



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.03 p.m. – 6.35 p.m.

Gibraltar, Monday, 24th June 2024

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.03 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Judge K Ramagge GMH *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: J B Reyes Esq *in attendance*]

PRAYER

Madam Speaker

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Monday, 24th June 2024.

Order of Proceedings: (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the seventh meeting of the 15th Parliament, which was held on 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 28th May 2024.

5

Madam Speaker: May I sign the Minutes as correct?

Members: Aye.

10

Madam Speaker signed the Minutes.

PAPERS TO BE LAID

Clerk: (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be laid – the Hon. the Chief Minister.

15

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Second Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Authority for Citizens' Rights.

Madam Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

HOUSING AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GIBRALTAR

Q500/2024

South District –

Action points following Minister's meeting

Clerk: (vii) Reports of Committees; (viii) Answers to Oral Questions.
Questions to the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University. Question 500. The Hon. the
20 Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Please state which action points are being addressed in respect of the
South District following the Minister for Housing's meeting there.

25 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P A Orfila): Madam Speaker, I kindly ask the
hon. Member to refer to published HM Government Press Release 404/2024, issued on 4th June
30 2024.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am grateful for that reference, and of course we are aware of that. In
relation to the particular issues raised, were there any that the South District were most
concerned about that the Minister agreed to act on in a particular timescale? Is there a particular
timescale agreed on these issues?
35

Hon. P A Orfila: All the issues were important to us, and they are all being looked at by the
Minister involved with the petitions.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q501/2024

Varyl Begg –

Companies to carry out works

40 **Clerk:** Question 501. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Please state which company or companies, to include subcontractors, are
expected to be contracted to carry out the works at Varyl Begg Estate.

45 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P A Orfila): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that
Gibraltar Joinery and Building Services Ltd (GJBS) are the main contractors for the Varyl Begg
Estate project. Furthermore, and in addition to this, I am also informed by GJBS that they have
50 subcontracted the following work: external render – Inline Framing Ltd; windows – AJR Window
Works Ltd; and scaffold – Euroresa (Gibraltar) Ltd.

55 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** These subcontracts that are entered into, given that this is a sort of public contract, is that with the consent of the Government? Does there need to be a procedure by which consent is granted, or is there an ability for the main contractor to undertake those subcontracts without reference to the Government?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, those contracted to date are GJBS's main subcontractors.

60 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I understand that, but is there a process by which consent needs to be given by the Government in relation to subcontracts entered into by the main contractor, or not; or is the main contractor at liberty to subcontract to particular entities or entities on an approved panel? How does it work?

65 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, nothing has changed in the context of the operations of GJBS from the time that that company was successfully created in the late 1980s and through the last three and a half decades. They are the ones with the technical knowledge, they are the ones who manage their business, they are the contractor to the Government and they are able to subcontract in the manner that they consider appropriate, exactly as was the case
70 when the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition was a Minister.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just ask, in relation to the works themselves, in terms of timescale and cost, does the Minister have information in relation to that?

75 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Can I have a more specific question, please?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Okay, a more specific question would be: how much have those works cost?

80 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I think the hon. Member meant if the hon. Gentleman asked a specific question, we would have the information.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am happy to submit a question or ask my colleague to submit a more specific one, in future.

85 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q502/2024
Europa Point hostel –
Current plans

Clerk: Question 502. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. D J Bossino.

90 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, what are the current plans in respect of the hostel which the Government had stated was going to be built at Europa Point?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

95 **Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, the position remains unchanged. The Government is considering whether the hostel will be located at Europa Point or at a different location.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is it just a location issue or is it also a size-of-hostel issue? There have been figures bandied about before. Is the Government reviewing the position in relation to the size of the hostel?

100

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, it could vary. It might be bigger. What you are asking is are there current plans. The current plans are there. It remains unchanged, but we are considering whether it should go in Europa Point or at a different location. That is where we are at the moment.

105

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is the Minister willing to share the other possible location with the House?

Hon. P A Orfila: Sorry, not at this point.

110

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And given that there is this consideration process of the Government, is there some kind of timescale by which they would expect to take a decision in relation to, at least, location; and, if so, does it have a knock-on effect on commencement of the project?

115

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, as I have said before, and echoing the words of the former Chief Minister and the last successful and only successful leader of the GSD, when it comes to timings, we have the lifetime of this Parliament to deliver. Hon. Members keep pressing us for timescales, when we have commitments to deliver for the lifetime of this Parliament. Our obligation is to deliver them in the lifetime of this Parliament, and when we do not have a different timescale, we are not going to give it.

120

Madam Speaker: Next question.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

Q486/2024

Europa sports grounds– Cleaning and upkeep

Clerk: Questions for the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

Question 486. The Hon. E J Reyes.

125

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, why is no cleaning or upkeep of spectator facilities at the Europa sports grounds being carried out?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

130

Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam Speaker, the spectator facilities are cleaned regularly, not necessarily as a matter of routine. However, it is thoroughly cleaned before and after every event. Works to repair and repaint the spectator facilities are currently taking place.

135

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I have frequented the Europa sportsground and sat in the general public stand, and I can assure the Minister that the cleanliness of the place leaves a lot to be desired. The ablutions are unusable. The stench from the gents – and, I am told, from the

140 ladies – is incredible. You could not even get the light switch ... Nowadays, most of us carry a
mobile phone with a little app where you can switch the light on. I thank the Almighty for that
because otherwise I would have stumbled in there.

145 Perhaps the Minister, on his next visit, where he is received as Minister and taken to different
seats, would like to have a wander around the general spectators' place to see the cleanliness. I
highly recommend that the Minister takes a clothes brush to brush off the dust, and that he takes
his own water supply and so on, because even the drinking fountain, which I believe was, once
upon a time, silver or stainless steel, is now totally black and more in keeping with the colour of
the road tar around the place. Would the Minister agree with me, or accept that he should perhaps
visit the general members' stands?

150 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, my answer to Question 496 might put him at ease.

Q495-96/2024
Europa Sports Complex –
Management arrangements and manning levels; ball stop nets

Clerk: Question 495. The Hon. E J Reyes.

155 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Government update this House with full details in respect of
developments since the answer provided to Question 571/2023, referring to the contract and/or
other arrangements to permanently settle the management and manning levels at the Europa
Sports Complex?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

160 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam
Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 496.

Clerk: Question 496. The Hon. E J Reyes.

165 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Government update this House in respect of the still outstanding
problems in providing a permanent solution to the ball stop nets at the Europa sports ground?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

170 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar can confirm that the
external areas of the Europa Sports Complex, such as the playing pitches, stands and training
facilities, will be managed and maintained by the GFA. We are currently in negotiations with the
GFA and the GSLA for the management of the internal areas of the complex.

175 In relation to Question 496, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the GFA are currently in the
process of investing over £1 million into the facilities at the Europa Sports Complex. As part of the
upgrade of the facilities, we are working on a permanent solution to the ball stop nets.

180 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful for that, Madam Speaker. If I recall correctly, in previous
questions, perhaps in the previous Parliament, we were informed that a company or a trust – the
Minister kept using the two words interchangeably, and we never quite got to the bottom of it –
had been entered into, the composition of which was independent members appointed by the
Minister, representatives of the Gibraltar Squash Club, the Cricket Association and the Rugby

185 Association. Now that the Minister has mentioned that there seems to be some sort of arrangement with the GFA, can he enlighten this House as to what has happened with the previous arrangements as announced in this House?

190 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. Gentleman might be mistaken with the conversation we had in the street, rather than here in Parliament. There was talk, before my time, of having a trust running the facilities, but we have chosen to go, at least for the outdoor areas, with the GFA, and for the indoor areas with the GFA/GSLA, as it makes more sense from a management point of view and from a financial point of view as well.

195 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. No, there is no confusion on my part. We may have had conversations in the street, but I am sure, with a bit of research in *Hansard*, the question and answer happened across the floor of this House. I see from one of my colleagues that he clearly remembers the conversations we had. So, those were the official answers as tabled prior to last election. Post the election – I think it was last November – the Minister said that he had to update himself, and I gave him that time and space, which is why eight or nine months earlier on ... in the same way that I recall clearly when I asked questions about the ball stop nets, the Minister
200 at the time stood up and said, ‘No, they have been fixed,’ and I had to come back the next month and say, ‘I have been back to the place and those nets have not been fixed.’ He apologised and corrected it. He said he had been led to believe they had been fixed, and they had not. So, here we are, the facilities building in 2019 – gosh, five years ago; that is quite a long time – still not fully settled. The ball stop nets are still not properly fit for purpose. I have made reference in the past
205 that when you have certain quicker games happening – because we have some rather good batsmen locally and they are what are called big hitters; they have even had to close the children’s play park at the eastern end during the course of a weekend for their own safety ... I have witnessed those balls flying well out of the ground and these ball stop nets are what will stop it being a danger to children.

210 So, I am rather confused with the whole setup. I am asking the Minister: the previous arrangements announced across the floor of this House, have those now been done away with, or does that entity still exist and still have a management role in some shape or form in the Europa Sports Complex? I know there are certain entities operating on a private catering basis there and so on, who I know have nothing at all to do with the GFA. We – and I am saying ‘we’ as sports
215 lovers and users – are at a bit of a loss as to the actual structure there. I am trying to get as much of an answer as possible now, because otherwise I will have to wait till probably nearly Christmastime before legitimately I can table a question again.

220 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I am really sorry but I am lost: in all of that, what is the question?

225 **Hon. E J Reyes:** If I break down the questions, then, Madam Speaker: the previously announced management structure by a company or trust, have they no longer any role to play – shall I start with that? – and it is now exclusively the GFA?

Hon. L M Bruzon: That is correct, Madam Speaker. The trust no longer has anything to do with the running of the facilities.

230 **Hon. E J Reyes:** And what arrangements then arise out of that? There are other entities – companies, I believe they are – that use the facilities, the indoor ones, from where they run businesses, like catering businesses and so on, not just to provide food and beverage for the spectators but they even prepare food and other similar supplies which are then taken out of the premises and actually –

Madam Speaker: I am going to press The hon. Member for the question.

235

Hon. E J Reyes: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I am asking: what are the arrangements for those entities that are not part of the GFA but operate businesses using the premises of the Europa sportsground, such as the catering ones?

240

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, if there are any businesses using the catering facilities, for example, I suppose that they will be able to carry on using them, as long as they carry on paying the rent.

245

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, the Minister is supposing. I am asking, so we have a record on *Hansard*: are these people licensed, or do they have a lease to use the premises? What exactly? What is their financial contribution?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I would need notice of that question.

250

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I can give notice, but with your leave I would need to raise that notice within the six-month period, which will be before Christmas.

255

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member could have filed that question for this session specifically this time around, but by all means file the question the hon. Member thinks is appropriate and we will have a discussion as to whether it is.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know I can come and seek your advice when it comes to that moment.

260

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just ask: has the change in management arrangements that now appear to be going to the GFA been with the consent of the structure that had been put in place some time ago?

265

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I have had numerous meetings with the different sporting associations that use the facilities, that call the facilities their home. I have had meetings with people who were involved in the setup of the structure, and everyone is in full agreement with the new change for the GFA and the GSLA.

270

Hon. C A Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I do not know if the Minister will afford me the luxury of asking a question which is slightly off but still to do with the complex, but from a sporting perspective, will the sports that call the Europa Sports Complex their home be affected in any way? In other words, will they continue to have the same use and availability that they did before?

275

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, they are more than welcome to call it their home. As an example, the Tercentenary Sports Hall is the home of basketball but it is also used by netball, volleyball and futsal. So, of course they can call it their home.

280

Hon. C A Sacarello: Thank you very much. I am sure they will be happy to call it their home. My question was more geared towards their use and timetabling of allocations at the venue: will that continue to be unimpeded, or will they be affected by the current management arrangements?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, if any sports were to be affected, they would be either cricket or rugby, which use the outdoor facilities, but there have been plenty of meetings between

the GFA, cricket and rugby with regard to each timetable and how they are going to work around
285 it, to make sure that everyone has the allocations that they require.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q497/2024
Lathbury Sports Complex –
Cafeteria

Clerk: Question 497. The Hon. E J Reyes.

290 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Government provide full details of any arrangements entered into to provide cafeteria facilities at Lathbury Sports Complex?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

295 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, the cafeteria facilities at Lathbury Sports Complex underwent a public tender process organised under the auspices of the Land Property Services. The successful tenderer was the Mindspace Project. The charity is now working hard to get the area fully operational.

300 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am sorry, Madam Speaker, because I have a hearing impairment, can the Minister please repeat who the successful tenderer was?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Certainly, Madam Speaker, it is called the Mindspace Project. It is a local charity.

305

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. E J Reyes: May I, Madam Speaker? The Mindspace Project is probably a registered company. I know the official answer will be that we can go and do a search or whatever, but are
310 they particularly affiliated or form part of any already existing sporting bodies? If I can draw a parallel, I know other places where a particular entity or sporting-type organisation has been given that, and then they come up with a more legitimate type of business. Is this a purely civilian-type organisation, or is it a company that is closely tied with any sporting association or entity?

315 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the Mindspace Project is a local charity that works in the area of mental health, not only but mainly with young children.

Hon. E J Reyes: And I take it, Madam Speaker, that they are a registered company and will be
320 subject to all the rules and regulations that companies have. Because there has been a connection with a charity thing, do they pay company tax like other companies, or are they exempt because they are a charitable institution? Does the Minister have any further information on that?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, from what I understand, the charity has been running for
325 a number of years, and the cafeteria will be run as a business but the profits from the business will be put into the charity.

Hon. E J Reyes: And they are not subject to the company taxation?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, the cafeteria element will be subject to all the laws and requirements that any other business would have.

330

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q498/2024
Children's play parks –
Provision of shaded areas

Clerk: Question 498. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Does the Government have any intention to provide shaded areas in respect of both equipment and seating facilities at all our children's play parks?

335

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam Speaker, we are currently investigating the feasibility of providing more shaded areas at some of our children's play parks.

340

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that it is being looked into. Can I press the Minister for some sort of timescale? With the much hotter weather... I know a lot of this play equipment, mainly for safety reasons, is made of hard, durable plastics and so on, which tend to heat up and become unusable on children's skin, especially children who wear shorts. I have seen children jumping off these contraptions because they could not bear the heat. Given that we are now officially in the summer season, does the Minister have any timeframe that he is aiming for?

