



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3 p.m. – 6.07 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 25th September 2024

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3 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, Wednesday, 25th September 2024.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the eighth meeting of the fifteenth Parliament, which was held on 24th, 25th and 28th June, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 9th July 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 Minister for Housing and the University of Gibraltar.

15

Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P A Orfila): I have the honour to lay on the table the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2012, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2013, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2014, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2015, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2016, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2017 and the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2018.

25

Madam Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

Q652/2024

Government hostels – Safety inspections and certificates

Clerk: (vii) Reports of Committees; (viii) Answers to Oral Questions.

30 Questions to the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.
Question 652. The Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government provide the dates of the most recent inspections by the
35 Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) of the firefighting equipment, fire exits and emergency
lighting at the following locations and confirm whether a safety certificate was issued: (a) the
Government hostel at the Queen's Hotel; and (b) the Government hostel at the Sunrise Motel?

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, the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service does not issue fire safety certifications, given that
buildings' safety and good housekeeping of fire safety measures are the responsibility of
custodians or management companies, who consult the GFRS for advice.

Regarding the Sunrise Motel, a building application was submitted in 2014 through which the
GFRS outlined fire safety requirements. These were inspected and found satisfactory by 2016,
with the GFRS having no objections to issuing the certificate of fitness. The Queen's Hotel has
been inspected annually for safety measures, with the last inspection in March 2024. This was due
to the establishment holding a petroleum licence. All systems were satisfactory with any faults
addressed as needed. It is important to note that moving forward, the petroleum licence is no
longer required due to the replacement of fuel tanks with electrical boilers. Government contracts
a private company, JT Security, which maintains the fire detection systems, emergency lighting,
emergency signage, ventilation systems, dry riser lifts and portable extinguishers at these
establishments.

40

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So that I can understand the answer the Hon. Minister has given, when
45 these annual inspections were carried out, because the Queen's Hotel had a petroleum licence,
do I take it that in assessing the petroleum licence requirements it is the Fire and Rescue Service
that does this inspection and they are inspecting things that would be of a firefighting, fire exit
and emergency lighting nature? Is that right?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, that is my understanding, yes.

50

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Also, to understand what the Minister said in terms of the Sunrise Motel,
beyond 2016 there has not been an official inspection – is that correct?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, there are annual inspections by a private company. I think
55 Techrolec are employed for that. They are the ones that carry out and issue any certification
which is required, not the GFRS.

60 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is there the possibility for the landlords or the persons managing the particular premises – in this case, for example, the hostel at the Sunrise motel – to contact the Fire and Rescue Service to say, ‘We would like an inspection to make sure that we are still up to scratch’? Is that the kind of thing that is done?

65 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the GFRS have a fire prevention unit which is always at hand should there be any complaints or any issues, or should the landlords, tenants or whoever require any advice or visits.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I see, so because the annual inspections have been done by Techtrolec, do I take it that there has been no request to the Fire and Rescue Service to assist in the inspection of this building since then?

70 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Once again, Madam Speaker, that is my understanding based on information provided by the GFRS themselves.

75 **Hon. A Sanchez:** And the annual inspections that are carried out by Techtrolec, I think you said the company is called ... I assume that they issue a safety certificate once they carry out the annual inspection and they verify everything as fit for safety requirements.

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that they do not have the authority to issue a safety certificate. They will do annual inspections of the fire alarms and fire extinguishers and make sure that the emergency exits are free from hazards and so on.

80 **Hon. A Sanchez:** But they must give the go ahead that everything is up to date and fit for purpose. That is the purpose of the inspection.

85 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Yes, Madam Speaker, but that, I believe, is very different to a safety certificate.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q653/2024
Europa Sports Complex –
Arrangements for operational management and maintenance

Clerk: Question 653. The Hon. E J Reyes.

90 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, can Government update this House with full details in respect of the latest terms, conditions and financial arrangements agreed for the operational management and maintenance of the Europa Sports Park complex?

