

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

22/2010

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The announcement of the development of Europa Point for the third time in seven years will evoke feelings of déjà vu in everyone who has followed the history of this project. The plain fact is that under the Government's previous announcement, the Europa Point project should have been completed in November 2008 and not fifteen months from now in 2011.

It will be recalled that in the budget of 2003, the Government announced that the Europa Point project would be the main one to be carried out that year. They said at the time many of the same things that came to be repeated again in 2007 and yet again now in 2010. Their intention seven years ago was also to "develop a picnic and leisure area, improve the Mound and create a new car parking to accommodate visitors to the area." In 2003 the Government stated that this would be "the first stage of a larger project which will take in the whole area of Europa Point, and make it a 'must see' stop for every visitor to Gibraltar."

Despite the commitment entered into in 2003, there was very little movement and just before the 2007 general elections the Government announced the same project yet again. This time large signs were placed at Europa Point indicating that work on the site was due to start in January 2008. This did not happen and the signs were quietly taken down some time after the general elections were over. The Government published a list of 20 different points in relation to the project at the time.

The majority of the 20 points published in 2007 were repeated again in the latest Government announcement of last week which listed 15 measures most of which had already been announced before. Given this repetition, it is not clear why the Government should say that they "have given much consideration to the scheme for Europa Point" when all they have done now is to largely copy what they had already said before. Indeed, even this comment is itself similar to what said in 2007 when they also said that the "scheme for Europa Point has been under consideration for some time...."

In the financial year 2007/2008 Parliament voted £1 million pounds towards the refurbishment of Europa Point of which only about a third was spent. In 2008/2009 a nominal £1000 was voted and nothing was spent and in the current financial year 2009/2010 the nominal £1000 was voted again.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for development and planning Dr Joseph Garcia said:

"Those residents and others who have been pressing for improvements to the area of Europa Point will consider this to be third time lucky. Clearly, if the Government felt that this project was so important in 2003, then it is obviously long overdue. It was promised as the "main project" of 2003 and it was promised again in 2007 just before the general election with works to start in January 2008.

The plain fact is that the Government have misled the public twice on this issue. Presumably this time the Government will be desperate to get it done, as a vote catching exercise, in order not to face the criticism when the next general election comes round that they have been promising the same thing again and again for over seven years.

ENDS