

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION  
75/2008**

**29 July 2008**

The Opposition has been informed that the Upper Rock descended into total chaos this morning as a result of traffic congestion which resulted in gridlock with traffic coming to a standstill for long periods.

This was caused by a combination of taxis, coaches and private cars and was compounded by the presence of a cruise liner in Port. The situation became so bad that at one point desperate drivers who were tired of waiting were trying to reverse back down to the Upper Rock entrance.

The Opposition understands that even without the traffic chaos, there are serious shortcomings affecting the ability of the fire brigade to deal with a fire in the Upper Rock. There are a whole range of issues like storage tanks for water not being properly maintained, not enough water pressure at hydrants without having to be laid on at short notice and firebreaks are not being kept as clear of vegetation as they should be.

The Opposition considers that the blame lies squarely on the Government. We have long urged the Government to invest more in the Upper Rock and we have a long-standing policy commitment that money raised in revenue through Upper Rock entrance fees should be spent to improve the area. This is normally

in the region of £3 million a year. However, the Government, instead of spending more on the Upper Rock, has actually cut projected spending for this financial year.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Tourism with responsibility for the Upper Rock Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The irony is that Parliament has been voting money for Upper Rock improvements and the Government has not been spending it. In 2006/2007 Parliament voted £650,000 of which only £284,000 was spent. In 2007/2008 Parliament voted £500,000 of which £320,000 was used up. The last straw is that only £25,000 has been earmarked for the Upper Rock Tourist Sites in the current financial year. This is not good enough.

There is a serious risk that in the event of an accident or a fire the emergency services will be unable to access the Upper Rock and the paying public, residents or employees will not be able to get out quickly. This suggests that the time may well have come for the Government to take more drastic action before it is too late.”

ENDS