

The Hague, 10 February 2006

Mr Peter Caruana, Chief Minister
Office of the Chief Minister
No 6. Convent Place
Gibraltar



*Fédération pan-européenne du patrimoine
Pan-European Federation for Heritage*

Re: save the Rosia Water Tanks

Dear Chief Minister,

Europa Nostra, the pan European Federation for Cultural Heritage, which is presided over by HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark, has been informed by its member organisation Gibraltar Heritage Trust (GHT) and the South District Association (SDA) of the imminent threat of destruction of the Rosia Water Tanks in Gibraltar, an outstanding example of late 18th century naval architecture with great historic, cultural and architectural significance for Gibraltar and for Europe as a whole.

As the voice of the civil society associations concerned with the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage throughout Europe, we urge you to use your authority to postpone the planned works and engage into the necessary process of public consultation on the development of the Rosia Water Tanks site and the possible alternative locations for the affordable housing project.

We have been given to understand that the planned apartment building, known as Nelson's View, will detract from what remains of the heritage of Rosia Bay. It will overshadow the Victualling Yard and Parson's Lodge which won a Europa Nostra Diploma in 1996 for the careful repair and restoration of the historic fortification. But most importantly this construction will destroy the unique Rosia Water Tanks, of great historical and architectural value, as has been underlined by two leading experts on British Naval History, Dr Colin White, Director of the National Maritime Museum in Portsmouth and Dr Jonathan Coad, a member of the Europa Nostra Scientific Council and Vice-President of the Society for Nautical Research.

According to Dr Coad, the Rosia Water Tanks are an important element in the extraordinary concentration of historic naval and military installations on the Rock of Gibraltar and should be a key element in any submission that Gibraltar will make for World Heritage Site status. In addition, if regenerated the Rosia Water Tanks could benefit the public at large, add to the quality of life of the Gibraltarians and provide a further attraction for Gibraltar's many visitors, generating income for many sectors of society.

Europa Nostra fully appreciates the needs to build affordable housing for families in Gibraltar but shares the GHT's view that this should not be done at the expense of the valuable heritage assets of the Rock, especially if alternative locations do exist. In this respect we have been informed by the GHT and the SDA that alternative locations for the development of affordable housing have already been suggested, namely: Queensway, Windmill Hill, Europa Point, Eastern Beach and Buena Vista Barracks.

In the light of the above we reiterate our appeal to postpone the start of the works and engage into a proper public consultation process with all parties concerned before a final decision is taken. This decision should seek to strike the right balance between the two complementary objectives: to provide affordable housing and to protect Gibraltar's cultural heritage.

Our Scientific Council and Secretariat remain at your full disposal for any further advice you might wish to obtain.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sneska Quaedvlieg Mihailovic". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sneska Quaedvlieg Mihailovic
Secretary General

Cc: Sir Francis Richards, Governor of Gibraltar
Mr Fabian Vinet, Heritage Minister
Mrs Gisele Sene, Chairperson of the South District Association
The Chairman of the Gibraltar Heritage Trust
Dr Ann Coats, Secretary of the Naval Dockyards Society

Prof Gianni Perbellini, Chairman of the Europa Nostra Scientific Council
Dr Jonathan Coad, Member of the Europa Nostra Scientific Council