

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

164/2009

30 November 2009

The Opposition continue to receive complaints from local anglers who are unable to fish because most of the limited space available is taken up by anglers from across the border. There have been cases where just one of these anglers takes up a wide area of seafront by placing nine or ten fishing rods in a row.

The Opposition has raised this issue both inside and outside Parliament on a number of occasions. In 2005 the Government told Parliament in answer to questions from Opposition spokesman Dr Joseph Garcia that it was not in our culture to require people to get a license in order to fish, even though there were organisations in Gibraltar pushing for this to happen. However, they added that the situation was constantly under review and it may be that at some stage a licensing system may be the option pursued.

Three years later, in 2008, the Government was still considering the introduction of legislation to regulate the activities of anglers in all of Gibraltar's shoreline. Parliament was told that this included issues like the number of rods, size of fish and the location to fish from. The Government then said that it was not an easy problem to solve because as Community nationals "the visiting Spanish anglers have the same rights as the Gibraltar angler. So any restrictions that are imposed on a visiting Spanish angler, de facto is imposed on the local angler." This was an argument that the Opposition rejected at the time.

Later on in 2008, again in answer to questions from Dr Garcia, the Government said that they had still not completed their consideration of the introduction of legislation to regulate the activity of anglers in all of Gibraltar's shoreline.

The problem is that while the Government have spent four years with the question under review, it is now 2009 and the situation has continued to worsen for local anglers as the message spreads in Spain that we have a free for all in Gibraltar. There are some people coming from as far as Malaga and Granada to fish here, some spending the whole weekend fishing and sleeping in their cars. To make matters worse, there are many visiting anglers who do not clean up after themselves when they leave and rubbish of different kinds is often left behind all over the place.

There are areas of Gibraltar which have almost become the exclusive domain of non-resident anglers and where the unfair practice of using more than two or three fishing rods per person is prevalent. This includes Camp Bay, Little Bay, Europa Point, the seafront in the Waterport Terraces area, the Eastside reclamation area and Rosia Bay itself. The basic problem is that there are too many people wanting to fish and too little available seafront from which to do so.

The Opposition is also concerned that there may well be an incident between local and visiting anglers when the latter refuse to remove some of their fishing rods in order to make space. The Government have been reviewing the matter, considering the legislation and looking into it since 2005. It is about time that their words translated into action before something more serious happens.

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