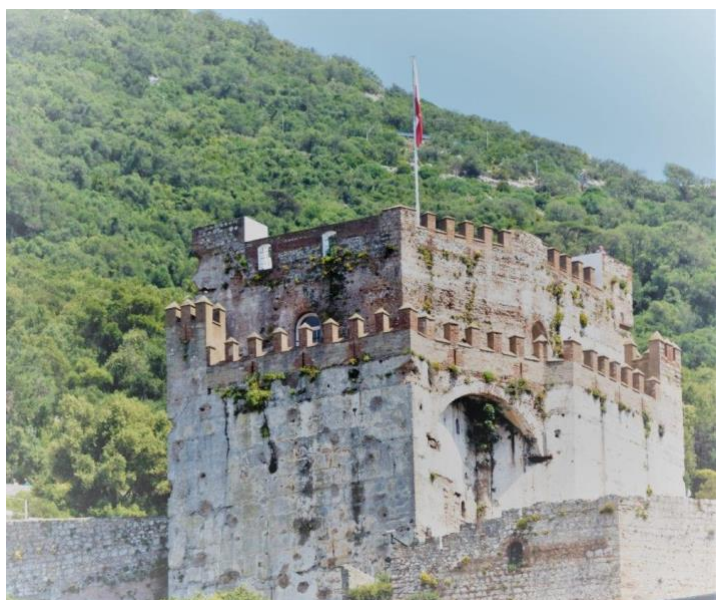


# HERITAGE REWIRED



## Developing Partnerships for Public Benefit

Election 2023, Manifesto feeder meeting

Gibraltar Heritage Trust

A summary of areas for focus



# A Core National Asset

Our heritage is one of our greatest national assets, from our rich vernacular architecture to our geological and palaeolithic landscape; from our customs and language to our literature and gastronomy; from our monuments, relics and antiquities to our museum, archives, galleries and historical sites; It creates the unique identity of the Gibraltarian and defines us and our sovereignty, encouraging inbound tourism, uniting the community and creating a sense of place.

Heritage drives beneficial change, contributes to our well-being, enhances biodiversity and supports long-term environmental sustainability. Our historic buildings, landscape and coast, traditions, language, and way of life are part of our unique offer and should be a central consideration in decision making and planning the Gibraltar we shape by our daily decisions.

Gibraltar's heritage and tourism industry directly contributes millions to our economy through entry fees, port calls and dues, regeneration and restoration projects and urban renewal initiatives. An analysis from other revenue streams that are directly derived from tourism-based activities, eg. The Hospitality and leisure sectors show the critical impact that this area of activity has as a driver in our economy.

## **Public good**

Heritage is a **public good**, playing a key role in economic and social regeneration and enhancing wellbeing and mental health, but its survival depends on the private, independent and public sectors working together. Heritage provides the background to people's lives. In small communities, the potential for heritage-led initiatives to contribute positively is even more tangible and achievable but in tight geographic spaces such as Gibraltar the need to establish a shared vision and objectives is all the more acute.

## **Gibraltar's Heritage needs all political parties to:**

1. **Champion** our unique heritage by supporting systems to safeguard and promote it;
2. **Commit** to the principles in the Heritage Vision and champion the conservation of heritage assets and their use for public benefit;
3. **Invest** in and promote heritage assets as part of creating vibrant places to live whilst building sector skills and capacity;

## **Champion** our unique heritage by supporting systems to safeguard and promote it

Protection and management of our cultural heritage environment has matured in the last decade or so, particularly with the enactment of the Heritage Act, 2018 and the Town Planning Act 2018, and consolidation of the open Planning Process.

***We call on Government to reinforce this step change by embarking on a programme of Heritage Audits which will determine the state of heritage assets and identify particularly those at risk.***

A better awareness of the condition of heritage assets will allow for improved planning, prioritisation and budgeting within the historic environment. Audits will also support the protection and management of heritage assets and work to achieve best practice benchmarks.

The programme would need resourcing through the Ministry for Heritage as a focused project. The GHT would be willing to assist where possible and with the mobilisation of volunteer contributions from our membership.

These audits should be underpinned by the formalised creation of a Historic Environment Record (HER) database which is an important tool in establishing access to information on and facilitating the management of the local heritage portfolio. These HERs normally provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the archaeology and historic built environment of an area. This information is vital in feeding into the planning system and can guide development work from a very early stage.

This will put HMGoG well on track to achieving sustainable management of the historic environment and, crucially, performance measurement tracking.

## **Commit** to the principles in the Heritage Vision and champion the conservation of heritage assets and their use for public benefit

The Government has issued a Heritage Vision document. The GHT was fully engaged in the drafting of the vision and as such believes that it enshrines the best practice and approach required for our heritage environment as matters stand today. It is essential that this vision, though ambitious, enjoys the support of all political parties as its achievability requires long term and consistent policy

application. That is only fair to our invaluable Gibraltarian human heritage which is more than 120,000 years old.

***We call on Government to fully Commit to the principles in the Heritage Vision and champion the restoration of heritage assets and their use for public benefit.***

In our Heritage Vision consultation survey which went out to the general public, 97% of respondents to our survey on the Vision stated the Gibraltar's national heritage was "very important" to them, with the remaining 3% believing it was 'somewhat important'. 95.7% believe that it should be used more in promoting and safeguarding our identity, with 91% then going on to say that integrated heritage management should be at the heart of mainstream policy, which is essentially what the vision is pushing for. The impression is that heritage management is an afterthought and that the resource is not being effectively maximised in terms of tourism and what it can contribute to the quality of life. In areas that the public believed were of priority – both Moorish Castle (25%) and Rosia Bay (20%) were highlighted as the most in need of attention.

Rosia Bay remains as one of Gibraltar's 'Crown Jewels' Its unique combination of natural beauty, heritage assets and witness to significant moments in world history means it clearly merits a sensitive treatment. As Gibraltar's only natural harbour it demands a holistic, joined up approach for its preservation and development.

***We call on HMGoG to change the approach to this site and champion the development of the Rosia Bay Heritage Quarter.***

Successive historical ad hoc planning applications have been met with a GHT 'red line' defence and significant opposition from the people of Gibraltar. Current applications (Victualling Yard Aquarium) and recent announcements (Natural History Museum at Parson's Lodge) only serve to further divide the site under disparate management structures.

To resolve this impasse, we would ask HMGoG and its agents to engage with the GHT to create a vision and tender document for a Rosia Bay Heritage Quarter encompassing 100 Ton Gun/Napier Magdala Battery, Fortress HQ/Rosia Casemates, Victualling Yard, Parson's Lodge and Rosia Bay and developing it for public benefit.

## Invest in and promote heritage assets as part of creating vibrant places to live whilst building sector skills and capacity

HMGoG invests in heritage, however there is no tradition of performance management over that investment that ties it to any overall plan or vision. With the recent publication of the Heritage Vision, there exists a unique opportunity to take stock and review the current situation.

***We call on HMGoG to review its approach to core heritage activities and invest in growing talent and skills locally to fill the demand created by successful awareness drives.***

As a non-profit organisation, the GHT is ideally placed to continue to add value to the initiatives of HMGoG independently of central policies and foci, however this needs to be driven by a focused and resourced Ministry for Heritage.

The GHT as an entity delivers outstanding value for money in the many areas it works and in delivering on its statutory duties, however the current model of relying on volunteers and charity to maintain national assets is not sustainable. With a modest increase of the HMGoG budget to the GHT, we can grow our permanent staff and make a significant difference in key areas of heritage engagement, education and outreach, as well as conservation. This would include aspirations for a post for an educational officer and a technical post focusing on HER duties.