



PRESS RELEASE

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Fishing Incursions are down

Enforcement of the law remains the responsibility of the Royal Gibraltar Police and is at its discretion, although Environmental Protection Officers (EPOs), who do not have full enforcement powers, are increasingly involved in monitoring and challenging illegal activities – usually with considerable success. EPOs regularly challenge vessels, commercial and otherwise, and on most occasions these move away.

The GSD need to remind themselves that this Unit was never even contemplated in their day, when instead they made an agreement that allowed Spanish fishermen to fish with impunity with the clear implication and implicit understanding that the law did not apply to them. They were even told how many boats were allowed and where. This made the GSD Government clearly complicit.

Police statistics show that in fact fishing incursions are well down on previous years. Between January and the end of April 2015 there were a total of 66 fishing incursions, an average of 16.5 per month, whereas in the same period this year there were 46, down to 11.5 per month. Indeed, other than an increase in 2013, interestingly occurring *before* the creation of the NW artificial reef, overall figures are generally lower, as the following table shows:

Total number of fishing incursions:

	Annual total	Average for year
2012	318	26.5
2013	527	43.9
2014	215	17.9
2015	192	16
2016*		11.5

*2016 average is for the first four months



Since January 2015 until the present, despite Trevor Hammond's sensationalist implication, there has only been one instance in which a Guardia Civil vessel was in proximity to a Spanish fishing vessel, and that was a pot-fishing vessel, not a raker or net fisherman.

Mr Hammond seeks to create trouble in other ways too. It is totally untrue that the law is being enforced against local and not Spanish fishermen. There have been no recent prosecutions under the Marine Protection Regulations against any locals, who have mainly embraced the new law and are complying. In fact, there was recent prosecution of a Spanish national who broke the Tuna Preservation Regulations. Tuna fishing is in any case a totally different practice to commercial or other recreational fishing, as it is regulated by an international treaty (ICCAT) the provisions of which have been applied to Gibraltar as good practice expected of a nation with credible international environmental credentials.

The Marine Regulations have in fact been welcomed by the vast majority of anglers and other users of the sea in Gibraltar. Indeed 3922 licences have been issued to date.

Many conservation measures, such as reef creation, including the Sandy Bay reef and sunken vessels as well as the north-west artificial reef, marine conservation zones, and other improvements to the marine environment are all helping marine life around Gibraltar. The increased frequency of observation of whales and other marine life in the area, as well as the increase in occurrence of some species of fish in our waters is likely not a coincidence. Local fishermen will also be the main beneficiaries of these measures.

Indeed, Trevor himself accepts that the artificial reef has successfully regenerated marine life. This is one of the aims of the fishing report that he himself says, almost in the same sentence, has been ignored! Mr Hammond is reacting to social media items without doing any research whatsoever, and, typical of the GSD, is once again trying to give Gibraltar a bad name.

Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes, commented, "Never before has so much been done for the marine environment in Gibraltar: even Trevor has had to admit that. Tremendous progress has been made, although as ever, I am the first to say that there is more to do. And, working with all those stakeholders who genuinely share my vision of increased marine life for the benefit of all, do it we will."