concrete internally, and it is another completely different proposition to establish a commercial operation to sell that concrete to others.

There are also very serious issues which arise in relation to the manner in which the Government is allocating public land to developers. The last the public knew, OEM had been given a license over the site at Catalan Bay. Now, with no prior warning, the aerial farm at Eastern Beach is the subject of an application by the same people for the construction of a concrete batching plant. There has been no explanation whatsoever as to how a plant which was supposed to be located in one particular plot of land may now materialise on a completely different site some distance away.

This simply transfers the problem from the users of Catalan Bay to the users of Eastern Beach.

The location of the plant will also have the same negative consequences for traffic, as cement lorries will still have to make their way from one end of Gibraltar to another as the main OEM projects are in the south district.

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

“This is yet another example of the lack of foresight and planning on the part of this Government. Every decision that they take appears to be ad hoc and reacting to events, and not the result of a long or medium term strategy or plan. It is also absolutely appalling that different plots of land should be dished out to developers in such a cavalier manner.

It will be recalled that at one point it was Government policy to move heavy industry away from Devil’s Tower Road. Now they want to put a concrete plant there. What Gibraltar needs is for the new development plan to be published once and for all so that everyone can establish what the policy of the Government actually is.”

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