

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

**64/2010**

**18 May 2010**

The situation facing ambulances from Gibraltar when carrying out patient transfers in Spain needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency following the fine imposed by the Guardia Civil on a Gibraltar ambulance last week. It is not good enough to expect the drivers of such ambulances to carry enough money to pay the fine in the event that there should be a repetition of the incident.

The Opposition considers that this is a serious matter which has the potential to affect the service being provided to patients and their well-being. It is totally unacceptable that patients and ambulance crews should be at the mercy of the Guardia Civil over such a petty matter as the colour of the flashing beacon lights used by ambulances from Gibraltar.

The Opposition understands that in the event of a serious hold up, which in theory can even lead to the confiscation of an ambulance until the fine has been paid, the advice is that a Spanish ambulance should be called to the scene to continue with the patient transfer. This can only serve to cause undue delay to the patient and will add to the stress and anxiety which is already normal in such a situation.

Given that Gibraltar ambulances come from a different country and are entering Spain for a specific purpose, and that our regulations are clearly different to theirs, this is an issue over which greater understanding and flexibility would have been welcome. The fact that the Guardia Civil decided to fine the ambulance because its beacon lights were flashing blue instead of orange shows a complete lack of common sense and is beyond belief.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Health Minister Neil Costa said:

“The Opposition take a very serious view of last week’s incident because the welfare of the patient could have been adversely affected. The ambulance crews and nursing staff need the security and peace of mind to know that they can operate professionally in Spain without the risk of being interfered with or fined by the Guardia Civil . The matter must be resolved in a way in which there is a guarantee that there will not be a repetition of the incident.”