345

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, the timeframe, as always, is as quickly as we can. The problem is that there are certain parks, like the ones down at Catalan Bay, where it is quite easy to have sails to protect equipment from the sun, but there are other parks, like Europa, which are very big and subject to winds, so we have to be very careful with what we plan for up there.

350

Madam Speaker: Next question.

355

Q499/2024
Pickleball –
Facilities

Clerk: Question 499. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Does the Government have any plans to construct or grant licences to any other entities to provide pickleball sporting facilities in Gibraltar?

360

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam Speaker, we are currently exploring all options in relation to the provision of specific pickleball

365 facilities. One such project, which we are hoping to start soon, is the renovation of the tennis court
at the Mount, where the court itself will have a dual purpose as either a tennis court or four
pickleball courts.

Hon. E J Reyes: I think we had a brief exchange last time on the Mount court, and I wanted to
370 be supportive of the Minister at the time.

May I start by asking, Madam Speaker, would this project, whether it is a refurbished tennis
court or pickleball facilities, end up forming part of those falling under the auspices of the GSLA?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Yes, Madam Speaker, the aim is to have the tennis court, pickleball courts
375 and one padel court, which would come under the GSLA.

Hon. E J Reyes: I know, Madam Speaker, that in a few days' time we are going to go into the
Budget session and perhaps we can look into some of the details there, but would this be
government funded out of the Improvement and Development Fund projects, or is there a private
380 entity that has just decided to donate the funds, or otherwise?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, it is privately funded as a donation.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, curiosity beats me: what does the private donor get out of it?
385 I know no one give things away gratis and for nothing.

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, just giving back to the community is enough for some
people.

Hon. E J Reyes: I know I am being pedantic, but just double checking: although it may come
390 from these very generous private funds and so on, it will remain exclusively a government-owned
facility managed by a government-owned authority such as the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure
Authority? Or do we owe anything, managerial or whatever, to this donor?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, as per my reply moments ago, it will come under the GSLA.
395

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask who the private donor is?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Yes, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman can ask, and an
400 announcement will be made on inauguration or at another moment when the private donor
considers it is helpful that we should make that announcement. There is no question of this private
donor remaining private or confidential, but it is just a question of choosing the right moment to
make the announcement in respect of someone who wants to give something positive and
something back to this community. They already provide a lot in other sectors and they want to
405 also add their contribution to the field of sport, something which the Government warmly
welcomes and is a demonstration that there are those who do not just contribute in the usual
direct way through their corporations and other methods of taxation but also want to go the extra
mile of contributing in other areas in support of the community, something which no doubt will
be warmly welcomed across the floor of the House.

410

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand at the moment he is judging properly
whether to use it as a tennis court or a pickleball facility. Can the Minister confirm that he has
been in discussions with those sports that are part of the wider family, like padel tennis and so
on? If I may add to that, tennis was officially known as lawn tennis. Other than a private club that
415 exists, there is only one other available tennis court in Gibraltar, the one based at the Bayside

Sports Centre, so unless you are a member of a particular private club, your use of tennis facilities is limited, and a similar setup perhaps exists in the heavy demand I know there is for allocation in respect of padel tennis ... who built up their hopes that more and –

420 **Madam Speaker:** May I press the hon. Member for a question?

Hon. E J Reyes: [*Inaudible*] ... enter into a discussion that could lead him, or not, to provide facilities for what, after all, is a brand-new sport in Gibraltar, because I do not believe there is any entity or official association registered as pickleball in Gibraltar, yet there is in respect of tennis and padel tennis.

425

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I am having discussions with all the stakeholders.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q503/2024

Mobility scooter charging points – Number and location

430 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change. Question 503. The Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government clarify how many charging points for mobility scooters are currently operational, and the location of each of these points?

435

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. There is one charging point for mobility scooters funded by the Government, which is located between Casemates Square and Main Street. The Ministry is actively reviewing other areas for mobility scooter charging points.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I am grateful. I was aware of the location between Casemates and Main Street, and yet I have heard from those unfortunate people who depend heavily on mobility scooters that it seems that that charging point – I do not know if it still is, but very recently – was blocked with a new e-scooter parking bay. Is the Minister aware that access to that point ...? As most mobility scooter users tend to be elderly, people find it extremely difficult to get to the charging point itself.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, no requests and no complaints have been received by my team. I believe that there was one elderly gentleman who used it particularly and, sadly, that gentleman passed away. We have had no complaints that anybody else who wants to use it has difficulty accessing it, but now that the hon. Member has raised it, I will make sure it is checked and, if that is the case, that we allow a passageway should anybody else want to use it.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I am extremely grateful, Madam Speaker. It was an elderly lady, actually, not a gentleman, who passed this on to me. I do see her occasionally. I can double check, and if I do get

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confirmation, I will let the Minister know in our usual cordial, friendly manner. I want to place on record that I am grateful that the Minister has taken it on board and will check it, because this point seems to have been, because of its location, extremely popular when someone reaches Main Street and they find they have little power left. I will leave it at that and express my gratitude.

Hon. A Sanchez: And given the number of individuals that use mobility scooters, does the Hon. Minister have any more information he can provide regarding the locations or the number of mobility scooters they envisage they will be providing?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker. This is an initiative of ours, wanting to provide more, but we are not in receipt of representations or of a large demand, which surprises me, if there is such a demand, that it has not come our way. Nevertheless, we feel it is a facility that we should provide and the team is looking at different areas, mainly within the Town area, which is where it is more likely that elderly people or people with conditions that require the assistance of a mobility scooter would like to move around, so this is something that we are looking at.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q504/2024
Disabled parking bays –
Numbers

Clerk: Question 504. The Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government state the number of disabled parking bays in Gibraltar for the following years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 to the present date?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the number of disabled parking bays is reviewed at intervals, and so I can provide figures as at 2018 and 2024 as follows. In 2018, a total of 157 accessible bays and 14 time-restricted three-hour maximum stay accessible bays. In 2024, at present we have 156 accessible bays and 17 time-restricted three-hour maximum stay accessible bays.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, is the Minister satisfied on the ratio? I know he has just explained to us that you have those disabled parking bays that have time limits. The advantage of that is that people who need to go on a particular errand or whatever can use one for a reasonable length of time. Yet in other places, we find that they have become the permanent home, without even having to purchase zone parking, for some individuals. Areas near the Children's Health Centre come to mind. I met a grandmother who had to take her grandson to the Children's Health Centre, and this lady complained, 'Every time I go there, it is always the same car parked there 24/7.' Sometimes it seems that that car does not even have a Gibraltar-issued disabled parking permit but one issued from another country, which it seems we have chosen to recognise, yet other countries outside Gibraltar do not recognise ours.

500 So, my question is: is the Minister satisfied with that ratio? We are all in favour of the concept that parking bays are available for disabled people to go to for a particular purpose, but in practice they have become the permanent free, gratis and for-nothing parking spots for some individuals.

505 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** So, the question, Madam Speaker, is whether I am satisfied about the ...?

Hon. E J Reyes: About the number of parking –

510 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I see, about the ratio. Madam Speaker, I am aware that, as in everything else, some of the bays are abused, and this is something that the traffic wardens regularly monitor. It is not an easy thing, because when you challenge somebody there is always some explanation as to why they have been there for a length of time. These requests are put to the Traffic Commission, which is an independent commission that makes recommendations. I will ask the Traffic Commission whether they feel that there should be some change in that ratio.

515 Without having the information right now as to specifically where each of those parking bays is – it is information that I can gather – I do not want to commit as to whether I am personally satisfied, but I always welcome the possibility of reviewing things and I will ask the Traffic Commission to look at this.

520 **Hon. D J Bossino:** On the basis, Madam Speaker, that there does not seem to have been much in the way of movement in the figures between 2018 and 2024, can I ask the Hon. the Minister whether this is in any way policy driven? In other words, is it something which he, his Department and the Government have taken a view on, that there will not necessarily be an increment of those numbers? It has remained pretty much static for a considerable period of time.

525 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, normally, where there are people who feel they would benefit from the use of a disabled parking bay, they make an approach either to the Ministry or to the Traffic Commission, and these are discussed on their merits. There are regular requests for specific areas. I am not aware of clamouring for the creation of more, so I suspect we probably are somewhere close to what we need; otherwise, I think we would be in receipt of more requests. 530 But as I said, whenever anybody feels that they should have access to an accessible bay, it is put to the Traffic Commission and they consider the parking situation in the area and will then make the necessary recommendations. I am open to consider and review, as I said, always wanting to improve what we provide.

535 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Do I gather from that response that the Hon. Minister is saying that as far as the Traffic Commission is concerned, there is not a maximum number? He said that they work independently. One assumes that they work under some sort of statutory discretionary process, but they are not subjected to a maximum number.

540 May I also ask him this, by way of further question on the response he has just given: is it the case that there are two avenues open to potential applicants? Is it the case that they may apply to the Traffic Commission, which he said in the initial response is an independent statutory body which takes its decisions independently of him and his Department, but a separate avenue open to them is that they can make the application to his Department? I thought that I saw a distinction in his response.

545 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that there is no maximum and no minimum, clearly. Both avenues are the same because any requests that are made to my Transport team or me are always referred to the Traffic Commission for their views. There is no way that I would consider myself in a position to allocate directly. I would always refer it to the 550 Traffic Commission.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q505/2024

**Accessible equipment for persons with disabilities on beaches –
Contract for maintenance**

Clerk: Question 505. The Hon. A Sanchez.

555 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government confirm which entity is subcontracted for the maintenance of all accessible equipment for persons with disabilities on our beaches? Could the Government please specify the date of commencement of the contract and the amount paid per year, broken down per financial year, since the commencement of the contract?

560 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, there is no contract. Work is carried out as required by the Mobility Care Centre, which is the only entity in Gibraltar that the Department is aware can provide such a service.

565 I now hand over the schedule with the financial information requested.

Answer to Question 505/2024

Financial Year	Total
2017/18	£6,120
2018/19	£4,505
2019/21	£9,791
2021/22	£20,995
2022/23	£5,270
2023/24	£3,789
2024/25	£17,145

Madam Speaker: Let's move on to the next question. The hon. Member can then ask supplementaries when she has had a chance to consider the schedule.

Q506/2024

**Three strikes system for taxi licensees –
Rollout**

Clerk: Question 506. The Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, by when does the Government expect to roll out the three strikes system to taxi licensees found liable for breaching their obligations under the transport legislation?

575 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the three strikes system is already in place, along with the increase in fines for those who breach their obligations. The Transport Commission will be the body that enforces the three-strike rule.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q507-08/2024

ConSen tunnel –

Plans; whether by tender process or private investment

Clerk: Question 507. The Hon. G Origo.

585 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Government expand on what plans it has for the ConSen tunnel transport link and how it will ensure it will become a bona fide new tourist attraction?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 508.

Clerk: Question 508. The Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Will the Government be issuing a tender process for the proposed ComSen tunnel transport link project; and, if not, what private sector investors has it engaged instead?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, we are still in the preliminary stages of looking at options and are not able to comment further at this stage.

605 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. Member for that answer, but may I just quickly ask – as I know that when announcing this project it was announced that it would be a transport tunnel link for bicycles – whether the Hon. Minister has considered whether pedestrians, cars and bikes will be allowed to go through the ComSen tunnel?

610 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is too early. We are looking at all the different stakeholders, all the different possibilities, but we have not gelled our plans in such a way that it would be helpful at all if I were to share any of the preliminary discussions that have been held.

615 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I appreciate that the Minister says they are at the preliminary stages, but as a matter of principle, once they conclude those discussions, the matter will go out to tender?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Member mind repeating the question? I did not catch it.

620 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, of course. We appreciate that the Minister has said that they are in the preliminary stages, but as a matter of principle, once those discussions are over will the project go out to tender?

625 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is too early to commit to that. We do not really know how viable the project is. It is really a little bit too early for me to share any further information.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, I understand the Minister's caveat as to the viability. I am asking him, if they were to determine that it is viable, would it go out for tender, or is it that they are proceeding on the basis that another option to see it to a conclusion is being considered?

630 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we would have to look at a number of options. It is verging on the hypothetical.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q509-10/2024
Witham's Cemetery –
Restoration works; intention to open to the public

Clerk: Question 509. The Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister provide an update on the progress of the restoration works at Witham's Cemetery; and by when does he expect these works to finish?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 510.

Clerk: Question 510. The Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, is it still the Government's plan to open Witham's Cemetery to the public once the restoration works are complete?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate change.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, this project has been prepared, funded and executed by the Gibraltar Heritage Trust with the support of the Government but is not a Government project. However, I can report, in relation to Question 510, that the cemetery has been open to the public since June 2022 daily, from sunrise to sunset.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q511/2024
Dive operators –
Policy re regulation in BGTW

Clerk: Question 511. The Hon. G Origo.

660 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, what is the Government's policy for regulating dive operators in Gibraltar territorial waters?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

665 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, Government's policy for regulating dive operators in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters is set out in the Marine Protection Regulations 2014 and is based on a permitting system. Clauses

29 to 32 of the aforementioned Regulations detail the provisions of the permitting system, otherwise known as a Class G permit.

670 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his answer. In answer to last month's questions, in May, it was reported that 23 dive operator permits have been issued since 2014, yet zero penalties have been issued to date to operators for breaches of licence conditions. Zero permits have been revoked to date. So, may I ask the Hon. Minister who is responsible for carrying out the enforcement supervision of tour operators and whether he is
675 happy with their performance?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the enforcement team at the Department of the Environment, the Environmental Protection and Research Unit, is the entity that would enforce, as they will if there are any breaches that it is aware of.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q512/2024
Tuna fishing –
Policy re regulation in BGTW

Clerk: Question 512. The Hon. G Origo.

685 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, what is the Government's policy for regulating tuna fishing in Gibraltar territorial waters?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

690 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government's policy for regulating tuna fishing in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters is enshrined in the Tuna Preservation Regulations 2014. These Regulations cover the permitting system known as a Class K licence, including specific licence conditions, as well as the total allowable catch and open season restrictions.

695 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his answer. May I just highlight, similarly to the point made on dive operators, that it is noted that in answers to last month's questions a total of 2,359 permits have been issued to date, since 2014, yet none of these have been revoked? A total of 17 penalties have been issued in 10 years. A further 42 confiscations of fish have happened since 2014; 64% of these happened in 2014 alone. So, may I ask the Hon.
700 Minister: have enforcement measures in this area been relaxed; and, if not, how does he explain the reduction in confiscations?

