

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Opposition reject the latest violent outburst by the Government on the issue of the service charges for Waterport Terraces. Mr Caruana hits the roof every time that the Opposition point out the failings of his Government. It is clear that he thinks he is infallible and above criticism. The truth is that he has nothing left to offer the people of Gibraltar except insults and empty promises.

The issue of Waterport Terraces is a prime example of this. The Government took years to react to the need that existed for this kind of housing. The purchasers have had to endure delay after delay and broken promise after broken promise. It will be recalled that during the general election campaign the Government gave purchasers unrealistic completion dates and dangled the carrot of compensation.

Once the election was over, the completion dates were not met and the purchasers discovered that the compensation for the extra costs incurred in relation to bridging loans was not going to be universal. Mr Caruana and his Government therefore have no moral authority to lecture anyone about Waterport Terraces. The Government, on this and on many other issues, have behaved in singularly dishonourable and unethical manner.

The point made by the Opposition about the service charges is that for many purchasers, against the background of delay and disappointment, this has been like rubbing salt into the wound. It is obvious to anyone who takes a walk around the project that, for the ordinary layman, this is still a building site. People are perfectly entitled to take the view that they should not be charged service charges for living in a building site or that the initial service charges are too high. This is a democracy and freedom of speech means that persons can hold a different opinion to the Government and be able to freely express it.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Housing Charles Bruzon said:

“The plain fact is that there is a serious human dimension to the Waterport Terraces issue which the Government does not seem to care about and this worries me. In the light of the delays, there are people who have had to rent accommodation, to move in with relatives and to pay the bridging loan at the same time. Now they have to make provision for service charges as well in the run-up to Christmas. This has created hardship of immeasurable proportions. In addition to this, the Opposition is also very concerned that the delays have affected Albert Risso House for senior citizens, which will be the last one to be completed, although this has been less well publicised.

I do not propose to respond to the unwarranted personal attacks that Mr Caruana has made on me or my colleagues, suffice it to say that he will have to answer to his conscience for his words and his actions. Mr Caruana must realize that he is dealing with real people and not with numbers or statistics. The stress, tension and suffering that he has put these people through is unforgivable.”

ENDS