



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 548/2018

Date: 18th September 2018

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### **Gibraltar Enjoys Considerable Support at UK Lib Dem Conference**

Gibraltar has engaged in discrete direct bilateral dialogue with Spain, which commenced when the Partido Popular was in power, in order to ensure that Brexit works well for all affected parties. The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has outlined the mechanics of this and the issues that Gibraltar faced as a consequence of the decision to leave the European Union.

He spoke during an address in Brighton at the Liberal Democrat conference at the traditional Gibraltar Government reception.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Sir Vince Cable MP also spoke at the event on behalf of the guests and expressed full support for Gibraltar and its people going forward. He did so in the presence of parliamentarians, party members and activists who packed into the room. There were also long-standing Liberal friends of Gibraltar present including Sir Simon Hughes and Sir Graham Watson. Also present was Health and Justice Minister Neil Costa who attended separate events specifically related to the operation of the justice system, against the wider backdrop of Brexit.

The nature of the negotiations to leave the European Union, where the United Kingdom is the Member State responsible, has led to a variable geometry when it comes to discussions on Gibraltar. This means that the UK has fully involved Gibraltar in the discussions and that the Government of Gibraltar has been a full participant in matters relevant to us.

“We did not want Brexit, we did not vote for it and we did not support it,” said Dr Garcia, making the point that 96% of those who had voted in June 2016 did so to remain in the EU. He said to applause that there was no conflict between being British and being European but that sadly the electorate in UK had not seen it that way.

He pointed to the operation of border post-Brexit as the single most important issue that Gibraltar faced and made the point that it was vital for both sides of the frontier to get it right.



The border has created strong economic links between communities. Gibraltar businesses purchased £400 million a year from Spanish businesses, and Gibraltar residents spent nearly £100 million a year in second homes and leisure activities in Spain. The 13,000 frontier workers represented all the Member States of the EU, from 8000 Spanish citizens down to two from Luxembourg, he said. "Gibraltar is a shining example of what Europe is all about. We cannot lose that going forward."

The Deputy Chief Minister went on to list the issues under discussion with the United Kingdom and with our nearest EU neighbour Spain as we prepare to leave the EU.

Gibraltar enjoyed a high profile during the conference with countless expressions of support. There was also an opportunity to exchange a few words with remain activist Gina Miller who visited the Gibraltar Stand.