705 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, quite the contrary. I think the fact that the enforcement was so strict in 2014 has meant that the tuna fishermen have realised that they cannot get away with what they used to get away with before we introduced the regulations in 2014. Hence the drop in these infractions. The tuna fishing fraternity in Gibraltar has become much more organised and much more regulated, and that is why we have seen that decrease that the hon. Member has pointed out.

710 **Hon. G Origo:** I am very grateful, Madam Speaker. If I may ask, finally: who, or what authority is responsible for carrying out the enforcement measures of the Government's policy in open waters?

715 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, once again, it is the Environmental Protection and Research Unit. Where there are instances of non-local fishermen – and there are implications as to whether we are on the edge of BGT or not on occasions – the Royal Gibraltar Police or Customs will assist, but that is not normally required.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q513-16/2024
Careers Advisory Service –
Plans; qualifications and experience of advisers and whether paid of voluntary;
availability to students abroad

720 **Clerk:** Question 513. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Government expand on its plans for a school-based Careers Advisory Service for young people? For instance, what hours will the service be available and who will be providing these services?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 514 to 516.

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Clerk: Question 514. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: What qualifications and/or experience will those giving careers advice at the Careers Advisory Service be required to have?

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Clerk: Question 515 The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How does the Government propose to make the Careers Advisory Service available to those youths studying abroad?

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Clerk: Question 516. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Will the Careers Advisory Service be a paid role or carried out as volunteer work?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

750 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this set of questions asks for details that have not yet been determined. I will, therefore, give a more general reply, referring in broader terms to careers advice policy, partly because the approach to careers advice has evolved and is much more holistic and strategic.

The Department of Education has been working on developing a more service-wide strategic approach to careers advice and future pathway guidance for the children and young people under

its care. This work has very much been school based and facilitated through the learning and teaching curriculum within schools. This more strategic approach has included dialogue across multiple educational settings and across numerous educational sectors. There has also been very fruitful engagement with colleagues in the Youth Service and professionals from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and emerging dialogue between the Department of Education and key representatives from numerous Government Departments and private sector industries, in order to further develop the strategic approach to developing skills, identifying competencies and appropriate qualifications and/or pathways which align with careers and with industry preferences or requirements.

Whereas this consistent effort is of more long-term value than singular events, the latter are helpful also. There has been some incredibly successful partnership working with a fantastic Future Pathways event, providing year 12 students with an opportunity to attend workshops, engage directly with professionals from a large number of different fields within industry, develop their CV-writing skills and acquire relevant current knowledge which will enable them to make more informed decisions about their future. The Government is also currently working on reintroducing a careers fair.

The Department of Education is actively working to develop a more strategic approach and age-appropriate guidance for younger learners, with plans to extend the career and future pathway focus within the learning and teaching curriculum to pupils in Key Stages 4, 3 and below, further developing the service-wide strategic approach to pupils' life journeys, skill development, self-awareness and career direction.

At present, there are no plans to extend this service to young people at university. Universities have career services which can better provide their students with bespoke advice and guidance. The Department of Education's career advice focus is very much school based and intrinsically linked with the Department of Education's vision for education, which is to develop children and young people holistically, in a manner which focuses on their skills development and which helps them contribute to society positively in meaningful and fulfilling ways.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the Hon. Minister for his answer. However, may I just press him for a clarification on one of the points he has just made? I noted, whilst listening to his answer, that he did mention that the Careers Advisory Service, when it is developed, will not be extended to university students. However, referring to their manifesto, at page 121, in the part which deals with the Careers Advisory Service, it reads:

In order to assist these, both those young people who want to pursue higher education and those who will seek employment, we will set up a schools based careers advisory service. This will be extended to providing advice to Gibraltar students studying abroad.

So, I would ask the Hon. Minister to clarify the comment he has just made, that the Careers Advisory Service will not be extended to University, with the manifesto commitment that was given by his party.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I qualified that paragraph with 'at present' there are no plans. To a large extent, clearly, if young people at university come to the Department of Education for advice, they will get it, but it is true that universities have more specialised and focused advice available to students within their particular university. I did qualify with 'at present'. As I said at the beginning, we have not yet determined the detail of the careers service. It is not that we are going to exclude it completely, but at present we have not developed it.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Just to pull the thread from that, at present there are no plans but in October 2023 there were plans. Is that the case?

800 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, we have the whole lifetime of this Parliament to develop. Those are the intentions, and I am talking specifically about workstreams which have not yet developed those plans.

805 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I think my hon. colleague was asking specifically about the paragraph in the manifesto, and the Hon. Minister responded that at present there were no plans. I was seeking to clarify that surely the position must be that at present there are plans. The plans are in the manifesto. It cannot be that there are no plans.

810 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** No, Madam Speaker, at present there are plans that there will be plans.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Reyes had a question.

815 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I may home in more specifically on Question 515, the Minister said that for those students studying abroad ... and I concur with the analysis that there are careers advisory services available in some universities, but being more home related, can the Minister confirm that he, somehow or other, has some dialogue with the Minister for Employment? If I can give you an example, having been a university student, I may get general information on something, but I know that in respect of accountants – who are like
820 Marmite, you either like them or you hate them – there seems to be a shortage in Gibraltar, where we have to import accountants. We have accountants who are Members of this House who would gladly offer career advice to anyone wishing to take it. Can we have some confirmation that there is some sort of rapport and interchange of ideas for the future needs of Gibraltar, specifically the Minister for Employment and even with the Minister for Economic Development, who has
825 fantastic ideas for the future, but someone has to listen to him?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am going to address both. The advice to university students is available in universities. We intend to provide that here, but at present we are planning it; we have not developed that yet. The more urgent thing is to help those young people within
830 our education system now, and I have expounded all the work that is being done with industry, with different sectors, within our schools, to provide careers advice in a holistic kind of way.

Having dealt with that, there is a lot of close co-operation with my friend and colleague the Minister for Employment and Training. We have held meetings together and there are workstreams which will assist in the very joined-up manner that the hon. Member is hoping is
835 happening. Madam Speaker, it is happening.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

840 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Plans to plan, and lots of words, Madam Speaker. There is one specific question which was posed by my friend here, Question 516, which related to whether the Careers Advisory Service would be a paid role. He says that he is not yet in a position to provide the answers to that question because the service has not yet been formulated; the position is not so crystallised to allow the Hon. the Minister to provide an answer. Can I, therefore, ask him when he thinks he will be in a position to provide answers to these specific questions, which remain
845 unanswered?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, within the lifetime of this Parliament.

Q505/2024

**Accessible equipment for persons with disabilities on beaches –
Contract for maintenance –
Supplementary questions**

Madam Speaker: Before we move on to the next question, I am going to revert to Question 505. Are there any supplementaries arising from that?

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, in relation to the Mobility Care Centre, I believe the hon. Member said was the name of the company, just to understand it a bit better, the hon. Member is saying that the Government subcontracts the company in the event of repairs but the Government has not entered a contract with the company for the maintenance of the accessibility equipment – is that correct?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, there is no contract as such, but there is engagement with that entity. They provide equipment and they repair and maintain it on an as-needs basis. The costs are in the schedule that I provided.

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Hon. A Sanchez: But can the Hon. Minister confirm whether the Government is in any form of service agreement with the Mobility Care Centre for services provided by this company, either these services or similar services?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there is an arrangement with the entity. I do not have the full details of what that is. It was something that was inherited by the Department of Environment in 2017 from the Care Agency. As I said, it is an arrangement whereby the repairs are carried out on an as-needs basis, depending on what the equipment needs in any particular year.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I think, Madam Speaker, we had a similar issue arising in the context of the Care Agency about two sessions ago. As I understand it, from what the Hon. the Minister is telling us, there is, in effect, an agreement, a contract legally, and he says that he does not have the information. Should we ask specific questions in relation to that next time? The Hon. the Minister would be in a position to provide specific answers in relation to what those arrangements are. But may I ask him this: is it the intention of the Minister to enter into a formal contract with this particular service provider, or indeed to open it out for tender, which is what his hon. Friend in the Care Agency is doing in respect of respite services?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the arrangement is working well. I will consult the Department to see how they feel about that. I think it is important that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. We have had very positive comments this year on the service that has been provided, but I will discuss with the Members of the Department who deal with this on a day-to-day basis, to see whether we need to change the way we approach this.

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Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Looking at the schedule that the Minister kindly passed round, these are the actual costs incurred, as and when the need arose, for the works to be carried out. I see that in the last one, referring to 2024-25, I presume – I hope I am right that that is for the financial year that commenced on 1st April – in less than three months, is it correct that we have already spent over £17,000, and that just covers the first quarter of this financial

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year? Can I have confirmation? And, if so, why such a huge expense compared to the two previous years?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: There is a very easy reason: we have to spend the money before the beach season starts, so we have to spend it early in the financial year to make sure that the equipment is ready for the beach. Other than repairs that may be necessary during the summer, we do not expect there to be much expenditure after that.

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I know for a fact that this year, because one young person has grown we had to specifically buy some other facilities to accommodate the growth of this young person, and that took quite a chunk out of the funds, but you would expect to have the expenditure loaded towards the beginning of the financial year because it is something that has to be ready for the summer.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, one can understand that the bulk of the expenditure will come in the first quarter of the financial year, but the second part of my supplementary question was why such a huge difference compared to 2023-24 to 2022-23? Forget 2017, just look at the last three years: it has tripled, quadrupled, compared to last year or the year before. Some mysterious or unknown expenditure has been incurred.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, but Madam Speaker, 2021-22 was a higher expenditure. I suspect – and I do not have that information here – that the equipment will have a certain lifespan and that after a certain number of years you will have to replace the bulk of it, but I do not have the breakdown, item by item, of when and where it has been purchased. If the hon. Member wants me to go into that detail, I can obtain it, but I do not think it is particularly useful or relevant. I can imagine that this is probably cyclical.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I thank the Hon. Minister for his offer. Yes, I would like to have the detail. I have sat on that side of the House and when I look at the answers from statistics prepared for me by officials, it sticks out like a sore thumb. I ask for details because I suspect, in all probability, I will get questioned on it. I am grateful that the Minister is willing to undertake that and provide us with the further details. Thank you.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q517-18/2024

Teachers –

Number retiring; anticipated number of new teachers

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Clerk: Question 517. The Hon. J. Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many teachers are retiring at the end of this current academic year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 518.

Clerk: Question 518. The Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: How many new teachers are envisaged to be contracted on a substantive basis as from the start of the 2024-25 academic year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there are no teachers retiring actually at the end of this academic year. However, as at projected figures now, there are 5 teachers retiring at the very beginning of the next academic year. For all intents and purposes, I think that is the information that the hon. Member requested.

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In answer to Question 518, there are 14 permanent teacher vacancies available.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can understand, in the answer to Question 517, that there is a specific reason why many teachers put down a retirement date of 1st September rather than 31st August: it does have a small adjustment on their pension for those still on a pension scheme based on their present salary. I am glad to note that if the permanent complement loses five for retirement, those numbers are then being increased to 14. Can I ask for further confirmation? Is it because there has been an increase in number, or is it because there were other vacancies that were being covered during the last year by those on the supply list? I know the Minister has worked very hard to make sure that vacant posts are covered, even if it is just by temporary cover, but at least physically there is a qualified teacher in the classroom. Can he confirm which one it is?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, that is due to retirements during the course of the year. There are 5 in respect of the first question, but there are another 9 who have gone during the course of the year, and therefore it is 14 that are vacant by the start of the next academic year.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q519/2024

School TLR posts –

Results of review and number of unfilled posts

Clerk: Question 519. The Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Has the Department of Education now completed its review of TLR posts at all schools, and how many TLR posts are still not filled on a substantive basis?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Department of Education has been progressing the review of the TLR posts that had been pending. 8 of the posts that were previously pending, and had been for a number of years, have now been clarified and have already been recruited for, with the successful applicants expected to take up their appointments in September 2024. 14 of the pending posts are under the final stages of review, with discussions with staff members and the union expected to be completed in term 1 of academic year 2024-25. A further five pending posts are College TLR positions which still require further consideration.

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In total there are currently 38 TLR posts not filled in a substantive capacity: (a) the 19 pending TLRs mentioned above; (b) a further 16, which have already been recruited for and will be filled

980 in a substantive capacity by September 2024; (c) and a further 3 which will imminently be advertised.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful and I note satisfaction with the fair amount of progress that has been made. Just on the last one, we have 16 that will be taken up as from 1st September, but the others that he hopes to advertise shortly – is the Minister able to commit that he will do his utmost that, at least within the first term of the forthcoming academic year, those will be settled?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, when I say imminently, I think it is within the next few days. The intention is to recruit them and identify them before the beginning of the term in September.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q520-22/2024

Hair and Beauty vocational courses at Bayside and Westside Schools and the College – Numbers of students involved, grades achieved and costs

Clerk: Question 520. The Hon. E J Reyes.

995 **Hon. E J Reyes:** What results or grades were obtained by students who followed the Hair and Beauty course at both Bayside and Westside Schools during the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 521 and 522.

Clerk: Question 521. The Hon. J. Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: What is the total cost in respect of the Hair and Beauty vocational courses delivered at Bayside and Westside Schools during the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, and how many students were enrolled and completed these courses?

1010 **Clerk:** Question 522. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: What is the total cost in respect of the Certificate in Hairdressing vocational courses delivered by the Gibraltar College of Further Education during the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, how many students were enrolled and completed these courses and what results grades were achieved by students?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the results/grades of pupils who completed the Hair and Beauty Course at both Bayside and Westside Schools in academic year 2022-23 are in the public domain, as they were reported through a government press release in August 2023. The results/grades of pupils who have completed the Hair and Beauty course at both Bayside and

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Westside Schools in academic year 2023-24 are not yet known. These pupils completed the work this summer and are now awaiting their results. Results are expected in August 2024.

1025 In answer to Question 521, the total cost in respect of the Hair and Beauty vocational courses delivered at Bayside and Westside Schools during academic year 2022-23 has already been presented to Parliament in answer to Question 558/23. To date, the total cost of the Hair and Beauty vocational courses delivered at Bayside and Westside Schools during the academic year 1030 2023-24 is £32,968.71. These courses are two-year courses delivered at Key Stage 4 level, during young people's year 10 and year 11 journey. As such, there are two cohorts within each academic year stated within the question, one cohort commencing the course in year 10, and another cohort completing the two-year qualification over the course of year 11.

1035 I now hand over a schedule which details the number of pupils who enrolled in each cohort at the start of year 10, and also the number of pupils who completed the course at the end of the two years.

