

## ESG RESPONSE TO GOVT INTEGRATED TRAFFIC, PARKING AND TRANSPORT PLAN

November 2009

### Introduction and Public Consultation:

The public consultation exercise by Government on its Integrated Traffic, Parking and Transport Plan, is broadly welcomed by the ESG. We invited our membership to comment and the following reflects this internal consultation exercise. While we welcome this opportunity to feed back to Government we would like to add that its clear that several major traffic plans and measures have already been decided or acted upon, and therefore the consultation aspect of the plan is somewhat limited. We believe there should be greater input from the community to any such plan to obtain a full picture of the main factors regarding mobility issues in Gibraltar. We shall nevertheless contribute our thoughts in the hope that these shall be taken into consideration for continued improvement of the plan.

### ESG General Statement

The ESG believes that any traffic/transport plan for Gibraltar today not only has to facilitate car users (which it predominantly aims to do), but needs to urgently address safety and liveability concerns in what is after all communal areas that belong to everyone and not just the car user. Targeted effort to help make walking and cycling in a small place like Gibraltar a safe option, has to be pursued. Greater use of a progressively enhanced and expanded free public transport system would also contribute in calming the stressful nature of our busy roads. *This vision of quieter, calmer streets, cleaner air, and a safer environment* should be the aim of any successful traffic and transport plan and it is noted that the Government Plan has touched upon many of these issues.

### The Main Elements of the Government Plan include:

- Car Parking facilities and schemes
- Policing and Enforcement
- Traffic Management and Calming Measures
- New Roads
- Further Enhancement of Public Transport and other Alternatives

### **ESG added heading:**

- Public Consultation and Public Interest

### Car Parking facilities and schemes:

- Creating ever more road space and parking facilities as the main thrust of traffic management, has been known to offer short term relief to traffic problems as this is usually followed by an increase in vehicles to fill up the available new space (see also under New Roads)
- Parking facilities are desperately needed in the Upper Town area, to urgently address the danger that parents with prams, the elderly and all walkers in general face when negotiating their way round parked vehicles and moving traffic. Prince Edwards Road is highlighted here as is the section of road children use to access Sacred Hearts School
- Border information: vital to ensure that first time visitors receive clear advice before entering the labyrinth of our busy roads. The park n ride facilities planned at the airport site is welcome and should assist in alleviating visitor and worker traffic – nevertheless information provided at the border via leaflets as well as large posters on entry would help direct traffic

## Policing and Enforcement and Traffic Management and Calming Measure

- CCTV cameras – not only desirable but should be implemented without further delay - would be used to address shocking driving protocols on our roads today practised by a considerable minority–
- Fast track completion of court building expansion programme to enable driving and littering/vandalism offenders to be dealt with effectively and speedily, and this way positively influence behavioural changes and achieve progress in this area
- Immediate employment of Parking and Traffic Enforcement Officers – these could already be monitoring traffic behaviour, assisting visitors and generally improving the driving standards of motorists in general

## New Roads

- Creating ever more road space and parking facilities as the main thrust of traffic management, has been known to offer short term relief to traffic problems as this is usually followed by an increase in vehicles to fill up the available new space (see also under car parking facilities)
- Its logical that tunnelling under runway will reduce current negative impact on our roads from visiting traffic and especially those entering Gibraltar simply to fill up tanks with cheaper fuel
- The reopening of the Dudley Ward Tunnel is long overdue and would have helped the ridiculous traffic back-up which has been seen on our roads, especially during the summer months.(not strictly “new” road)
- Govt states its not possible to eliminate traffic build up during peak times- the ESG takes issue with this- if greater facilities and focus is given to alternate means of transport, safer roads for walking and cycling, improved bus service, timings and routes, then this must have a knock-on effect on traffic build up in rush hour. Using fuel costs/taxing system and incentives have been known to radically alter traffic levels elsewhere
- Road improvements around the Queens Cinema will also clearly benefit traffic flow

## Further Enhancement of Public Transport and other Alternatives

- Historic use of cars for recreational purposes has to now be phased out and this needs management, (carrot and stick approach)- an open frontier means people are no longer hemmed in which has previously led to a cruising culture on our limited road space-
  - Incentivise the use of electric and hybrid vehicles (electric, etc.)- does Government have any plans to run a future public transport service with electric vehicles? What about other government vehicles?
  - Allowances, incentives and infrastructure for encouraging use of hybrids/green vehicles/fuel
  - While entry of the “take ride and leave” cycling scheme in plan is welcome, current road facilities make cycling dangerous and new roads do not include cycle lanes. The question here is why not? Comments from members also raise the issue of bike theft in Gibraltar and the possibility of a similar fate with these free to use bikes?
  - Feedback on the existing bus service is that it is generally good and the plan appears to be addressing need for increasing service hours of buses, especially a night service- as well as introduction of new routes – members have also called for a Queensway route to be considered for inclusion
  - Phasing out of noisome exhausts on motorbikes should be handled seriously and urgently- the public suffer at the hands of a few riders and Govt/Police should take up this issue with users as well as the business/commerce importers of such equipment
  - Incentives for leaving the vehicle at home should be pushed – ie positive campaign
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**Public Consultation and Public Interest:**

- Govt should run a number of ongoing Gibraltar wide polls to test public opinion – important to understand road use by all and plan more effectively
- To set up an integrated public transport plan based on addressing climate change and impact on health which needs to be signed up to at a cross party level for the improvement of the quality of life for all Gibraltarians
- The need for attention to and creation of pavements throughout Gibraltar is also highlighted here- while ongoing works are transforming some areas, others need to be addressed just as urgently
- Europa Road also harbours some very dangerous walking areas which should be targeted in the new transport plan to ensure safe passage for walkers
- With evidence based knowledge of “*health effects of car emissions on the young and old*”<sup>1</sup>, it is particularly important that Government uses this focus period to tackle some of our worst areas to protect the most vulnerable: - namely junction at Regal House and playground “roundabout” next to Ministry of Tourism
- **Idling:** The issue of bus and car engine idling unnecessarily- actually illegal in some parts of Europe<sup>2</sup>. Apart from the fact that car fumes are harmful to health, idling also burns up fuel and contributes to greenhouse gases. Border queues in hot summers lead to chronic build up of pollution and creation of smog and severe lowering of air quality- Heat and pollution force drivers to leave engines on to use A/C. If guidelines were set up to encourage/inform drivers of the benefits to health from switching off engines, opening windows while also making savings, (as A/C eats up fuel when stationary) then idling could become more of an isolated problem rather than the common one that it is today

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<sup>1</sup> Government air quality monitoring site: [www.gibraltairquality.gi](http://www.gibraltairquality.gi)

<sup>2</sup> Internet sites offer a wealth of information to back this up describing idling as both wasteful in terms of fuel and actually harmful to the engine itself