

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION**

74/2007 18 July 2007

The continued closure of Dudley Ward Tunnel by the Government is contributing to the traffic chaos that now affects Gibraltar practically on a daily basis. This is now compounded further in the summer months with increased traffic to and from the beaches on the eastern side of the Rock.

It will be recalled that the tunnel was closed in February 2002 after a tragic accident. The fact that it still remains closed in 2007 is a reflection of poor forward planning on the part of Government and their inability to get to grips with the chaotic traffic situation that motorists face on a daily basis.

There is no doubt that had Dudley Ward tunnel been open by this summer, it would have alleviated the gridlock that the north of Gibraltar faces on a daily basis. People going to work and to the airport in their cars, merge at this time of the year with traffic heading for Eastern Beach, Catalan Bay and Sandy Bay. The result of this is a traffic jam of nightmare proportions. This is complicated further for the motorist by delays at the border and tailbacks caused by civilian aircraft or military exercises.

The re-opening of Dudley Ward Tunnel is an issue that the Opposition have been calling on the Government to tackle for a long time and on which the Government have blown hot and cold depending on when they were pressed. When they told us in 2005 that the cost of works to re-open the tunnel was estimated at £4.6 million, there was no indication from the Government as to when it would open. It will be recalled that at the time of the Rosia Tanks controversy, the Government suggested that heavy lorries for the building projects there might be able to use the tunnels to avoid causing traffic jams elsewhere. Everyone in Gibraltar knows that this has not happened.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Transport issues Lucio Randall said:

“In the budget for 2006/2007 the Government estimated spending £250,000 in that financial year in respect of Dudley Ward Tunnel access safety works. There was a further balance to complete the project of £ 5.3 million. The latest Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for this financial year show that only the £ 250,000 was spent last year in relation to Dudley Ward Tunnel and that the total estimate for this year is only £ 1.5 million, so it is not clear whether the Government intend to open the tunnel in this financial year or not.”

“It should be obvious by now that a project of this nature which can decongest traffic to our beaches by providing an alternative route from north to south and vice versa should have been awarded a higher priority by the Government. The Government have moved at snail’s pace on this issue since 2002 and in the meantime Gibraltar has ground to a standstill on a daily basis as traffic flow collapses.

It is deplorable that the Government should have money to spend on less important issues and yet at the same time continue to subject the long suffering motorist to a totally unacceptable and unnecessary level of chaos,” said Mr Randall.

ENDS