Answer to Question 521/2024

	Year 11 Cohort	Year 10 Cohort
This academic year 2023/2024	Bayside	Bayside
	12 students completed the course Westside Group B	5 students enrolled on the course Westside
	6 students completed the course	7 students enrolled on the course
Last academic year 2022/2023	Bayside	Bayside
	4 students completed the course Westside Group A	14 students enrolled on the course Westside
	4 students completed the course	7 students enrolled on the course

1040 In answer to Question 522, which is the one relating to the College, the total cost in respect of the Certificate in Hairdressing vocational courses delivered by the Gibraltar College during academic year 2022-23 has already been presented to Parliament in answer to Question 558/23. The total cost of the Certificate in Hairdressing vocational courses delivered by the Gibraltar College during academic year 2023-24 is nil, as no students enrolled on this course in September 1045 2023. This qualification is a one-year course. There were four students who enrolled on the course at the start of the academic year 2022-23. Three students completed the course in the summer of 2023, with two achieving merit results, and a third, who initially was awarded a fail outcome, subsequently passing the course with a merit at the next earliest opportunity. There have not been any students enrolled on this course during the academic year 2023-24.

Hon. E J Reyes: First of all, Madam Speaker, is there a particular reason why no students have been enrolled on the 2023-24 course? Is it because of the cost?

1050 **Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member is referring to Question 522?

Hon. E J Reyes: Sorry, Madam Speaker, yes, I am referring to the last answer the Minister gave me. He said there were no new students enrolled on the 2023-24 course. Is it because there were no takers or because the course was not offered?

1055 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I do not know whether they are mutually exclusive. There were no takers. The reasons could be several, many or none in particular. What I can say is that it is expected that there will be young people enrolled this year on that course, because there are some in Bayside and Westside doing their level, which is really a precursor to the College, who are doing very well and seem to be very keen. So, I think this year we will be able to enrol some students, but the
1060 decision will depend on the results this year as to whether they take the course next year.

Hon. E J Reyes: I understand the decisions cannot be taken before.

Madam Speaker, going to Question 520, which was the first one from this particular batch, the results and grades obtained by students. It is understandable for those following the course in
1065 2023-24 that results normally come in August, so those are not yet available, but were there no the statistics? Did no one undertake any examinations during the academic year 2022-23, or is that the date when the course started and therefore all the students were then in year 10? I need clarification because of my confusion.

1070 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, what I said is that those results are public. They were issued in a government press release in August 2023.

Hon. E J Reyes: The Minister referred me to Question 558/2023. That is in respect of the cost. I did not get any details, or perhaps I did not make a note, of where exactly I may find the
1075 examination results – a detailed breakdown, how many of any particular grade or if indeed, unfortunately, there were any ... or whatever for the 2022-23 course.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: The government press release that is issued every August with the results of the examinations.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Can he pinpoint the press release number?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I cannot. It is in the public domain; I am sure he could Google it right now. This information will follow, but it is there, it is in the public domain. He could
1085 have ...

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I accept I can Google it. If he does not have it, he does not have it; I will have to lump it.

1090 **Madam Speaker:** Any other supplementaries? Next question

Q523/2024
Campion Park play area –
Wood chippings

Clerk: 523. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, is the Government aware of concerns expressed by parents and users in respect of the wood chippings at Campion Park play areas, which are covered in filth
1095 and dust, and what remedial action has been planned?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the bark chippings that we use for the play area – singular, not plural as in the question; there is one play area – are of a specification recommended by the designers of the park, who contracted children’s play park specialists to advise on all aspects of the park design, including the type of substrate used. An independent professional on health and safety in children’s parks was also engaged to sign off on all aspects of the play park, and training was provided to staff in addition. The bark typically produces less dust than would, for example, a sand or soil substrate, but it does degrade and is therefore monitored and replenished when necessary. When it is nearing the end of its cycle, it tends to produce more dust, but we reject the term ‘filth’, the *Oxford Dictionary* definition of which is ‘any very dirty and unpleasant substance’, which is completely inappropriate for a natural and harmless material such as bark. The plan is, of course, to replenish the bark chippings as usual.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My opening words in the question are ‘Is the Government aware ...?’ The Minister has not told me if has been aware or if it had been reported to him. Was he aware, or not?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I was aware from the question but we have had no complaints or representations, because this is the normal cycle and after a certain period of time the chippings are replaced as per the specifications and recommendations of the experts.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, I accept that, Madam Speaker. If, in the future, any parents wish to express concerns, can the Hon. Minister advise these parents how they can make him aware of the situation?

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, as I shared with the whole of the community during the last *Direct Democracy* – perhaps too often for the hon. Gentleman’s comfort – john.cortes@gibraltar.gov.gi.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q524/2024
Levant Battery 9.2-inch gun –
Plans

Clerk: Question 524. The Hon. C Sacarello.

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Hon. C A Sacarello: What are the plans for the Levant Battery 9.2-inch gun, once destined to be displayed at Europa Point?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, after 50 years of neglect, this Government, in collaboration with several key entities, successfully removed the 9.2-inch gun barrel, carriage and pedestal from the Metalrok Eco Park on Flint Road. Our preferred option is to return it to its original site at Levant Battery, although

1140 logistical challenges and road weight restrictions are making this difficult due to its weight.
However, this remains the preferred location.

Hon. C A Sacarello: Madam Speaker, thank you very much to the Minister for his reply. Could he please inform us why the destination has been changed from Europa Point back to Levant Battery?

1145 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, because in Europa Point it would be outside its historical context. That gun was never there. It is a massive gun, which would change the nature of Europa Point; it is not in context. Increasingly when you restore heritage, one wants to put it in its original context, so we are still looking at Levant Battery as the logical place to return it to. If that appears
1150 to be completely impossible – I am not convinced it is completely impossible, and we are looking at various options – then we would have to look at an alternative position, if indeed we want to mount it and replace it. But at this point in time, Levant Battery is where the Levant Battery gun should ideally go.

1155 **Hon. C A Sacarello:** And does the Hon. Minister have a timeframe as to when it will be decided whether it is surmountable or not?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Within the lifetime of this Parliament, Madam Speaker, but just to add that we are in contact with a UK entity which specialises in this sort of restoration, and hopefully
1160 they will come up with a scheme.

Hon. C A Sacarello: And can the hon. Member confirm whether the carriage and pedestal to which he referred will also be preserved? At one point it was mooted that they may be split up, but obviously these, being a rarity, would deserve to be preserved.

1165 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if we are able to get it back to Levant Battery, the whole gun will be mounted. If not, then we have to see what visual impact there would be as to whether the barrel would be displayed. But, for the moment, the intention is to keep it all together and to put it back there. If it appears that that is completely impossible ... It was taken away, so in theory
1170 it could be taken back, but we are looking at the logistics of it. It is not easy; it is complicated.

Hon. D J Bossino: But may I ask the Hon. the Minister why has it taken them so long? I cannot remember the exact date, and it will be in the public domain, but as things stand, the 9.2 gun was removed from the scrapyard in Devil's Tower Road to a scrapyard in Europa Point. Is that the sum
1175 total of progress as far as this Government is concerned? May I ask him what has taken them so long to now decide to even change the location of it?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, that which the hon. Gentleman has described sounds to me like a whole lot more progress than when they were in government, which
1180 was that the gun that he is referring to was at the same scrapheap for 16 years. I think that the Hon. Minister has today told the House of much more considerable progress than hon. Members can point to in the time that they were in office. Therefore, we are very satisfied that we are making much more progress than we made in the time that they were in office.

1185 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Much more progress? This is total lack of planning. Will he not agree with me that it has gone from scrapyard A to scrapyard B and nothing has happened? He says that they are now thinking of changing the location from Europa Point to the Levant Battery. How much is that going to cost the taxpayer? Does he have that information, or does he not have that information? Again, it is going to be another feature of lack of planning on their part.

1190 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I know that the hon. Gentleman wants to create a sense
of outrage in everything that he does. In that case, (**Hon. D J Bossino:** Outrageous.) I would have
thought that it was –

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. Member not comment from a sedentary position?

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Hon. Chief Minister: – perhaps not the choicest question for him to choose, because, of course,
as the hon. Member has said, we have not just moved the gun from where it was totally
abandoned in their time, in the context of the most abject lack of planning to plan anything to do
with the gun, we have actually moved it, treated it, and are now considering where to put it, which
1200 I would have thought, even in the context of the hon. Gentleman’s ability to understand things
and give credit to the Government, is demonstrably much more planning and doing than
happened when they were last in government.

Just to assist the hon. Gentleman to focus on what he is saying, for the 16 years that they were
in government – that is to say for the over 4,000 days that they were in government – the gun lay
1205 where it was, unmoved and unthought of each day. In the time that we have been in government,
the gun has been moved from where it was to a different place, it is being treated, the plans are
being developed in order to put it in the right place, to show it off and to demonstrate that
investment in our heritage that we are known for.

Madam Speaker, happily, the hon. Gentleman never takes my advice – if he had, he might have
1210 progressed a little more in his political career – but I shall tell him at least this: on this one, he has
really shot his load.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely bizarre to hear the Hon. the Chief Minister
answer in the way he has. There is nothing in what he has said today in answer to my question
1215 which moves away from the basic criticism, which is that it has moved from one scarpyard to
another scarpyard and equally lay abandoned there since it was last moved. The criticism still
remains that there is a lack of planning. Furthermore – and this is why I rise – apart from all the
fluff that he has mentioned about me and my political career, which is absolutely irrelevant to the
question that I posed, they have failed to answer one basic question: does the Hon. the Minister
1220 have any idea of cost to move the 9.2 gun to the Levant Battery? What are we talking about here,
in terms of cost?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, that did not seem to me to be the question that
the hon. Gentleman wanted answered. It seemed to me that the hon. Gentleman found, after I
1225 replied to him, that he had actually put his gun on a carriage and taken it down the wrong one-
way road into a cul-de-sac, from which even he, with his mock outrage, could not find a way out.

Perhaps I was too quick in the way that I explained it, and he did not quite understand it. It is
not a fair criticism of the Government that has taken the step of taking the gun from the scarpyard
in which they left it, treated it and prepared it for a new emplacement – either one or the other,
1230 the original one or an alternative – for that to be said by the representatives of the Government
that did nothing about the same gun: *nothing*, absolutely zero. They did not consider whether it
should be moved. They did not, I think, even know that it was there. This is something that comes
from the time when we were in opposition. We were approached about the gun. We worked with
the private sector to look at how we could go about moving the gun. The private sector
1235 contributed to the movement of the gun. It is a complex thing because of the size of the gun. It
has not cost us anything to date and it very likely will cost us nothing going forward.

So, there has been no failure of action on our part, but there was on theirs. There has been no
cost to us to date, and there is likely to be no cost going forward. In light of that, the hon.
Gentleman can get up and, with his mock outrage, sound outrageous again about everything
1240 which is outrageous about the questions that he is asking, but actually, really, do we want to spend

any further time listening to the hon. Gentleman labour the point, which actually is that we did something about it and they did not? I wager we do not, Madam Speaker.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker –

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Madam Speaker: Your question has been answered on cost. Is there a new supplementary?

Hon. D J Bossino: Could I invite the Hon. the Chief Minister, by way of a point of order, to withdraw the reference that he made, that I had shot my load, which I think is a reference which I would rather not go into but I think is an unparliamentary use of language. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman knows what the slang version of that is, and I would invite him to do so. The outrage which is being prompted on my side is not the issue at hand but the way that the Hon. the Chief Minister is answering these questions. That is what is causing me outrage.

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Madam Speaker: I am not aware of the slang either, but I will look into it, and then, if necessary, I will rule as to whether it is unparliamentary language or not. I am happy to admit my ignorance on that. I do not know if the Hon. the Chief Minister wants to reply before I rule at a later time.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I actually understood ‘shot my load’ to mean when one loads a cartridge of shot into a gun for shooting birds, but I have now looked it up and the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that there is a vernacular, alternative meaning, which was not anywhere near my mind but was obviously the first one to come to his. So, I fully and completely apologise to all those who believed that I was making a vernacular reference when the reference I was making was to the shot used when one goes shooting, which is not a pastime I have ever indulged in but is a phrase that I know from literature rather than anything else. I do acknowledge that it is also a vernacular and rude expression, which is not what I intended but obviously the one that first came to his mind.

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Madam Speaker: I think that deals with the point of order. I shall check it myself in any event, because now my curiosity is aroused.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, if I might suggest that you should have someone check it for you rather than have it on your search engine, if I may put it that way – and ITLD should know that it is on my search engine only for these parliamentary purposes.

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Madam Speaker: Well, maybe I will not search for it at all, then; I will just take your word for it.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Finally, on the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, I really do not accept the chronology of what he said. We now have a video of this. I got up and referred to his mock outrage only after his mock outrage, so his mock outrage –

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Madam Speaker: I believe we have dealt with this issue. I am not going to labour it any longer. I will ask the hon. Gentleman to take a seat.

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A new supplementary on this? Yes. The Hon. Mr Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I address this question specifically to the Minister for Heritage, just for the Minister to clarify, for the purpose of *Hansard*, that this barrel was, in fact, originally removed by the Royal Engineers back in 1972 for scrapping by them, and not by any Government of Gibraltar.

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1295 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I believe it was removed by ... I cannot say I believe because I do not know, but I suspect it would have been removed by the Ministry of Defence. Where they took it to, I do not know. That, as the Chief Minister has said, it had been languishing in what is really a scrapyards, unlooked-after and degenerating for many years is nevertheless a fact, regardless of who took it there.

1300 **Madam Speaker:** Next question – We have exhausted this question. Did you want to ask something on another question?

Hon. E J Reyes: At a convenient moment for you, Madam Speaker, referring back to the schedule that the Minister for Education gave me.

1305 **Madam Speaker:** All right. I will allow the Hon. Mr Reyes to ask any supplementaries on Question 522.

Q522/2024

Hair and Beauty vocational courses – Supplementary questions

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is referring back to the schedule that the Minister for Education gave me.

1310 **Madam Speaker:** I will allow the Hon. Mr Reyes to ask any supplementaries on Question 522.

