



PRESS RELEASE

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Government regrets tone and language of Heritage Trust Grand Parade comments

The Government deeply regrets the tone of the statement issued by the Heritage Trust regarding the proposed new car park at Grand Parade.

It goes without saying that the Trust is free to take whatever position it wishes on this and on any issue. However, they have given the unfortunate impression that in recent times they are quicker off the mark to be critical of the Government than they are to acknowledge positive progress. There is clearly a need to maintain a right and proper balance between the two positions.

Indeed, it will be recalled that this is not the first Government to propose the creation of more car parking spaces at Grand Parade. This is a policy in common between different administrations. The reason for this is that a Government has to balance conservation and development and sometimes the scales will tilt towards one side and on other occasions the balance will tilt to the other.

The tone of their statement is particularly unfair because the Government has invested hugely in heritage projects all over Gibraltar. This includes the refurbishment and beautification of Wellington Front, the continuing progress at the Northern Defence, which were abandoned and neglected for years on end, the restoration and relocation of the MOD gatehouse, and other heritage-sensitive projects elsewhere. This will continue.

However, what the Trust cannot pretend is that the whole of Gibraltar should come to a standstill and that this balance should always be tilted in their favour.

It is also unfortunate that the language used in the statement issued by the Trust has not been more measured, more moderate or more restrained. Indeed, it does not reflect the spirit of constructive cooperation that has always existed between us.

The Trust have taken objection both to the low-rise scheme itself and also to the manner in which the scheme was announced.

They have got it completely wrong and have unfairly jumped to the wrong conclusions.

Firstly, the Government announcement itself declared clearly in black and white that the “tabling of this project before the Development and Planning Commission will mark the formal start of the consultation process with all interested parties.” Therefore the comments made by the Trust in



relation to the manner in which the scheme was launched, which made up the bulk of their criticism, is in truth totally without foundation.

Secondly, Grand Parade is a car park and it is proposed that it will continue as a car park. The fact that it was once used as a parade ground does not mean that it is still used as a parade ground. This use ceased a long time ago. Indeed, Casemates was once an army barracks, the leisure centre was a bastion, Lathbury Barracks was a barracks and a parade ground and the University is also housed in former military facilities. It would have been practically impossible to develop these areas if successive Governments had adopted a fundamentalist approach to Heritage matters. In fact, the construction of a low-rise car park in Grand Parade, which does include an underground level, should not be controversial precisely because it is an open area and there are no buildings of heritage significance!

It is the Government that has been shocked by the tone and the language contained in the statement issued by the Heritage Trust which is both unfair and uncalled for. The Government considers that in this day and age it has a duty to deal with the historical parking problem faced by the residents of Alameda Estate, of Trafalgar House, and particularly those who live in the southern end of Main Street and the southern Upper Town precisely as identified in the STTP.