

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The traffic chaos that motorists are subjected to along Devil's Tower Road on a daily basis is a reflection of the poor planning and organisation of the Government in not having opened Dudley Ward tunnel years ago. The opening of the tunnel would have provided an alternative route to and from the east-side of Gibraltar through which motorists could have avoided the bottle-neck which forms near the sun-dial roundabout.

The situation has now been compounded further by the road works taking place in Devil's Tower Road in order to convert it into the main access road to Spain. The Government, with proper planning, should have opened the tunnel first, in order to have provided an alternative route for vehicular traffic long before this new project started.

It will be recalled that Dudley Ward tunnel closed in February 2002 following a tragic accident. The Government has since been going round in circles in relation to this project. As far back as 2003, the Government said that a consultant had been appointed and a preferred solution had been identified. This remained the position for years with little or no progress. The project finally then moved on to the tender process and tenders were invited and received only in March of last year. After all that time, this original tender was then reappraised. In the meantime, the Government decided to use the site as a dumping ground for rubble.

The Government then decided not to proceed with the project as it was originally designed and instead decided, seven years later, to divide the project into three separate packages each of which would have to be individually tendered for. The first was for the erection of rock fall catch fences, the second for demolitions and earthworks and the third for the construction of a rock-fall canopy and road.

When the issue was last raised in Parliament by Shadow Traffic Minister Gilbert Licudi, the Government advised that the tunnel was now expected to open in July 2010, 14 months after the start of works. It goes without saying that had works started sooner the project would have been completed sooner and the Government would have saved everyone a great deal of trouble and inconvenience in the process. The Government have also spent over £1 million in moving the rubble which had been dumped in the area.

It is obvious that the Government have not given any priority to this project over the years and that instead they have preferred to allow the long suffering motorist to sit in traffic jams as they travel from the south of Gibraltar to the north or vice versa. While an open tunnel may not have eliminated all the traffic jams it would certainly have alleviated the tailbacks along Devil's Tower Road that we have witnessed once again throughout the summer and to this day.

The delay in re-opening Dudley Ward tunnel will stand as testimony to the political mismanagement and incompetence of the GSD. They have given more importance to building a new air terminal, at an astronomical cost, rather than

giving priority to re-opening a vital part of Gibraltar's only ring-road for use by the local community.
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