1315 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a very short clarification I am seeking. The schedule where he provides me with the details of the answer to Question 521 lists that in the academic year 2022-23, the year 11 cohort – those are the students who undertook the examinations in the summer of 2023 – four students completed the course at Bayside and four at Westside. Referring to the press release that I was advised to look at, I see that from Bayside School four students ended up with ungraded results, in Westside School there was one merit and three ended up with ungraded results, but the Minister made a reference that I think upon appeal – is it upon appeal or is it upon a resit? – one of those students was able to alter their grade. I am sorry, but I seek the clarification so that ... Seven students failing out of a cohort of eight looks bad, but perhaps it is not as bad, if the Minister is able to clarify.

1325 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Well, yes, Madam Speaker, students do fail, or fail to pass. But my reference to a resit – it was in fact a resit – was in relation to the College.

Hon. E J Reyes: And which entity – was it from the Bayside or Westside School group – managed to be successful upon resit in the subsequent year?

1330 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The resit was a student from the College, who failed their one-year course and who got a merit on resit a few months later.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q525/2024
O'Hara's Battery –
Provision of water and drainage

Clerk: Question 525. The Hon. C Sacarello.

1335 **Hon. C A Sacarello:** Will the ongoing restoration works at O'Hara's Battery include the provision of water and drainage to the site?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1340 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, current restoration works done at O'Hara's Battery are solely on military artefacts and the general upkeep of the site as a military battery. The provision of water and drainage would not form part of these restoration works, except for the drainage of rainwater from the battery itself.

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Hon. C A Sacarello: Madam Speaker, thank you very much to the hon. Member for his reply. Would he not agree that it would make sense to upgrade this facility with a simple introduction of water and drainage, which would benefit locals and tourists, would help with cleaning and maintenance, and also assist in any fire prevention measures?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, it would if it were simple, but water on the Upper Rock is not simple. It is an old MoD system which relies on gravity from the header tank right at the very top of Breakneck Battery. The whole system is currently under review jointly between the MoD and AquaGib. So, getting running water up to that site is not simple, due to the location and the difficulty with water pressure so high up on the Rock.

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Hon. C A Sacarello: Madam Speaker, man managed to put a man on the moon: where there is a will, there is a way. Just because things are difficult or awkward or do not necessarily run with gravity is not necessarily a reason for ... Is the Government's commitment, or rather, lack of commitment to do so, driven by financial restrictions?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is not a lack of commitment at all. I have held several meetings now with the Ministry of Defence – whose system it is and who obviously have an interest in the work – and with AquaGib in order to see what needs to be done, but it will be a complicated and expensive task to provide water under pressure to the very top of the Rock. Clearly the Government has to take a view when those costs are determined, and they would have to be determined jointly with the Ministry of Defence. That is where we are going, but we do not have that information yet.

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Hon. C A Sacarello: So, will the Government not commit to putting water up there, particularly given the number of tourists and locals that use the Med Steps, for example, and may be caught short at that location?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, once again, I have to almost refer back to the scrapyard argument. Water to the top of the Rock has been a problem. It is now a matter that we are trying to address. Of course we want to improve the water supply to the Upper Rock. We are addressing it, but as I have said, it is not simple.

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1380 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** The Hon. Minister has explained that it is an MoD system, and presumably
the MoD are still responsible for the infrastructure, but do I take it from his answer, given how he
has explained it and how they have to assess the cost jointly and so on, that if there are then
additions to what is an MoD system, that cost would be borne by whoever wants to pursue that
addition. Hence the involvement of AquaGib and so on.

1385 He gave us a reference point of the tank being at Breakneck Battery. I am afraid I am not
familiar with where Breakneck Battery is. Can he give us a bit more information on that, so as to
understand? It would really be connecting Breakneck Battery to O'Hara's, presumably?

1390 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Breakneck Battery is the highest point on the Rock. It is slightly to the
north of O'Hara's Battery, at the top of Mediterranean Steps. It is still an MoD site. That is where
it is. It is the highest point. That is where the header tank is, but it has to supply the whole of the
Upper Rock and it is a gravity feed. In order to supply it under pressure, there would have to be a
pumping system – hence the involvement of AquaGib – and obviously it gets complicated. It is a
discussion that is being had at the moment, Madam Speaker.

1395 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q526/2024
Frontier pelican crossing –
Replacement with normal crossing

Clerk: Question 526. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1400 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Why was the pelican crossing by the Customs post at the land Frontier
replaced with a normal crossing?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1405 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam
Speaker, the entire area and road layout at the Frontier was adapted to allow for the opening of
Kingsway back in March 2023. There is adequate signage and visibility and, to our knowledge, it is
working without any issues since its implementation 14 months ago. The said road layouts are
temporary and will be redesigned and implemented as necessary to suit any reconfigurations
required as a result of the treaty negotiations or no negotiated outcome, so it would not be
justified to use public funds to install new infrastructure and then remove it after a few months.
1410 The redesign will include pedestrian light-controlled crossings, as well as safe routes for cyclists
and e-scooters to access the Frontier loop and beyond.

1415 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may ask the Hon. Minister, why the removal in the first place? He has said
that there was a reconfiguration, in effect, as a result of the new tunnel, but why was it removed?
The reason why I have raised it is because I have been approached in relation to this, and I am told
that it is causing havoc for vehicular traffic because it is widely and excessively used by tourists
and other members of the public, which is not necessarily a bad thing because it shows that people
are still coming in their numbers, and obviously commuters as well. The point that was made to
me is why was it removed in the first place, and I am not sure that the explanation that the hon.
1420 Member has given, which is that it was part of a reconfiguration as a result of the tunnel works,
assists in understanding.

1425 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the detailed discussions at the time I would not be familiar with, as this was done back in March 2023, before I had responsibility for transport. I hesitate to repeat my email yet again. I have not received any representations, and certainly when the team looked at the question and prepared the answer, they were not of the opinion that it was creating any havoc, as the hon. Member has explained, but I will put it back to them and see what they come up with.

1430 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Something I detect from his response is that he is – and I would ask him to confirm – open to the possibility of a reintroduction of the pelican crossing, I suppose subject to infrastructural and cost considerations, but it is something that the Hon. Minister would be open to consider?

1435 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker, provided that the Traffic Commission, which will have to consider it, as I said earlier, makes a recommendation to the effect.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q527/2024

Bicycles in pedestrianised areas – Measures to prevent inappropriate and inconsiderate use

1440 **Clerk:** Question 527. The Hon. DJ Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What measures, if any, are being introduced to prevent the inappropriate and inconsiderate use of bicycles in pedestrianised areas?

1445 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, it is for the Police to apply the appropriate enforcement, as with all traffic offences. The Ministry, however, is actively looking into other methods, such as the use of CCTV and body cameras.

1450 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Minister is absolutely right, as far as the first limb of his answer is concerned. In relation to the second limb of his answer, when does he expect to be introducing these measures? I think those would be very useful tools which would then be available to the Police to enforce the laws in relation to this issue.

1455 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, hopefully after we have funds voted by Parliament at the forthcoming session.

1460 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask the Hon. the Minister to perhaps go back to his original reply? As I understood it, what his Department is considering is the introduction of CCTV cameras. Did he also make a reference to body cameras? Presumably that would be for the relevant police officers to wear. Is that the case?

1465 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Police officers, although that obviously is their decision, but also the traffic wardens.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has a supplementary?

1470 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, only to understand that, because obviously the Police already wear
body cameras in accordance with their roles under the criminal legislation but if there are going
to be body cameras worn by enforcement officers under a different guise, not under the criminal
legislation, is the Government intending legislation regulating the use of that material?

1475 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I said we are looking into it, and obviously, if the
decision is taken that that would assist and it needs legislation, we would have to bring legislation,
absolutely. We could not just do it, if the law does not cover that.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q528/2024
Speeding at Line Wall Road –
Measures to curtail

1480 **Clerk:** Question 528. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does the Government have any plans to curtail speeding at Line Wall Road?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1485 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam
Speaker, there are no immediate plans to introduce further speed calming measures on Line Wall
Road. This road currently has a 30 kmph limit and is actively patrolled and enforced by the RGP
with mobile speed radars.

1490 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When the Hon. the Minister refers to no current plans, that would be
suggestive, in my view, that he would also be open to consideration of the introduction of speed
calming measures, which is one of the ways of preventing what, according to one particular
correspondent in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* on more than one occasion, where he has said – I do not
want to mention a name – that this is a cause for concern. I think this particular individual is aware
1495 of this because he works in that area. The hon. Member refers to the Police enforcing the laws
and all the rest of it, but clearly something is missing and something else needs to be done. It may
not necessarily be calming measures, it may be something else, but I ask him whether it is
something that he would be considering doing in the future, or is he going to leave the status quo
as it is because, as far as he is concerned, he does not think that there is an issue of speeding in
1500 Line Wall Road?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, perhaps we would solve the problem if we
pedestrianise it.

1505 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I have raised a serious point, and it is a matter of serious concern to not just
this individual, but to others. I personally do not have that direct experience, but I am told by
people who live and work there that there is an issue. With the greatest of respect to him – I know
he is rather glib in his reply and probably trying to be funny, in my view unsuccessfully – can I ask
the Hon. the Minister to answer my question, which is would he be willing to consider alternative
1510 measures, or is it his position and the position of the Government that there is not an issue here?

In other words, the complaints have not been brought to his attention, so there is no problem of speeding on Line Wall Road.

1515 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the speed limit is 30 kmph. People may fail to keep to that speed limit and that is obviously something which we do not condone, but I must refer the hon. Member to the original answer that I gave.

1520 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The hon. Member is not answering the supplementary question I am asking of him. Is it something that he is willing to consider by way of further measures, or – and I need to press him on this – is it his or indeed the Government’s position that as far as they are concerned, there is not an issue, the speed limits are there, the Police are there to do their job? Another question would be for the Minister for Justice to answer whether the Police are sufficiently resourced, by way of human resources or money, to carry out the enforcement. That is a separate question. But is it that his view is that nothing else needs to be done?

1525 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is a matter for the Traffic Commission, and I will ensure that the Traffic Commission considers this.

1530 **Madam Speaker:** Yes, the Hon. Mr Sacarello.

1535 **Hon. C A Sacarello:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. If I may just drill down specifically to the end of Line Wall Road, to where the top end of the taxi ramp meets the popular, although not official, crossing to the other side of Line Wall Road, where the youth centre used to be and there is now a nursery: in the interests of pedestrian safety, would it not make sense for the Minister to advise his Department to consider implementing a zebra crossing or some other form of pedestrian crossing at that particular point?

1540 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is a world-renowned expert on the flight of birds, he is a botanist, he is referred to as a professor in many regards; the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano is a well-known economist; Mr Feetham leads in the field of insurance; Ms Orfila has led in education; Gemma Arias-Vasquez is a well-known lawyer; and we have, luckily, somebody who could save our lives here and a historian whose history of Gibraltar, especially its socialist liberal Government in the second decade of the third millennium, will be the authoritative piece in respect of that when it is written. But I, unfortunately, and none of the others who might grace these tables are experts in traffic. Luckily, we are blessed with eight experts in traffic
1545 opposite. They should feel free to raise matters with our experts in traffic, who are the Traffic Commission, who will gratefully receive any correspondence they wish to address to them. We can all give opinions about zebra crossings, pelican crossings, speed etc., but we are not experts, and so all we are doing is dizzying the pheasant by speaking constantly about issues on which we
1550 are not experts. If there is an issue, then address it to the experts in the Traffic Commission and they will respond. But to simply be, across the floor of the House, talking about these things when none of us are expert on it, I think makes little sense, Madam Speaker.

1555 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Sacarello, one more.

1560 **Hon. C A Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I do need to come back to that, because on this issue I think the Hon. the Chief Minister is belittling the seriousness of the situation, particularly when there are mothers with babies crossing the road. I do not think it is a laughing matter, a joking matter. All I asked was that they give serious consideration to my request; it did not warrant that response. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Your question?

1565 **Hon. C Sacarello:** My question remains the same: will they give this the serious consideration that it deserves?

1570 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, nobody here, on this side, has laughed at what he has said. Nobody has taken it as a joke. The only joke is an Opposition that thinks that they can come here and, in a supplementary question, put a proposal that there should be a zebra crossing. If it was so important to the hon. Gentleman, it should be a policy matter which they express either in a press release or they take up with the Traffic Commission directly, or they do whatever it is that they think is appropriate. But to get up and to glibly say in a supplementary, 'Will you agree to put a zebra crossing there?' when that is not an area of our responsibility, when doing so could actually be more dangerous because of the area of road, which is just across a curve ... Perhaps
1575 the hon. Gentleman does not know that it is extremely dangerous to set up a pelican crossing, or indeed any zebra crossing, where there is a curve on the road, because it becomes more dangerous for the pedestrian. Perhaps he does not know that this is a crossing to a pavement which is so narrow that it would ill behove any mother with a pram, as he has referred to, to cross in that direction. Those are the issues which the experts know about, which I tangentially have
1580 knowledge of because we are sometimes referred to those things, and which hon. Members, if they raised the issue properly and in the right forum, might get the feedback from.

Nobody here is going to belittle that pedestrians should be protected, in particular mothers with babies, but people on that side should understand what it is they should be doing at Question Time, whose responsibility is what, what the Traffic Commissioners are experts in and what
1585 Ministers are not experts in. That is all I am saying to him. He can pretend that we have laughed at him, he can pretend that we have joked, but the reality is that he needs to work out what Parliament is about and who is responsible for what in this place.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q529/2024
Certificate of Roadworthiness –
Number of vehicles without

1590 **Clerk:** Question 529. The Hon. DJ Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: How many vehicles have been without a roadworthiness certificate for between each of one to 10 years, broken down by goods vehicles, private vehicles and motorcycles?
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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I hand over a schedule with the information requested – in fact, a little bit more than the
1600 information requested.

Madam Speaker: Whilst the hon. Member has time to consider it, we will move on to the next question.

Answer to Question 529/2024

Classic	Code	1-2 Yrs	2-3 Yrs	3-4 Yrs	4-5 Yrs	5-6 Yrs	6-7 Yrs	7-8 Yrs	8-9 Yrs	9-10 Yrs	10-11 Yrs
Classic	F	11	8	5	2	3	2	2	2	1	0
Goods	G/J	176	100	128	98	105	112	107	118	67	50
Moped	E	66	55	59	76	94	86	108	101	110	134
Motorcycle	M	696	545	569	468	487	419	444	500	499	470
Omnibus	O	5	8	0	0	0	4	1	2	5	1
Private	P	983	766	830	867	905	820	744	672	619	546
Private Hire	H	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self Drive	D	6	7	2	2	1	0	2	1	2	1
Special	S	1	0	9	5	3	3	5	1	2	3
Taxi	T	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

Q530/2024

**Roadworthiness test –
Number of vehicles failing to book**

Clerk: Question 530. The Hon. DJ Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: How many vehicles on their fourth anniversary of registration have failed to book for a roadworthiness test?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, 4,108 vehicles have failed to book for a roadworthiness test on their fourth anniversary of registration as of 20th June. An exercise commenced in March contacting and reminding these vehicle owners that they do not have a roadworthiness certificate. This has resulted in 452 vehicles either obtaining their roadworthiness certificates or having a pending booking for the test for those highlighted vehicles. These are additional and over and above those vehicles that have completed their roadworthiness test within time. The Chief Examiner and DVLD staff continue with the exercise.

