



TEAM FOR GREEN

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY LOOKS TO GIBRALTAR
BUSINESSES TO SPRUCE UP THE ROCK



It has been an extremely busy time of late for the Gibraltar Horticultural Society (GHS), and now the organisation is eyeing the business community on the Rock to leverage expertise on both sides.

Fresh back from a sell-out trip to Amsterdam — the GHS is a vibrantly active group with many member activities — its Chairwoman and Treasurer, Annabelle Mor-Codali, spoke to Gibraltar Business about upcoming initiatives that local companies can get involved in.

With the imminent and long-anticipated census due, it's clear just from walking around Gibraltar that a growing population requires ever more housing and infrastructure in a limited geographical area. You're never far from the sound of a drill, but how can local businesses help green the Rock and beautify the environment?

The GHS is planning what it calls “*urban mini forests*,” where trees and shrubs native to Gibraltar and Andalucia can be planted. The organisation was inspired by a recent visit to Lisbon and Granada, where it saw the concept in action.



ESG Perspective

“It’s a long-term project because obviously, we will start on one site and, as we progress, we will need sponsorship from companies,” Ms. Mor-Codali told the Chamber of Commerce. “We’ll need money coming in and it needs to be sustained.”

But why would Gibraltar companies want to back an idea — laudable as it is — that may not have immediate commercial appeal?

“I’m trying to call out to companies from an ESG [Environmental, Social, and Governance] point of view,” said Ms. Mor-Codali. “You’re investing in a community where you’re working and doing business — you’re giving back long term something that’s going to benefit the majority of people. Well, everybody really.”

“Companies need to modify their carbon footprint, and I think this is a perfect opportunity to put into practice something that is long-term and global.”

Any Gibraltar urban mini forest would be on a smaller scale than the one in Lisbon, but the GHS has already met with architects and is currently working through the necessary administration to launch the project. This will also involve delivering trees to schools for planting.

Air Quality Rising Up the Agenda

Ideally, all schools on the Rock will be involved, ready for planting in October and November of this year, with trees and shrubs hardy enough to withstand Gibraltar’s summer heat. And it may not be just traditional areas like Ocean Village or Europort — the Upper Rock and Castle Steps, both popular with tourists, could also benefit.

A growing local population and high vehicle usage mean air quality is an urgent issue. More trees and shrubs can act as natural lungs to help purify the air we breathe, as Ms. Mor-Codali explained:

“As we increase the population, car usage and tourism, we have to mitigate as much as we can — bring back green areas so that in the future, we can breathe better air and enjoy better health.”

“And actually, you improve the population’s health, both mentally and physically. All this has a big effect on mental health, especially for children.”

Bus Stops to Provide Summer Cooling

Another key GHS initiative where local companies can get involved is the idea of green bus stops, with businesses sponsoring improvements to the passenger experience.

The concept involves creating a frame on top of bus stops to support the weight of plants and flowers. As well as being visually appealing, these would provide cooling during Gibraltar’s fiery summers.

The GHS is currently in discussions with technicians to determine what kind of load the frames can support. A tentative launch is planned for October, starting with the bus stop just outside the airport, followed by a second one near Campion Park.



Ms. Mor-Codali explained: *“We will obviously be looking to local companies for support on that front as well. They will get a plaque with the name of the company sponsoring that bus stop. It’s about mitigating carbon dioxide in the air and helping with the heat. We thought it would be lovely to combine the beauty of Campion Park with a green bus shelter. Whether you’re an individual or a company, I think we all need to take personal responsibility.”*

Greening Up Our World

Precise sponsorship costs are still being evaluated, but the GHS has met with technicians from the Government of Gibraltar to discuss how a lip could wrap around bus stops to secure bolts in place.

An irrigation system will allow water to drain from the top of the shelter, and a local company will maintain the green structure, which will feature native plant species.

“We need green areas in the urban city — we need to green up our world as much as we can. Not just in touristic places; we need to do it in Laguna Estate, Glacis Estate, and Devil’s Tower Road too,” added Ms. Mor-Codali. “We need to improve the lives of people — for everyone’s future.”

"We're trying to work with schools by providing them with shrubs and greenery. But imagine a child growing up in Laguna — what is their appreciation of nature? What do they know about sustainability if they don't even have access to it where they live?"

Staying on the environmental theme, the GHS welcomes the potential introduction of electric buses on the Rock in an effort to help Gibraltarians break away from the entrenched car culture.

Horticulture Interest Is Thriving

"We need to educate our children that walking is fine — that when it rains, we're not going to melt," noted Ms. Mor-Codali. "When it rains, people walk with wellies and umbrellas — and that's fine. You don't need to get the car. I know people say we're always in a rush, but it's about changing your perception."

"It's a cultural thing — and to change that, we have to start with the young people growing up now."

Interest in horticulture appears to be thriving in Gibraltar, with GHS membership rising to 110, as more people take an interest in the natural world around them.

As well as hosting workshops, the GHS can also visit businesses for teambuilding sessions on how green initiatives can benefit companies and their employees.



But Ms. Mor-Codali is careful to avoid any hint of greenwashing — where companies pay lip service to environmentalism with token gestures rather than real action.

"We have to be careful about greenwashing, and that's something I'm very aware of," said Ms. Mor-Codali. "There's so much research showing that just 30 minutes spent in a green environment reduces stress and increases productivity — for children and adults alike."

Businesses that would like to get involved with the GHS can contact the organisation at: acodali@gibraltarhorticulturalsociety.com.



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40 small dishes of Mediterranean cuisine

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