



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Government's Safeguarding, Monitoring and Enforcement of BGTW Leads to Thriving Marine Environment**

The GSD response to the Government's latest reply on fishing is, as usual, totally inaccurate.

It is nonsense to say that illegal fishing continues "unabated". Fishing activity overall is now regulated by the 2014 Marine Protection Regulations and monitored like never before. Mr Hammond conveniently ignores the fact that this Government's actions have meant that the long standing problems of multiple rods lining our shoreline has ceased, precisely because all recreational anglers coming into Gibraltar must be in possession of a Gibraltar licence and are challenged by Environmental Protection Officers to ensure that this is so. This applies also to divers and spear fishers coming to Gibraltar. Offenders have been and continue to be prosecuted. Indeed, two offending vessels are currently being legally processed.

This Government's policy of environmental safeguarding is in stark contrast to the dark days of the GSD's illegal and politically and environmentally damaging 'Fishing Agreement', which actually encouraged Spanish commercial fishing with nets. It gave Spain a *de facto* say in the internal affairs of Gibraltar. At that time, Spanish boats fished commercially at very high levels whilst there was no protection whatsoever by the GSD of the interests of local fishing.

Indeed, the Gibraltar fishing fraternity will recall the days under the Fishing Agreement where they were unable to simply fish recreationally with a rod and line because the entire shoreline was littered with unlicensed and unregulated Spanish anglers.

It was for this exact reason that the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers led a sustained campaign against the GSD's damaging policies, aptly called "Angling for Change".

With this appalling GSD track record, Trevor Hammond's blinkered statement is simply disgraceful.

The Government's policies of regulating fishing in BGTW are working, as can be seen by increasing biodiversity in our waters, now ranging from whales and dolphins to turtles, different species of fish, and even otters!



The Government's strategy of persistent monitoring and enforcement has clearly improved the protection of BGTW. Gibraltar now stands out internationally in its environmental governance and we are determined this will continue. This Government can proudly hold its head high on environmental matters, and especially in relation to the marine environment.

Whilst the independence of the RGP in enforcing the law is paramount, this Government will continue to use other assets to uphold its policy and environmental law. Specialists at the Department of the Environment conduct regular patrols of BGTW, in addition to their outstanding research and conservation work, and have a dedicated environmental protection unit. This was unfathomable under a GSD administration.

Minister John Cortes commented: "Trevor's attempts at re-writing history will fail. We have progress still to make, but our marine environment is thriving compared to just 10 years ago. We will not stop here. The whole world is now much more aware of our obligations to the oceans, and we will continue to look after our small, but increasingly rich part of it."