1615

Hon. D J Bossino: Without wishing to pretend that I am an expert on these issues, on the face of it, from a layman's perspective and as a lowly politician who is not an expert on traffic matters, these numbers look pretty high. In other words, as we are now, it is 4,108, as the Hon. the Minister has replied, and as I understand it, of those 4,108, there are 452 that now either have had their certificates – he is nodding his head – or are in the process because they have had an appointment. He also said in his response that letters – which I think is a very useful initiative – have gone out in March to those offending vehicle owners. As I understand it, that was the policy before, that the Department would issue these letters. So, when the Hon. the Minister says that this policy was commenced in March this year, the accurate response would have been that it has recommenced. I would ask when the policy stopped and why did it stop.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not know the answer to that question. In my familiarisation with my new portfolio, it became evident to me early this year that there was an

1635 unacceptable backlog and therefore I took the initiative of *recommencing*, if the hon. Member
wants, this process. Ten per cent of those vehicles we have managed to get back on track, if that
is a term I can use in this context, and the exercise continues, and will continue because I am
clearly not satisfied with the situation.

1640 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is it the case, therefore, that all 4,108 vehicle owners have received this
letter? Is that the position? He is suggesting by his body language that he does not have that
information. It is very difficult, if he does not have the information available to him, to make the
further point, because if he did and the position was that everybody had received it, the response,
10%, would be particularly low. This is an important issue because it deals with the safety of our
cars out there in our streets. I would ask him if he can perhaps state whether he has that
information as to whether all the offending vehicle owners ... Ultimately this is a traffic offence,
1645 not booking your car to obtain a roadworthiness certificate. These are offending owners and I
would ask him to confirm whether all of them have received this notification.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I cannot possibly know whether all of them have
received it. I believe that all of them have been sent. I would need to confirm that. I assume that
1650 is what the hon. Member meant. It is not what he asked, but I am happy to say I will confirm that.
I believe certainly the instruction that came from my office was we have to get all these people
on track and we have to resolve it, so I would have thought that they have all been sent.

Madam Speaker: Next question. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*)

Q531-32/2024
City Walls –
Refurbishment; contract for maintenance

1655 **Clerk:** Question 531. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When will the City Walls be refurbished?

1660 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam
Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 532.

1665 **Clerk:** Question 532. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, is there a contract to maintain the City Walls and clear
them of overgrown weeds or shrubs?

1670 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 431, Gibraltar, as we know,
boasts kilometres of walls both within our historic Old Town and along the original Line Wall and
elsewhere. Whenever an urgent issue such as one with health and safety implications arises, we
promptly address it. This was evident in last year's restoration of Southport Gates, previous work
1675 on the Tower of Homage, and the ongoing restoration of the outer Moorish Castle Wall along
Castle Ramp. The latter project encompasses over 100 m² and we are diligently working on it.

Concurrently, we are also restoring the Convent facade and undertaking other heritage projects. Our professionals continually assess these needs, although clearly not everything can be addressed simultaneously given the extensive length of our walls.

1680 In answer to Question 532, no, Ma'am.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

1685 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Specifically on Question 532, if I may. I was slightly surprised by that answer, I have to say; I thought there was a contract to do that. It has been pointed out to me that there are areas of the City Wall that have these overgrown weeds and shrubs, so I assumed someone was responsible for going round and clearing them. Or is it the case that they are cleared in the context of wider refurbishment projects? While I am on my feet, does the Minister think it is an idea worth looking into, to have a contract, extended perhaps to one of the cleaning
1690 contractors or something, to clear the area the walls of overgrown weeds?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there is no specific contract but when a specific area needs to be cleared, the Department would normally go, I would have thought, to the horticultural contractors and ask them for quotes for specific areas. That is how it is dealt with. I think that a contract in itself might not be cost effective. There are some areas where there is growth of
1695 shrubs. Normally, if they are annual plants, they do not cause any structural damage, but if they are woody plants then clearly those are the ones that we have to prioritise, and if they create health and safety issues like we saw in Southport and like we have seen in the Castle Street area, then those are given priority. The professionals go around and when they see an area that needs
1700 tackling, it is tackled. I must say that I go around and when I see an area that needs tackling, I also bring it to the attention of the department in question.

Madam Speaker: Any other supplementaries?

1705 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes.

Madam Speaker: On Question 531?

Hon. D J Bossino: In terms of ongoing projects, the responses that he has given, particularly as far as my friend the Leader of the Opposition is concerned, almost seem more reactive
1710 management as opposed to the Government having a plan, a project and a vision for what to do in respect of these walls. They are very attractive when properly refurbished and properly lit, and there are examples of that in what the Government has done – for example, round about the areas of Champion Park and Commonwealth Park.

1715 I know that the Government has made various promises in its manifesto in relation to this, but can I press him in relation to some statistics? What is the total length? Does he have that information? I think he made a reference to it in his initial response. What is the total length of the walls and square metreage of surface that we are dealing with here? What has the Government to date, in its 12 years in office, managed to refurbish, and what are its plans in
1720 respect of the remaining walls which require to be properly refurbished?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not have the length. I will ask the Heritage team if they can come up with a length; it would be interesting to know. I think it becomes de facto
1725 reactive because when you intend to programme restoration of walls but then you find that one particular area has an olive or fig tree growing through it, then you have to shift your priorities and deal with that, because there could be problems as to the structural integrity of the wall or danger to people walking below, which is what happened in Southport Gate, which was possibly

1730 not going to be done straight away and was done because it had to be done. There is such a large extent of wall that fortunately a lot of it is in good condition. That is a testament to the people who built it in centuries gone by. I gave examples of some of the areas that have been recently dealt with, but as the hon. Member said, as a consequence of other work in adjacent areas, as in Commonwealth Park and Campion Park, then work is done on them. At the moment we are looking at priorities, particularly, as I said, where there are structural implications, and those are the ones that we have to prioritise.

1735 **Madam Speaker:** One more.

1740 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may, is the sum total of his response ...? We had our fair share of refurbishment works – in Chatham, famously, Kings Bastion, Orange Bastion ... Where I would like to pin him down is in relation to this: is it the Government's current position – it may not be its policy, it may not be its aim, it may not be the best place it wants to be in relation to this issue – that it will, in effect, only deal with maintenance aspects? He mentioned specifically Southport Gates, where he is right: as a result of the fact that it posed a danger to members of the public, that good refurbishment was carried out, but not as a result of a plan in order to improve our City Walls to make them more attractive for not just visitors but for local residents as well. He knows where I am going with this and I would like him to reply.

1750 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I just remembered as well that we also did the whole of Wellington Front, which is one that did not come up because I am working from memory; I have not gone systematically through it.

1755 What I said before that it becomes de facto reactive. There are a number of areas of wall which we want to deal with, and I can think of several right now because we are just now looking at how we want to roll out the programme for all Departments, but specifically for Heritage, in the coming year. You have that programme, then you identify an area which is more urgent, and then we have to shift resources here, whether it be financial resources or curatorial resources, and therefore it becomes de facto reactive, even though the intention is that you are going to be doing it in a systematic way.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q533-34/2024

World War II Tunnels management agreement – Whether subcontracted; details of agreement

1760 **Clerk:** Question 533. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1765 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, has any aspect of the World War II Tunnels management agreement been subcontracted, and if so, to whom; has the Government consented to such subcontracting, and if not, is there a provision in the management agreement that prevents subcontracting without the consent of the Government?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1770 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 534.

Clerk: Question 534. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1775 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, what is the length of the management agreement entered into by the Government over the World War II Tunnels project; who are the parties to the agreement and what are the main financial terms in terms of payments to Government, income to the management entity, whether the Government will loan or contribute funds towards the cost of investment or refurbishment of the project, and who will retain the ticketing revenue?

1780 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1785 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 533, there are no subcontractors involved in the operation other than, as is logical, construction and electrical firms etc. to carry out the upgrading. Any change in the contract, including subcontracting of the operation, will require government consent.

1790 In answer to Question 534, the length of the contract is 15 years. The parties are Wrightttech Ltd and the Government. There are no direct payments to Government, but the contractor will manage, man, maintain and repair the site, resulting in a considerable saving to Government. In addition, a payment of 15% will be made to Government on income from any events etc. at the site.

1795 The arrangements with the contractor are commercially in confidence and I am not able to provide that information here. There has been and will be no contribution from the Government by way of loan, direct payment or other means towards any of the costs of refurbishment and upgrade. There will be no separate ticketing for the site, which will remain included in the general Upper Rock ticket.

1800 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I just understand the reference that he made? Halfway through his answer he said that some of what they have agreed is confidential in nature, but then he gave, I think, answers to most of my questions. Was he referring to something else? Without revealing the confidentiality of it, was he referring to something in particular which cannot be disclosed to the House in terms of a specific area?

1805 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member reads his question and then compares my answer, he will see that there is one particular subject, which is the arrangements with the contractor, which are the ones that I stated were commercially in confidence.

1810 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I ask him about Question 533? He says there is no subcontracting except in the context of the construction, but in the context of the construction there may be, then, presumably, and in relation to construction or electrical, I think he said. So, in relation to those, is government consent required for the subcontracting?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker.

1815 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** And does the hon. Member know who those parties are?

1820 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. I took the question as being whether the contractor was going to subcontract the operation of the site, rather than whether they have a particular electrical company or construction company. I would have to ask them for that information, and then I would have to determine whether I am at liberty to divulge that here, because it is a private arrangement.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 535. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1825 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** If I may, I had supplementaries on Question 534.

Madam Speaker: Because he started with Question 534 and then jumped to Question 533, I presumed the hon. Member had finished his supplementary. Back to Question 534?

1830 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, back to Question 534, which was the next one. I was trying to take them –

Madam Speaker: I understood that the hon. Member had started with Question 534 and then moved on to Question 533, which is why I presumed the hon. Member had finished, but we will go back to Question 534.

1840 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I had not. Thank you. In relation to Question 534, the hon. Member has said this is a 15-year agreement. I think that he said the Government receive 15% of income on events, which means that they take 85% of income on events, but there is no separate arrangement on ticketing because it is part and parcel of the entry into the site generally. It is a fairly long contract. Is there any clause in the agreement that allows a review of the arrangements so that the Government is not bound into this for such a long period? Is there some kind of review or break clause?

1845 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I believe so, because that is quite standard in this type of contract, but I would have to check the actual wording. I would not like to mislead.

1850 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. I think he said – I am just seeking his clarification – that there is no contribution from the Government by way of loan or any other means. Does he know the cost of the project in terms of the refurbishment of the World War II Tunnels?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, not exactly off the top of my head, but I believe it is several million. I would need to check that.

1855 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** These arrangements have been reached, I assume, fairly recently; I am not sure if the hon. Member has a date. Is there no intention to be more specific about the arrangements, and indeed the project, given that it is clearly backed by the Government insofar as the Government has seen fit to give this entity a 15-year contract – and clearly it is intended to be a tourist project, isn't it?

1860 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, full details will be given once the project is complete and is ready to come into operation. At the moment, it is not yet finalised.

1865 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** In terms of income streams, as I understand it, the company is putting in millions but there is no separate ticketing arrangement, and they take 85% of income on events, but presumably events will be from time to time. What is the business model for the entity putting in millions, and indeed what is the Government gaining from these arrangements?

1870 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think I have already answered this, but we have to bear in mind that the Government is getting an investment and an upgrade in a site where we know we had done some restoration, but the plans are far in excess of that. Everything else is a commercial arrangement, which is what I have already said in my original answer I am not able to provide.

1875 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I just have one more and perhaps this will clarify it for me. In relation to the ticketing itself, where he says there is no separate ticketing arrangement, does the company that is the manager of the site get part of the revenue on the ticketing, or does all that ticketing revenue go to the Government?

1880 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is now delving into the commercially in-confidence details that I have already said I cannot divulge. There are other entities that we are talking with, and therefore it is a sensitive matter that I do not wish to divulge here. I do not think it is correct that I should do so.

1885 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I do not understand that. What other entities can you possibly be discussing the matter with, because there are no separate ticketing arrangements? He has explained that as part of the original answer. There is a ticketing arrangement to enter into the site as a whole. There is one ticketing arrangement. There is not going to be a breakdown of many ticketing arrangements. So, as those ticketing arrangements are there already, why can't he be clear as to what those ticketing arrangements are? At the end of the day, they have already been put in place, and not in relation to this particular site because there are no separate ticketing arrangements. So, what are the ticketing arrangements in relation to the site and what is this company gaining from it?

1895 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the non-commercial ticketing arrangements are that you visit the World War II Tunnels for free if you are a local; if you are a tourist, you have already paid in your Upper Rock entrance ticket. We are talking to some other entities about similar, or possibly not dissimilar, arrangements in other sites, and therefore I cannot give commercially sensitive information here which might have an impact on other discussions.

1900 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** But to be clear, there is an arrangement, which is the Upper Rock entry fee, which is split between the managers of this site and the Government. That is really what he is saying: at the heart of it, without telling us what the split is, there is a split arrangement. Otherwise, there would be no commercial confidentiality in it. He would just say the Government is taking 100% of the revenue.

1905

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition can surmise whatever he wishes to surmise, but I do not have anything further to add to this question.

1910 **Madam Speaker:** Next question. (*Interjection*) No, there have been eight supplementaries on this one alone. I think we have exhausted it.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I was not asking him to surmise. May I just ask him one question?

1915

Madam Speaker: One last question.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It is not a question of surmising; I am asking him a very direct question. In the context of the site fee, is there a split arrangement or does the Government take all the revenue? He is the Minister: he knows whether the Government takes 100%.

1920

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Member to the third paragraph in my answer to Question 534. Apologies, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member does not have the text in front of him: 'The arrangements with the contractor are commercially in confidence and I am not able to provide that information here.'

