

Anti Planning Abuse Meeting in Mojacar

AULAN Press Release, Mojacar, 3rd May 2008

On the 3rd May last, a meeting was held at the Best Hotel in Marina de la Torre, Mojacar, Almeria at which almost 400 people attended.

The meeting was chaired by Lennox Napier of the political party Ciudadanos Europeos de Mojacar and was organised with their assistance to discuss the planning problems arising in the area.

The head of this political group and Councillor of Mojacar, Mr Angel Medina, spoke and stated that Spain should be kept as a favoured destination for foreign investments and was a good place in which to live, despite the problems which had arisen and which should be remedied.

With respect to the problems, Mr Medina mentioned a number of measures which should be taken, including: the establishment of a legal protocol (a set of regulated steps) for conveyancing; estate agents to be registered, supervised and insured; that the publicity and public consultation for plans be made obligatory and this be implemented as soon as possible; that the land registry should be relied upon to show the real estate and planning situation on a particular property; that the catastro should be tied in with the land registry as soon as possible; that a commission should be set up to consider the current planning problems and to make recommendations, of which the administration and associations should be a party; and that there be independent agencies to oversee the protection of the environment and human rights.

Mr & Mrs Prior were invited and spoke. Readers will recall the demolition of their house – before the very eyes of this unfortunate couple, which has had great repercussion with the media outside Spain. They explained that, at the moment, no compensation for them was in sight. Bob Preston, President of Abusos Urbanisticos Almanzora No, an association trying to fight against perceived planning abuse in the Almanzora Valley in Almeria where thousands of homes are under threat also spoke and complained that, despite various indications from the various administrations, few concrete steps had been taken to legalise the homes involved.

During the speeches Mr Svoboda, of Abusos Urbanisticos No in Valencia, who has been fighting against planning abuse for many years, and whose association has thousands of members, urged people to group together to fight for their common interests to prevent planning abuses. Mention was made of a new association which was being set up to cover the Levante Almeriense (the western coastal part of Almeria) which would be linked to Mr Svoboda's association and would work together with other similar associations, and eventually form part of a national federation of like-minded Associations.

This new, fledgling association is to be called the AULAN ("Abusos Urbanisticos Levante Almeriense No"). Members to be of this association have indicated that the association is to be independent of political parties, though they are grateful for the support the political party Ciudadanos Europeos appears to be currently giving to the aims of the new association.

It has been stated that the purpose of the association can be summed up in one phrase: to strive for the protection of human rights within the ambit of the real-estate and planning fields, preventing abuses.

It has also been stated that the association will seek to inform its members of planning changes – a bit like an early warning system so that its members will know what changes are afoot and are not surprised with the bulldozer turning up on their doorstep. In addition, it is considered that by people grouping together they can press the administration for solutions to current and possible future problems.

Apart from this, concrete steps have already been discussed at political level and with other associations to seek to remedy the problems which have arisen and the members to be are pleased that these ideas appear to have some support.

It is thought that situations like that experienced by Mr & Mrs Prior must not be allowed to happen again, and full backing is expressed for Mr & Mrs Prior by the members to be of the association.

Concern is expressed that the plight of Mr & Mrs Prior has had a wide coverage outside Spain – one of the main reasons the British are reluctant to invest in Spain, due to the perceived lack of legal security - but that the Spanish media at a national level has failed to inform on what has transpired.

A meeting is to be held shortly to formally set up the association, elect members etc. In addition, at this meeting a talk will be given on the planning issues relating to this area. Both English and Spanish living in this part of Almeria are welcome to join. The time and place is to be advised.