

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION**

50/2010

22 April 2010

The Government could have saved itself considerable time and trouble had it acted earlier to regulate the activities of anglers in Gibraltar. The Opposition has warned for many years that the situation was dangerously close to flashpoint given that non-resident anglers from Spain have been abusing the existing position.

The news that local anglers were told to go away from a local fishing site because a Spanish angling club was organising a competition there has only served to inflame further an already tense situation. This followed the recent broadcast of a television programme on a Spanish regional television station precisely about angling which, to add insult to injury, was actually filmed in Gibraltar itself.

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. They also advised that the situation was under review. When the Government were questioned again three years later, in 2008, Parliament was told that they were still considering the introduction of legislation to regulate the activities of anglers in all of Gibraltar's coastline. They also made the extraordinary claim that the problem was a difficult one to solve because "the visiting Spanish anglers have the same rights as the Gibraltarian angler. So any restrictions that are imposed on a visiting Spanish angler, de facto, is imposed on the local angler."

At the last meeting of Parliament in February Dr Garcia again pressed the Government on the issue. After years of doing very little, the Government confirmed at this meeting that it was their policy to regulate the activity of anglers and that legislation was currently under consideration.

It is well known that there are parts of Gibraltar that have become the virtual domain of non-resident anglers from Spain. The Opposition has been highlighting the issue over many years as local anglers and residents of some of these areas have come to us with their complaints. There are cases when they come to fish from as far afield as Malaga or even Granada, they leave all their mess behind and have no regard whatsoever for other users or even residents of the area. This has happened frequently in the area of the lighthouse. In many of these cases the non-resident anglers tend to occupy a large area of sea-front by using a large number of fishing rods. Indeed, the Opposition highlighted a case in Parliament a few years ago of one such angler using 28 fishing rods on the east-side reclamation area.

It is totally unacceptable that such an important issue as protecting our fisheries should have been neglected for so long and that despite the obvious need to act, the Government

should still be at the stage of studying the matter before deciding what to do. If they are not careful, before they make up their minds there will be no fish left!