1925

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q535/2024
Zone parking –
Enforcement arrangements

Clerk: Question 535. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1930 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, what are the enforcement arrangements in relation to zone parking?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1935 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, enforcement of zonal parking is done primarily by Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd. The Parking Management Officers (PMOs) – traffic wardens, as we normally call them – have designated areas of responsibility covering all four zones from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. When an infringement occurs, a fixed penalty notice is issued to local vehicles and a clamp is placed to foreign vehicles – only as an assurance of payment; a clamp does not carry an extra fee. Only those with multiple tickets or
1940 more serious violations such as blocking main roads and zebra crossings, parking on pavements etc., will be towed away. The night patrol is from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. and covers all four zones in a reactive role – that is calls out from the public, obstructions, breakdown of vehicles, RGP assistance and they will also tackle abandoned vehicles.

1945 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that. I take it from his answer that, in effect, whether it is at night or during the day, it is almost 24-hour patrolling and enforcement in different areas, primarily driven by things like obstruction etc. The reason for the question was representations made to me that there was insufficient monitoring by the traffic wardens of things like occupation of spaces in zones by vehicles that do not have zone permits. Does he have
1950 information in relation to how people can complain about that?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would have to ask for specific details of how many tickets have been issued and so on. The question was a general one on enforcement arrangements, which is the information I have given. One could delve into it in more detail.
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I think, actually, that the PMOs do a good job, in general. I think people will normally be able to find parking within their zone, but as I said, they are able to respond if there is a vehicle which is offending. They have a 24-hour service and they will respond to calls and deal with any complaints directly.

1960 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask, just by way of clarification and in order to afford the House a full answer: the Hon. the Minister said that the enforcement is, in effect, carried out, he said 'primarily', by the relevant company that he referred to. Beyond that, what is it: police officers? Is that what he is referring to? I imagine that the vast majority of the enforcement is carried out
1965 by this company.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, the Police obviously have powers to do this. The majority of the day-to-day work is done by the parking management officers.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q536/2024

**Urban wastewater treatment plan project –
Update**

1970 **Clerk:** Question 536. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can the Government update the House on the proposed urban wastewater treatment plant project and the award of the tender to design, build, finance and operate it?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the tender for the urban wastewater treatment plant was issued in June 2023 and closed in July 2023. Preferred bidder status was granted to Eco Waters Ltd in September 2023, in recognition that the tender submitted by them appeared to represent the most economically advantageous tender. Since then, a multidisciplinary team of officials and consultants making up the project team has been liaising with this tenderer to clarify a number of technical and commercial details, so that, when satisfied, the tender board, composed of senior public service officials, may make a final award recommendation to the Government. It is not possible to place a defined timescale for the completion of the stage, but it is expected to be completed within the next few months.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: But the situation is still unchanged in the fact that Eco Waters still have preferred bidder status, they are undergoing these discussions with the Government leading to final award but there are still other bidders – is that still the situation? They have preferred bidder status but there are other bidders? Or do the other bids lapse? Or are they fallback bids were Eco Waters not to then go to final award?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, when a bidder is given preferred bidder status, it is preferred bidder status; it is highly likely that the issues that need to be resolved are going to be resolved, and then they will be awarded the final tender, but it is not necessarily the case, and therefore other bidders could be called in. I do not have the detail as to whether the others fitted the requirements. I do not sit on the tender board, I am not actively involved, it is not appropriate for me to do so, and therefore I cannot tell the hon. Member whether any of the other bidders are potential successful tenders. But having spoken to a representative of Eco Waters only this morning, to see how things were going, it seems to me that we are making considerable progress and that at least an advanced works contract might be in the offing very soon.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: In terms of the preferred bidder status, under this contract is that an open-ended status, or is there a time limit? In some contracts, I suppose it may have a time limit. In this one, I do not take from his original answer that implicit in it was there an indication that there might be a time limit, but I am not sure if he has information on that.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information. I can find out very quickly and I can let the hon. Member know.

Madam Speaker: Can we deal now with any supplementaries there may be to Question 529, and that will conclude the questions for the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change? Any supplementaries? (**Hon. D J Bossino:** No.) Has the Member forgotten to study it?

Next question.

2020 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I am conscious that we have now been at it for close on two and a half hours. I wonder whether this might be a convenient moment to recess until 5.50 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I will happily recess until 5.50 p.m.

The House recessed at 5.38 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 5.50 p.m.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Q561/2024

**Parliament building refurbishment –
Update re progress**

2025 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.
Question 561. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Government provide an update on the progress of the refurbishment works to the Parliament building?

2030 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

2035 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Madam Speaker, yes. Works are currently focusing on the exterior of Parliament. These works mainly consist of the rendering of the facade, repairs to stone columns and iron balconies. This week saw the removal and replacement of severely damaged concrete balusters along the perimeter of the roof. Works are expected to continue along the summer months until the end of the year, with interruptions should there be any parliamentary sessions.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q562/2024

**Parliament building refurbishment –
Update re cost**

2040 **Clerk:** Question 562. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Minister provide an update on the cost to date for the recent and ongoing refurbishment works to the Parliament building?

2045 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, yes. The costs to date are £147,952.40.

2050 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for that answer. I understand that the works in relation to the Parliament building are being done in two phases. One is for the

2055 repair and refurbishment of the works on the exterior part of the building. The other is the interior part, which encapsulates the lift project. My understanding is that the expenses for the exterior refurbishment were through a donation made by a charitable organisation to Government, and the Government was using those funds for the refurbishment. Can the Government confirm whether the whole of the charitable donation accounted for the cost of the refurbishment, or whether the Government had to put in some of their own funds for the same?

2060 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, yes, the hon. Member is correct. There is a donation of £200,000 which will be made by the Parasol Group. The Government is now in the process of receiving those funds.

2065 **Hon. G Origo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. My understanding was that the funds from the Parasol Foundation would be used explicitly for the exterior refurbishment works to Parliament. Can the Hon. Minister confirm, therefore, what the cost would be to install the lift in the interior part of the project to Parliament, if he has that information?

2070 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, those are not costings I have seen as yet, but the Member is correct, the funds donated by the Parasol Group are in respect of the external refurbishment of the building.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

JUSTICE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Q537/2024

HMP Windmill Hill –

Weekly counselling clinics

2075 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.
Question 537. The Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: In relation to drug and alcohol misuse and offending, can the Government confirm whether a counsellor is holding weekly clinics in HMP Windmill Hill?

2080 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, yes, drugs and alcohol misuse counselling is offered in the Prison by the Care Agency on a weekly basis and the service is offered on demand.

2085 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q538/2024
HMP Windmill Hill –
Resumption of counselling services

Clerk: Question 538. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, has the provision of counselling services now resumed at Windmill Hill Prison? If not, what is the expected timeframe for this service to resume?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, as I have stated in answer to a previous question, drugs and alcohol misuse counselling is provided by the Care Agency on a weekly basis and the service is offered on demand. This is in addition to the work carried out by the MAPPA designated risk managers and Care Agency counsellors, who work with prisoners serving sentences for relevant offences.

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The provision of psychological services has been the subject of a recent pilot scheme at His Majesty's Prison by the GHA Psychological Services. This pilot was undertaken over a six-week period and has only recently ended. GHA Psychological Services will report their findings in due course.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: I am grateful. Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether the Hon. Minister is aware, but the Prison has been without a counselling service now for a period of three years – until recently, it seems – and that is in the recent reports of the Mental Health Board that the Minister has just referred to. The benefits of counselling and talking therapies in a prison setting cannot be underestimated if rehabilitation is to be the central aim of a prison system. Why, therefore, hasn't there been a counselling service at Her Majesty's Prison for three years, until recently?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, the premise of the question is flawed. The premise of the question is that counselling services have not been provided. In other words, if you are asking whether counselling services will be resumed, then what you are suggesting is that counselling services are not being provided in the Prison. That is not the case.

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The hon. Member has also indicated that the permanent counsellor based at the Prison is no longer there and has not been there – I think the word that she used was 'recently'. Again, that was not the case. Kevin Lawlor – and I have a great deal of respect for Kevin; I know him personally, not professionally, but I have no doubt that he was a very good professional in his field – unfortunately left for the UK in 2020, and therefore the arrangement that has since been made with the Prison Service is for the Care Agency to provide counselling services to the Prison. I have met with Carlos Banderas, the CEO of the Care Agency, and we have had a detailed discussion because the premise of the question seemed to suggest that services were not being provided. Mr Banderas has assured me that services are in place, that, in fact – and I read from notes which I took of the meeting – there are no waiting lists or referral lists for any counselling at the Prison. He has also provided me with a schedule of the services that are being provided in this area. I can compare the number of inmates receiving counselling services for the first four months of this year compared to last year. I have that information in front of me. In the last four months of this year, 13 inmates were receiving counselling services at the Prison compared to 17 inmates for the first four months of last year. Can we please ensure, for the record, Madam Speaker, that there is no gap in the provision of counselling services at the Prison?

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2135 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that clarification. Nevertheless, it was stated in the report of the Mental Health Board that there was a gap, given that there is not, as the Minister correctly states, a permanent counsellor at the Prison, which there was three years ago – Mr Lawlor, who I did work professionally with and who was an excellent counsellor. Are there any plans to re-implement that system, or will we just be relying on this new system?

2140 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, in answer to the question, I have stated, and I repeat, that a pilot scheme was undertaken at the Prison. We are awaiting a report, and indeed we will review any recommendations that are made. I have not seen the report. I do not think the Minister herself has seen the report yet, because it has not been handed down formally for review. When it is, I think the question then becomes pertinent. I should have also said that currently – and I do have this as part of my supplementary information – only one inmate has requested the provision of counselling services at the Prison, *one* inmate, and indeed the point has been emphatically made to me that there are no waiting lists at present.

2145 I should also add that I made a point of visiting the Prison today – I visit the Prison as often as I can – and I asked the senior management team to allow me to talk to inmates, so they opened one of the wings for me. I was accompanied by Jayne Wink, who I think is very well known in Gibraltar for the sterling work that she provides in this particular area, especially for men, and the Men in Need group as well. I must have spoken to every single inmate in that wing who wanted to speak to me, together with Mrs Wink. We asked whether there was anything that we could do, if there was anything that the Prison could do, or anything that the Government could do to support them in any of their needs, and the answer was that they were very well looked after in the Prison. They made two requests: they asked for a treadmill, because apparently the treadmill does not work properly, so they have asked if we could provide a treadmill and some benches, and Mrs Wink has made an appeal this afternoon for a treadmill to be donated to the Prison. I am sure that even that particular request will be seen to very shortly indeed.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q539/2024
HMP Windmill Hill –
Anti-bullying policy

2160 **Clerk:** Question 539. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

2165 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, does the Prison Service have an anti-bullying policy in place for adherence to by staff, and, if so, since when has this policy been in place? If it does not have such a policy, is there an intention to introduce one, and what is the timeframe for its introduction?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

2170 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I am informed that His Majesty's Government has a central Dignity at Work policy that extends to all public service institutions, including the Prison. However, the Prison Service is currently working in collaboration with the Industrial Relations Department, Unite the Union and prison staff towards a new working arrangement which will include a bespoke anti-bullying policy.

2175 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Just one short question arising: does the Hon. Minister have an estimated timeframe as to when that could be concluded and implemented?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, we expect to have an advanced working draft for consideration and conclusion by October this year.

2180 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q540/2024
Prison Service –
Changes since General and Clerical Association survey of members

Clerk: Question 540. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

2185 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what changes have there been to the Prison Service since the emergence of the Gibraltar General and Clerical Association survey of its members in March 2019?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

2190 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, since the emergence of the Gibraltar General and Clerical Association's survey of its members in March 2019, I am advised by the senior management team of the Prison that there have been a number of changes in the Prison Service which, I am informed, have addressed many of the issues that were raised at the time. These changes, which I am informed have greatly improved morale in the Prison Service, include the following.

2195 (1) The survey raised an issue with personal development of officers. The senior management team has since implemented a policy inviting officers to discuss their personal development and to increase feedback given to officers.

2200 (2) The question of training was also raised. The training team now works with the senior management team to identify officers who require additional training and those to be entrusted with extra responsibilities. The senior management team sent three officers to Cyprus for instructor training, enabling them to train prison officers in control and restraint techniques. This training is essential for the safety of both officers and inmates. Over the past year, officers have received training in various other areas, including fire safety, use of force, first aid, attentive listening, suicide first aid, safeguarding, domestic abuse and MAPPA training. The senior management team will continue to identify suitable courses for the department and ensure that staff members receive the necessary training to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

2205 (3) Following the 2019 survey, both officers and management agreed on a new shift pattern, as this had been raised in the survey.

2210 (4) The senior management team, in collaboration with the Industrial Relations department and Unite the Union, is developing a new working agreement to replace the 1988 Fresh Start Agreement. As I have mentioned in a previous answer, this new agreement will also introduce a bespoke anti-bullying policy.

2215 (5) I am also informed by the senior management team that issues raised in the survey with regard to the welfare and aftercare of officers and in relation to prison security and staffing levels have also been addressed.

It is expected that the issues I have mentioned, together with other matters highlighted in the survey, will continue to improve.

2220 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful and we are glad to hear that those improvements have been made. Just one question arising from that survey which the Hon. Minister has not touched upon. In that survey, 76% were unhappy with department equipment, and 83% said that more maintenance was needed for office space and IT. Have those concerns been addressed? And if not, will they be addressed in the near future?

2225 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I have the survey's findings here and management's comment against each of the issues raised. I cannot, right now, find the specific reference that the hon. Lady is referring to, but I can assure her, having gone through this with the senior management team in my office and my Justice team, that I have been reassured, and therefore I should reassure the hon. Lady, that the matters that have been raised have either been dealt with or are in the process of being dealt with as quickly as possible.

2230 I can also say, because I think this is the last question in relation to the Prison, that out of all my Ministries, the one where I have met staff more than in any of the other Ministries that I hold, is actually the Prison Service. I have visited the Prison on a number of occasions, and every time I visit I ask to meet staff, and when I meet staff I ask them, 'Are there any outstanding issues that you want to bring to my attention? Is there anything, with or without the presence of senior management, that you would like to have me address?' and the answer that I have been given is that there is nothing outstanding, certainly when I have visited the Prison. Outside the Prison, I must have met with prison officers on at least four occasions, and the issues that have been raised with us and that we are dealing with, with my hon. colleague Leslie Bruzon, are entirely related to allowances. In other words, nobody, for the record, has either raised an issue with regard to bullying – and I am not suggesting that the hon. Member has queried whether or not that is the case, but I would like to put it on the record that no prison officer has raised with me any issue of bullying – or any other matter, other than allowances and a particular issue involving casual leave. I have asked the prison officers to come back with a recommendation, so that I can then sit down with the senior management team to see whether we can address even that particular issue,
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2245 Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q541/2024
Law Library –
Whether in use

Clerk: Question 541. The Hon. J. Ladislaus.

