



PRESS RELEASE

No: 47/2016

Date: 5th February 2016

Victoria Stadium Belongs to the Whole Community

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar's policy on Victoria Stadium was made clear in the manifesto voted for by almost 70% of the electorate. The current policy is consistent with that which was being pursued as far back as May 2013 when Opposition Members Mr Feetham and Mr Reyes asked Parliamentary questions on this subject.

Victoria Stadium is currently being upgraded to UEFA standards for Champions League and Europa League matches. The Stadium will surpass the requirements of a Category 2 facility but will fall short of Category 3 specifications. This measured approach prioritises multi-purpose training facilities over spectator stands, and the infrastructural improvements will therefore directly benefit all sports practiced at the community complex. This was clearly explained to the opposition in Parliament on 16th October 2014 so all they are doing now is making mischief of this issue.

Throughout the last four years the Stadium has undergone extensive refurbishment to accommodate community use for all sports. This has included the laying of FIFA-approved AstroTurf and floodlights in Pitch 2 for evening play and the fitting of floodlights on the hockey pitch that comply with international standards. Furthermore, the improvements have supported crucial community programmes such as the Stay and Play Facility, which has enabled children with special needs to engage in and benefit from the Summer Sports Programme in an integrated way with their peers.

This Government's holistic and comprehensive policy towards the provision of sports facilities benefits the health and wellbeing of the entire community, which achieves significant long-term return in other areas of governance, for example in healthcare.

However, the Government won't ignore the needs of professional football in Gibraltar. We are working closely with the Gibraltar Football Association on plans for a National Football Stadium in an appropriate location that will provide fantastic facilities. We expect new plans for the Stadium at Lathbury Barracks to be put to Government very soon.

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Minister for Sports, the Hon Steven Linares, said: "The benefits of accessible sports and leisure facilities are undisputed. The Opposition are clearly prioritising professional football over the rights of the community to access sports and leisure programmes. What the Opposition don't seem to realise is that increased public use of the improved Victoria Stadium over the last four years makes a strong case for more community sports facilities, not less".