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Government Announces Four Point Plan to Mitigate Development

- New development plan
- Renegotiation of existing projects
- Five new open areas
- Freeze on development on six Government plots

The Government has today announced a four point plan which aims to tackle and mitigate the pace of development in Gibraltar and which includes the creation of five open areas for the public to enjoy.

However, it needs to be understood that some of the construction is in private sector hands and therefore outside the direct control of the Government itself.

It is also important to make it clear that certain projects like the Mid-Town development, that at King's Wharf and several Ocean Village projects were the subject of permits and deals before this Government came in to office, even though the actual construction has commenced much later.

NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Government has given the political green light for work to commence on a new Gibraltar Development Plan. The relevant sub-head to which the funding will be charged has been opened in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. This shows a nominal amount of £1000 because a tender will be published in the coming weeks. This plan will set out a future vision for the coordination of development and planning into the future. The tradition has always been for these plans, which cover planning and land use matters, to be produced every ten years although the 1991 plan was not replaced until 2009.

RENEGOTIATION OF EXISTING PROJECTS

A deliberate decision has also been taken to create and preserve additional open areas for the community to enjoy. This is reflected in the decision to renegotiate a number of projects which were in the pipeline before 2011.

- This included taking back a larger area of land from the developers at Mid-Town in order to create another park. The details of this have already been announced.
- The developers of King's Wharf were persuaded to reduce the height of their development and to provide a public promenade facing the sea.



- The decision was also taken to provide an open square on the site of the old Theatre Royal, even though there was provision for a building on that site.

In addition to this:

- The ugly car park at USOC was converted into the highly successful Commonwealth Park.
- Wellington Front was restored and refurbished.
- The small boats marina provided berthing and a recreational area in the centre of town.

NEW OPEN AREAS

The Government has decided that a number of new open areas will be created for the general public.

One such area will be provided on the existing site of St Martin's School. This was originally put out to Expressions of Interest in 2017. The Government has taken the decision not to proceed with the Expressions of Interest and the site, which includes several mature trees, will be preserved as an open area in the northern part of Gibraltar once St Martin's has been relocated.

The old Nuffield Pool site will be open to the public for the community to enjoy over the summer months. There were proposals made before 2011 for construction and development on the site which had been directly earmarked for a private developer at no premium. This was stopped.

The Government is finalising discussions, following an Expressions of Interest process, for the development of the old Rosia Officer's Swimming Club. This will include the provision of a public bathing area, with water-based activities. More details will be published in due course.

A number of new open areas will be created at the Northern Defences. This follows an Expressions of Interest process and discussions with different interested parties. The combined open areas of the King's Lines and the Queen's Lines is of about 3500m² (Commonwealth Park is about 5000m²). In addition to this there will be about half a kilometre of linear open walks. The objective is to blend a serious and important heritage site with public outdoor activity in certain parts of it. It is highly significant that these new open areas will be a short walk from Main Street. In this way, the tunnels and fortifications complex will be brought to life with serious heritage interpretation combined with outdoor activity like zip-lining, war games and archery in its open zones. More details will be made available in due course.

FREEZING OF DEVELOPMENT IN SOME AREAS

The Government has taken the policy decision to freeze development in certain plots of Government land. Therefore the Expressions of Interest that were issued for the Queen's Cinema, the Queen's Hotel, Bayside School and St Anne's School, the Rooke and the old Yacht Club sites have all been frozen. The proposals received for the sites will be assessed in discussions with the relevant interested parties at different points in time. This will provide some breathing space and allow for a phased approach to ensure that any new development in these sites commences when most of the existing construction comes to an end.



The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The Government shares the view that there is a need to mitigate the effect of development and construction. It is important to strike a balance given that Government projects, whether they are new schools, new housing or new sporting facilities are also in the public interest. It is nonetheless regrettable that there is an unavoidable degree of disruption to everybody in that process.

While we are more limited in what can be done with private sector development on private land, we can, however, control more firmly the timescale of development on Government land.

There are also exciting new plans for new open areas to the north of the leisure centre at Midtown Park, at the existing St Martin’s School site, in the Northern Defences and at Rosia Bay. There are more to follow.

There is a considerable demand for land in Gibraltar and intense competition between different land uses. This investment generates both economic activity and employment and is good for the country as a whole.

However, it must be executed in a balanced way which also takes other issues into account. The Government has been taking steps to address that balance.”