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

100 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that as from 1st October 2024 the GSLA will be taking over the operation and maintenance of the indoor areas of the Europa Sports Complex. As such, the GSLA management are in discussions with all stakeholders to bring the complex in line with all facilities under the GSLA’s remit.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I was looking back, reference this type of question, and the Hon. Minister's predecessor told us last year, in the previous Parliament, that an agreement had been entered into and was in place with a company – I think it was called Europa Sports Park Management Ltd, or something like that – and the Minister then went on to give us details of the composition of that board and so on. Can the Minister enlighten us as to what has happened to that agreement that had been entered into? For the record, I even asked the Minister could we have a copy of that agreement and he said that as far as Government was concerned, there was no problem but he wanted to check with the other stakeholders that there was no problem in laying that on the table. Unfortunately, a General Election was called following that, so I was never able to get that agreement. If we take the Hon. Minister's predecessor's word for it, if an agreement was in place, what has happened and why are we going to change on 1st October?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I am pretty sure that we have had this conversation already across the floor, as well as with the Hon. Mr Sacarello, where I explained that we had found the best alternative, which was the GSLA.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am asking, first of all, what has happened with the previous contract.

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, it has been replaced by the new arrangements.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, the feedback I am getting is that there are concerns expressed by parties who were signatories to the previous contract, the sporting associations; mainly rugby and cricket are the ones affected. They fear that their membership of the international governing body may be placed at risk because they no longer have premises that they either own or are leased to them, and that is a condition for their continued membership. Is the Minister aware of this potential problem; and, if he is, what does he intend to do in order to tackle this problem?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, the sporting association that the hon. Gentleman refers to has highlighted this in the past. I have explained to them many times that there is no such thing as a home of a particular sport in Gibraltar. For example, no one argues that the Tercentenary Sports Hall is the home of basketball, but it is also the home of volleyball and futsal, and the dog show once a year. They have the home of rugby; they just have to share it with other sports, just like all other sporting facilities in Gibraltar.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I take it that one can deduce from that that the Hon. Minister is confident that their international memberships will not be jeopardised.

May I ask, as well: those who were employees of whatever entity was managing the Europa Sports Park Complex beforehand, are they under the TUPE arrangements? Are they going to be absorbed and transferred to the GSLA?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, with regard to his comments on rugby, rugby still does not have recognition of the international governing body.

With regard to the employees, of course the Government will be following the law and the regulations with regard to TUPE.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, unfortunately the rugby application is still in the pending tray. That is why I am being a bit finicky, making certain that it does not add an extra spanner in the works, especially from the opposition that we get from our neighbours, who although sporting bodies, have no sporting behaviour in the manner they act on things.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

155 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is this arrangement with the GSLA now a permanent arrangement, and how does it work in terms of the present arrangements? My colleague asked about the operational management. As I understand it now, the operational management – I may be wrong – is being handled by the GFA, at least on a temporary basis until the new ... can I say 'home' for football without getting controversial? – is built. How will it work in terms of going forward once it is no longer needed for football? Is this a permanent arrangement with the GSLA?

160 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, just to be clear, we have effectively divided the Europa Sports Complex into two, so we have the outdoor area and the indoor area. Effectively what has happened is that the outdoor area – the playing pitch and the stands – is being managed by the GFA, as far as we are concerned, until the new stadium is built. When the new stadium is built I do not know what might happen. The indoor areas are the ones which will be managed as from 165 1st October by the GSLA, and that is a permanent arrangement.

170 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Following on from that, with a view, then, I ask, that once the GFA is not managing the external areas, the GSLA will take control of the external areas also, or there will be other arrangements?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker, that is the plan.