2250 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, is the Law Library within the precincts of the Supreme Court currently in use? If not, is there a timeframe by which the library can be expected to be functioning?

2255 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, the use of the Law Library at the Gibraltar Law Court is governed by the Law Library Rules, which are made by the Chief Justice. Very properly, given the separation of powers between Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary, neither I, as the Minister for Justice, nor any other Member of the Government, has any involvement in this matter. The Member opposite may wish to address the matter directly with the Registrar of the Supreme Court.
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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q542-45/2024

**Outstanding warrants of arrest –
Numbers from 2011 to 2023; age of warrants;
reasons for backlog, and plans and timeframe for addressing**

Clerk: Question 542. The Hon. J. Ladislaus.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister provide the number of outstanding warrants of arrest at the conclusion of the following years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, I will answer the question together with Questions 543 to 545.

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Clerk: Question 543. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, how old are the oldest warrants of arrest amongst the 15,000 unexecuted warrants of arrest recently flagged by the RGP?

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Clerk: Question 544. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, are the main reasons for having 15,000 unexecuted warrants of arrest issues with staffing levels and limited resources within the RGP, and what will be done to address this backlog?

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Clerk: Question 545. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is there an estimated timeframe by which the RGP expects to have addressed the backlog of the 15,000 unexecuted warrants of arrest?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, with respect to Question 542, I am informed that providing the information requested would be impossible. This is because the information is not kept in year chronology but in alphabetical order by name in a database. There is also an issue that original executed warrants are returned to the courts and, as such, it would be impossible to come to an accurate number of warrants at the end of each year, as these are no longer in the possession of the RGP.

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In respect of Question 543, similarly, as the warrants are not kept chronologically, I am advised that in order to ascertain the date of the oldest warrants, a manual search through all warrants would need to be undertaken and this would be an onerous task. However, a random sample has been looked at and the oldest warrant identified through that sample dated to 1990. I am also informed that this random sample confirms that many of the warrants relate to unpaid fines and non-residents of Gibraltar.

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With respect to Question 544, the backlog of unexecuted warrants is a historical issue that dates back over the past few decades and I am informed by the RGP that it is not related to staffing issues or resources. I am further informed that the RGP conducts operations from time to time in respect of warrants against individuals in addition to routine checks which are carried out whenever officers come into contact with members of the public.

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2310 In response to Question 545, I am advised that there is no timeframe in place to deal with the outstanding warrants, as warrants date back over the recent decades.

I have had a discussion within my Ministry in order to ascertain whether there are any ways to deal with this issue, for example through legislation. However, as Madam Speaker will appreciate, this may not be possible due to the need to ensure fairness and the separation of powers between
2315 Parliament, the executive and the judiciary, namely non-interference with court procedures and orders of the court.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister. If there is no system in place –

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Madam Speaker: May I stop the hon. Member? Can you refer to which question out of those you are addressing, so that we can keep focus?

Hon. J Ladislaus: Let me work out which one it is ... It does cut across all of them.

2325 We have heard that the system does not allow for certain data to be extracted because it would be too onerous, so the first question, I think, is how, therefore, has the number of 15,000 unexecuted arrest warrants been arrived at? Where has that number come from? I think the second question must be is there a way to improve that system, to keep these databases updated so that they can be accessed more easily?

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Hon. N Feetham: I am obliged, Madam Speaker. Yes, the way that I have understood it from my discussions with the Commissioner ... We had a session with the Commissioner last week, my Justice Ministry team. Unless I have misunderstood the system, the system is one where the information is kept in a Microsoft Access spreadsheet. I am not technologically able, but I assume that in a spreadsheet the number of whatever is held there is visibly available to those who control the database. I would not be able to answer the question directly other than that this is the information that has been made available to me. I am looking at my notes. The Commissioner has also confirmed that the RGP is in the process of changing the way that warrants are recorded by moving all warrants on to Cyclops, the RGP system.

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Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, may I invite the Minister to go back to the RGP, or whoever maintains this database, and ask them if they can sort it by date? He has used spreadsheets, as I have used spreadsheets, and it is not rocket science to sort data fields into things like date order. I wonder if he could ask the keeper of this database whether that would be possible, which I know it is if it is on a spreadsheet. That will be helpful to us in Parliament to understand the ageing of these warrants.

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2350 **Hon. N Feetham:** I am very happy to ask the question of the Commissioner when I next see him, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. J Ladislaus: I can go to one of the questions specifically, and it is Question 544, I believe. If the issues with the delays in executing these arrest warrants are historic and they do not have anything to do with resources or lack thereof, what then has caused such a backlog of execution of warrants?
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Hon. N Feetham: Again, Madam Speaker, referring to my notes of our meeting with the Commissioner, when I asked a similar question the Commissioner stated to us that there are between 3,000 and 4,000 crimes reported, on average, a year in Gibraltar, against a significant
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number of people – 250,000 people – that cross the border each week. This naturally creates a large number of warrants. When individuals are bailed or fined, they cross back over and do not come back to Gibraltar. Whilst we do not have the exact number, the Commissioner’s best guess – without having the information, because as I said, that information is not readily available from an interrogation of the system – is that between 60% and 70% of cases relate to foreign nationals. I am also reassured that where there are warrants relating to serious matters, these are executed immediately and the Police will chase and ensure that the relevant individuals are dealt with in accordance with the law. Where there are serious cases of individuals having left the jurisdiction, again I am also reassured that extradition requests are appropriately made. Finally, Madam Speaker, the Commissioner emphasised that most of these actually relate to fixed penalty notices – for car parking tickets, I assume is what he is referring to, and the non-payment thereof.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just ask a couple of questions, the first on Question 542? The Hon. Minister replied to my colleague the Hon. Mr Clinton that he would refer the possibility of ... (**Hon. R M Clinton:** Ageing – sorry, I am not an Excel user – to the keeper of that ... If, having referred the ageing process to the keeper of the database, he is able to sort by date and there is an impact on his original answer to Question 542 because it is possible to break it down by years, would the Minister agree to write to us on that issue?

While I am on my feet, the more substantive question is this. The Minister spoke about, at the end of his original answer, because there is such a high number, the possibility of the Government considering other things, like perhaps even legislation, but the Minister was mindful of not cutting across the judiciary, and he has had discussions with the RGP, but it strikes me that these are judicially issued arrest warrants. Sometimes it is appropriate for Government to sit down with the Registrar of the Supreme Court – if, for example, the judiciary wishes rules or legislation to be issued. Does he think it is a good idea to perhaps have a conversation with the Registrar? It may be that there are very historic issues that can be dealt with by rules or legislation and that the Registrar or the judiciary might have views in relation to a certain type of warrant.

Hon. N Feetham: We have had that meeting with the judiciary, Madam Speaker. Can I suggest that perhaps we have a conversation behind the Speaker’s Chair?

Madam Speaker: One more, yes.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, this one cuts across again. There was mention of the Cyclops system and transferring – the technical term, I believe, is migrating – the data on to that system. Does the Hon. Minister have a timeframe as to when that data may be migrated on to Cyclops?

Hon. N Feetham: No, I do not, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q546-47/2024
Income tax –
Amounts collected in May 2023 and May 2024

Clerk: Question 546. The Hon. R M Clinton.

2405 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the amount of income tax collected in May 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

2410 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 547.

Clerk: Question 547. The Hon. R M Clinton.

2415 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the amount of company tax collected in May 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

2420 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the amount of income tax collected for the month of May 2024 is £20.82 million.
The amount of company tax collected for the month of May 2024 is £0.54 million.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q548/2024
RGP launches –
Whether operational

2425 **Clerk:** Question 548. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the RGP launch operational?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

2430 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, the RGP has confirmed that it has operational launches.

Hon. D J Bossino: That is in the plural.

2435 **Hon. N Feetham:** I have been very generous.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Hon. Minister say how many launches are available to the RGP, and are they all fully operational such that our waters are being kept safe and there are not any issues surrounding that?

2440 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I have been very generous with the hon. Member, but he did ask in the singular: 'Is the RGP launch operational?' I could have said yes, but I have obviously addressed the question in the plural because there is more than one launch operational.

2445 I am afraid that on this question the Commissioner has advised caution. He has said be cautious about what information you put in the public domain because, as the hon. Member may recall, in answer to previous questions relating to the policing of our territorial waters, it is information which the criminal fraternity might make use of.

2450 I can assure the hon. Member of two things. First of all, that the Commissioner has reassured me, because I have asked him the very same question that the hon. Member is asking me. I quote here from the notes that I took: 'Overall, with the assets available, the RGP is happy with the footprint to protect our waters.' I have the information that he has asked for, but can I suggest, Madam Speaker, that I make that information available to him behind the Speaker's Chair? You will be surprised to know that actually the resources are there and there is no catch to this particular question.

2455 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

2460 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am sure my hon. colleague will have that conversation, but I just want to be clear because the question was, 'Is the RGP launch operational?' and the Minister generously responded that the RGP have operational launches, using that phrase. May I ask, are all RGP launches operational?

2465 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Chief Minister reminds me that in any organisation there will always be a particular asset that requires refitting or repair at any given point in time, but I have said, in the plural, there is more than one operational launch and that the Commissioner has confirmed that the assets that are available – in other words, more than one – are sufficient for him to be able to do the job that he is doing. If I then went into the details around what use, for example, is being made of other launches, that, I think, is information that he has strongly discouraged me from putting in the public domain.

2470 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I understand what the Hon. the Minister is saying, that it has been recommended to him by the Commissioner of Police to exercise caution, and given the nature of the way that he has responded to the questions, he is taking that on board – he need not have, but he has politically taken that advice on board, and he is therefore exercising that caution in the responses. But may I ask him this? I do not think he has answered my supplementary question, which is how many launches. Is he able to say how many launches are available to the RGP? May I also ask him – I think I would ask it by way of confirmation of the reply that he has already given, but perhaps a fuller reply – whether he is satisfied, politically that is, as the Minister responsible for this, that the manning arrangements are such that they are up to scratch, and that there are not any issues in relation to the manning of these vessels?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, from the information available to me, the Commissioner has reassured me that he is satisfied. That is the best answer that I can give him.

2485 With regard to his question around how many operational launches are available, it is not that I do not want to give him that information. I will give him that information behind the Speaker's Chair. I do take strong advice into account when it is given, particularly when it is given by the Commissioner in good faith.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q549-50/2024

**Economic Crime Unit of the Ministry for Justice –
Number of staff and job titles; recruitment of financial crime investigator**

2490 **Clerk:** Question 549. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, how many people are actually employed or work within the Economic Crime Unit of the Ministry for Justice at 14th June 2024, and what are their job titles?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, I will answer the question together with Question 550.

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Clerk: Question 550. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Why is the Government recruiting a financial crime investigator to work in the Ministry for Justice?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, the Ministry for Justice does not have an economic crime unit. The Economic Crime Unit is a unit within the Royal Gibraltar Police. On 13th June 2024, there were no people at the Economic Crime Unit of the RGP who are employed by or who work in the Ministry for Justice.

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The Government is recruiting two financial crime investigators for the Economic Crime Unit to bolster the existing team and assist with the investigation of financial crimes and the recovery of the proceeds of crime. The financial crime investigators are Gibraltar Development Corporation posts. The advert states that the post holders may be deployed to different locations. Nevertheless, the main workplace will be at the Economic Crime Unit. The financial crime investigators will be under the operational direction of the RGP. The Ministry for Justice role will be to provide ancillary administrative support such as leave approvals and personnel records etc. There will be no involvement whatsoever by the Ministry in their investigative and operational duties. This is similar to the manner in which other specialised posts, such as the probation officers, the community service officer and the Gibraltar Financial Intelligence Unit are administered.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, let's probe that, shall we, because this is the issue that prompted the question. The advert itself – and that is why I asked how many people work within the Economic Crime Unit of the Ministry for Justice – says 'Department, Economic Crime Unit' and so it is a GDC post: 'Financial crime investigator in the Economic Crime Unit, responsible to Principal Secretary, Ministry for Justice'. That is what the advert says, hence the confusion. I certainly welcome the assurance that the Minister has given that this is, in effect, an RGP post, but can I ask him: this is an RGP administrative post? It is not a police appointment because obviously it would not be conducted in this way, as I understand it, so this is administrative support, in effect, for someone who will work within the Police and be accountable and responsible to the Police and not the Ministry. Is my understanding correct?

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Hon. N Feetham: Correct, Madam Speaker.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: The hon. Member says this is the way it has been done in relation to other intelligence units, but I just ask the hon. Member if perhaps that confusion can be dealt with in future. I printed the latest financial intelligence officer job specification. The job specification of financial crime investigator, economic crime, and the job specification of financial intelligence officer. When it gets to the part where it says 'responsible to' in the GFIIU one, it says 'responsible to the Intelligence Manager at the GFIIU'. That, as I understand it, is a police person. It does not

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say that in relation to the job specification of the financial crime investigator; it says 'responsible to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry for Justice'. When you look at the job specification, which is about gathering of relevant information, intelligence and evidence, preparing case summaries and files for consideration by the Crown prosecution, litigation and handling evidence, it is obviously not a Ministry function; it is a function of the RGP, which I think the hon. Member accepts. Does he agree that if, in future, there are going to be further jobs put out there for financial crime investigators of that type, it should be dealt with clearly in the job specification, like they do with the GFIU posts, so that there is no confusion in future?

Hon. N Feetham: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to relay that information to HR and I am sure they will take that on board. I had not seen the notice when the notice was published, but I certainly saw the bulletin of circulars and there is no reference here to the Ministry of Justice having any active role other than there was a reference with regard to location which specified 'Ministry of Justice, Customs, Government Law Offices or any other location as required'. I think for future reference any reference to the Ministry of Justice should not be there, I accept that.

Madam Speaker: All right.

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, may I move that the House should now adjourn until tomorrow at 3.30 in the afternoon, to continue with Question Time?

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do adjourn to tomorrow at 3.30 p.m.

I now put the question, which is at this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3.30 p.m. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Tuesday 25th June at 3.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.