



PRESS RELEASE

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The GSD is Wrong About the Music Festival

The new leader of the GSD is wrong about every aspect of his criticism of the Music Festival.

First of all, the “loss” last year of the Gibraltar Calling Festival was not £3.1m. Mr Azopardi has got that COMPLETELY WRONG because he has assumed all that cost relates to last year. The Government cash accounts and therefore the sum of £3.1m represents elements of spending for THREE YEARS of the Festival. In every financial year except the first, part of the sum of the costs of the Festival relates to costs of the year before and some to the early costs of the year after. Additionally, some costs are still being claimed by the local organisers in respect of even earlier years of the Festival.

Mr Azopardi has also failed to take into consideration the indirect value for Gibraltar in terms of advertising value for Gibraltar which is calculated at approximately £1.3m just last year. That doesn't include the exposure to Gibraltar arising from the social media activity of the artists who take part in the Festival. This is without considering the impact on the wider economy of the Festival. Hotels are full and flights to Gibraltar are full.

Franco Ostuni, Executive Director at G & J B Hotels said; “Both The Caleta and our new Holiday Inn Express are fully booked for the event and we see a huge boost in revenue over the time of the festival. On the whole, it is a great thing for Gibraltar as the acts who come here help to raise awareness of Gibraltar as well as putting on a fantastic show. I'm looking forward to this weekend!”

Nuria Saccone, Head of Destination Services at Bland Travel said; “It is fantastic to see how much the festival brings to Gibraltar. This popular festival sees hotel occupancy rates hit nearly 100% and provides a positive impact on the tourism market during what is already a buoyant month for Gibraltar.”

In light of the above, Mr Azopardi is embarrassingly wrong in his calculations of the loss per hour of the Festival. These calculations are therefore entirely, woefully wrong and are no more than a crass joke. His example in relation to nurses, teachers and carers is a particularly callous one, given the Government already employs more of these than ever under the GSD and the GSD complain that we have increased the numbers employed in the public sector too much already!

All the information in relation to the matters referred to in the first three points above are already in the public domain. They relate to information provided to the GSD in Parliament, most of it in the last session of the House at Budget time. Similarly, Mr Azopardi will find that the viewing figures he quotes for the MTV television broadcasts are wildly inaccurate, a point that was made



abundantly clear in the January sitting of the House. Indeed, Mr Azopardi would do well to check all his facts against Hansard with his elected colleagues, before wasting tax payers' time with erroneous facts and incorrect calculations.

In addition, Mr Azopardi is wrong to have assumed that invitations would this year have been issued for free attendance in the Government's reserved area by Ministers, Members of Parliament or any other parties. In fact, as a result of the Chief Minister's own review of this event, Ministers, Members of Parliament and other invitees will be required to make commensurate charitable contributions for access to this reserved area. The Government will make an announcement of the amounts to be contributed to Charity in coming weeks. Mr Azopardi's statement is, however, entirely contrary to the actions of GSD Executive Members such as Damon Bossino, Daniel Feetham, Elliott Phillips, Trevor Hammond and Edwin Reyes, all of whom have previously accepted tickets to the Government's reserved area. Ironically, Mr Azopardi and the GSD generally have never complained about being invited to other events at the cost of the taxpayer, making their criticism transparently self-serving in this case. Ironically, given that they will not be attending this year, the only "freeloaders" will be the Members of Parliament of the GSD who will be the only ones who have attended without making any contribution in respect of their attendance, namely, Messrs Bossino, Feetham, Phillips, Hammond and Reyes.

The position of the GSLP/Liberal Government is that, at the end of the initial three-year contract period with MTV, the organisation of the Music Festival will be put to competitive tender. This will be open for competition nationally and internationally to ensure that Gibraltar taxpayers get the best value for money possible. In this respect, as the Gibraltar Calling media partner, MTV has run an extensive TV and marketing advertising campaign to support the 2018 edition of Gibraltar Calling across its network in the UK & Spain since June 2018. In the UK alone, this campaign has been seen by 2.89 million people. Additionally, the event has been supported editorially across mtv.co.uk and mtv.es, and social platforms, across the same period. A dedicated 1-hour show featuring highlights from the upcoming two-day 2018 event will be broadcast across MTV UK, MTV Music and internationally on MTV Live HD. MTV Presents Gibraltar Calling will premiere on MTV UK at 9pm on Friday 5th October 2018. MTV Presents Gibraltar Calling 2018 will also be provided to GBC for broadcast in Gibraltar.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP said: "The Music Festival is changing and improving all the time. It is growing and creating more and more positive international advertising value for Gibraltar worth many millions of pounds. Our hotels are full. Flights to Gibraltar are full. The Festival, which we in the GSLP Liberals created, has done extraordinarily well and has been brilliant for our youth and the promotion of Gibraltar internationally. At the same time, we have more doctors and more nurses and carers employed in our health services and teachers employed in education than ever before. In future, when our initial contract with MTV runs out, we will tender for the next generation of the Festival. It will only get better and better. This year, we are introducing charges this year in our enclosure, which will even result in a donation to charity by all those who attend in our area; and I am sorry that GSD members like Mr Mr Bossino, Mr Phillips, Mr Feetham, Mr Reyes and Mr Hammond are not prepared to pay to attend but were happy to turn up as freeloaders when they didn't have to put their hands in their pockets for a donation to charity. We also continue to consider further changes to the delivery and format of the Festival and will make announcements in that regard in due course. As ever, I am very much looking forward to the event this year."