

Opposition Press Release 126 / 2008 – APE KILLINGS CONFIRMED :
IPPL VINDICATED

The Opposition has been able to independently confirm that the GSD Government has actioned its policy of killing apes. These killings are evidence of the GSD Government's failure to properly manage the ape population and confirms the statements made by Helen Thirlway of the IPPL.

The public will now be in a better position to understand exactly the meaning of the refusal by the GSD Minister for the Environment, Mr Britto, to confirm or deny in Parliament or to the media whether he had authorised the further killing of apes.

Given that the IPPL had actually found a location for the apes to be transferred to, it is clear that the killings have gone ahead not "as a last resort" as the Minister had told Parliament would be the case. There was clearly an alternative to the killing, namely taking up the IPPL's offer for the relocation of the apes which also would provide for future ape management solutions. The killings have taken place only because Government would not accept the IPPL's requirements for the relocation and not as a "last resort". The statement by Minister Britto in Parliament has therefore clearly had the effect of misleading the Parliament and - in the government's later references to it - the media and the public.

To make matters worse, the killings have not in any way cured the problems being experienced by tenants of areas where the apes are roaming after being attracted by open rubbish dumps. These continue not to be enclosed and the government's failure to take action as simple as enclosing the rubbish dumps demonstrates that the GSD are just unable to act quickly even in providing simple and necessary solutions to the everyday problems being experienced by people.

In the circumstances the Government's unprecedented fury in its attack on Ms Thirlway is no more than an attempt to create a smokescreen to hide Mr Britto's continued killing of mammals that are most closely identified with Gibraltar. This is especially the case when we use the image of the apes to promote Gibraltar as the government did this very weekend at the Lord Mayors Parade in London, whilst secretly killing the apes on the Rock.

Shadow Minister for the Environment, Fabian Picardo, said:

"I find the statement of the Government to be entirely in keeping with the GSD approach to avoid accepting that it has acted in an unacceptable manner as a result of its own inability to put in place a proper ape management programme. As for the suggestion that anything that Helen Thirlway has said might be libellous, that simply is further bluster on the part of the Government. Ms Thirlway is entirely entitled to her opinion as to the manner in which the GSD acts to protect the interest of wealthy property developers and nothing that she has said is in our opinion defamatory or libellous. I am sure that Helen Thirlway will have no difficulty whatsoever defeating any libel action which the Government might foolishly decide to commence against her. Ms Thirlway should nevertheless have little fear of such empty threats from the Government and should continue her sterling work in defence of Gibraltar's apes. We are committed to working with both our home grown (and world class) experts in their field and with the IPPL in putting in place an effective ape management programme that does away with the need to kill any more apes. Ironically, Mr Britto has issued his press release attempting to intimidate Helen Thirlway into silence in the same week that he has said that – despite twelve and a half years of GSD Government in which to act - Gibraltar's tourist product needs to be improved. Perhaps Mr

Britto should start that work by thinking of alternatives to killing more of our apes which are recognised as our greatest tourist attraction. Until then, this episode will go down in our history as one of the most shameful instances of a government trying to rely on a claim of “national interest” to avoid its own shortcomings.”

ENDS.