

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

77/2007 24 July 2007

The response by Ocean Village to the statement issued by the Opposition on Monday will not serve to allay the concerns of traders in Main Street who are worried about the competition that this will bring.

The latest Tourist Expenditure figures released by the Government show that the expenditure in Gibraltar by tourists from Spain actually went down last year from what it had been in 2005. Excursionists from Spain spent £ 167 million in Gibraltar on 2006, and they spent £169 million in 2005.

In other words, contrary to what Ocean Village has said, the evidence available indicates that the provision of extra shops and restaurants does not necessarily lead to an increase in expenditure by tourists from Spain. Indeed, the Government figures show that excursionists from Spain spent £ 160 million in 1996, when compared to £ 167 million ten years later in 2006. This increase of just over 4% in ten years is a decrease in real terms and when inflation over that decade is taken into account. It is obvious that the same cake is being shared between more businesses.

It may well be that Ocean Village believe that they are doing something so different that they will not attract customers away from existing businesses. This remains to be tested. The evidence over the past ten years is that all that will happen is that customers will shift from one part of Gibraltar to another. For example, when the coach park was located in the Queensway area, it is well known that traders at the southern end of Main Street were doing better. The move of the coach park to its present location meant that businesses in the northern end of Main Street did better, but this was at the expense of those at the southern end. The opening of the restaurants in Casemates had the same effect on restaurants elsewhere in town.

Therefore on the basis of past evidence, traders in Main Street and elsewhere have every reason to be concerned.

The impression that Ocean Village give in their statement is that they are being very generous and kind-hearted by sharing THEIR waterfront with the people of Gibraltar. This is a very distorted idea of whose country this is, who the soil of Gibraltar belongs to, and who is the guest. The developers must learn that all of Gibraltar belongs to its people including the waterfront, and that it is not that Gibraltar is in Ocean Village but rather that Ocean Village is in Gibraltar. In any case, sunsets and waterfronts have existed here since time immemorial, long before Ocean Village appeared on the scene.

The notion that more people will want to come to Gibraltar by coach because they will be able to walk through from the back of Watergardens to Marina Bay is completely absurd. Tourists come to Gibraltar to see its rich history, heritage, the Upper Rock and to shop. It is well known that the shopping time that is available after taking a Rock Tour is very limited, and Main Street

traders have often complained that day trippers do not spend enough time there.

It is perfectly logical to assume that the shops and cafes in Ocean Village will compete with those in Main Street and elsewhere, given that there are a limited number of tourists with a limited number of hours and minutes of time to spend in Gibraltar. This is why the concern exists.

It is well known that Ocean Village and its associated companies already own a large part of Gibraltar, through purchases and through planning permission and tenders granted by the Government. However, they should realise that they do not own the Opposition and we will remain free to express our own views, and those of our constituents, on development and other issues as it is our duty and our obligation to do as Parliamentarians.

ENDS