175 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, if I may, because the Minister has now referred to a major differential with the internal areas: in previous questions I have been told that there are entities that run a commercial business using some of the internal areas and they were paying a fee, or rental or licence, or whatever. Can the Minister confirm that those arrangements still remain in place; in other words, that payments are being made – I take it this time probably to the GSLA – to what entity? Is the Minister is aware?

180 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the GSLA is holding meetings with all of the affected individuals. In fact, I believe that one of those meetings is taking place as we speak.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q654/2024

Lathbury Sports Complex swimming pool – Cancellation of classes by GASA

185 **Clerk:** Question 654. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: What issues have led to the Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association (GASA) having recently cancelled classes at Lathbury Sports Complex swimming pool, and by when are these problems expected to be resolved?

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

195 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, the filtration system at the Lathbury Complex swimming pool has suffered irreparable damage to both the primary and backup pumps. Spares have been ordered urgently. In the meantime, engineers are investigating possible interim solutions. The pool should be, hopefully, fully operational in the next few days.

200 **Hon. E J Reyes:** If I heard correctly, Madam Speaker, the Minister said it was irreparable, the filtration system. That leads me to ask, seeing that it is a new facility, is this system still under guarantee and going to be replaced under that guarantee, or is this an added expense that the Government will have to enter into; and, if so, what, more or less, is the ballpark figure of expected expenditure?

205 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, to date no moneys have been paid by the GSLA with regard to any repairs to the swimming pool.

Hon. E J Reyes: I know to date they have not paid anything, but my question was is it covered by guarantee, or if not, is there an estimate of how much it could end up costing?

210 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure about the guarantee but I did ask this question today of the GSLA and I was told that they would not be paying for these repairs. I am not sure whether it is because of its guarantee but they will not be paying, apparently.

215 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker. I know the Minister is trying his best. I know I am always a bit finicky on this, but to be able to get an update on this, six months does seem rather a long time. It will be 2025 if I ask again. May I beg now that Madam Speaker be a bit lenient with me and allow me shortly, maybe in the next quarter or something, to have an update, to see if the filtration system has been fixed? I would appreciate an update at some stage.

220 **Madam Speaker:** If the question is phrased in a manner which does not infringe the six-month rule, then the question is allowed; otherwise, it will not be allowed.

225 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I could not agree with you more. The hon. Gentleman has asked a question today about what happened. A question next month about the progress of the works that the hon. Gentleman has referred to the House would be a completely different question; there is no question of the six-month rule being engaged.

230 As Leader of the House, I have to protect all our rights and privileges, including theirs to ask a question. I do not think there is any need to raise the issue that he would not be able to ask the Hon. Minister until 2025. That is not what the Rules of this House provide. The Rules of this House are very clear and he can ask about those works the next month without having to beg anyone's indulgence, subject, of course, to the fact that you control every question.

Madam Speaker: Next question. Yes?

235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Could I ask the Hon. the Minister what the cost of the interim measures are?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, again, nothing has been paid.

240 **Hon. D J Bossino:** This about the interim measures, with the greatest of respect, which I assume are going to be put in place imminently because the Hon. the Minister says that the pool will be functioning in the next 48 hours. No?

245 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** I said 'hopefully'. Madam Speaker, I did not say 48 hours; I said hopefully in the next few days.

Hon. D J Bossino: When does he expect to have an idea of what the cost of the interim measures, which is what is going to give rise to the pool functioning in the next few days ...? When does he expect that that information will be available to him as the Minister?

250 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I will say it again: there is no cost.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q655/2024
GSLA sports facilities –
Allocations to team sports

Clerk: Question 655. The Hon. E J Reyes.

255 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of the number of hourly allocations given to team sports, broken down by sporting facility locations and associations to whom allocations were granted, at any of the premises falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority monthly since June 2023 to date?

260 **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, during June, July and August, allocations were granted to associations upon request via the facilities department at the GSLA, with the summer sports programme taking up most of the allocations during the summer months. Only the Gibraltar Amateur Basketball Association (GABBA) secured allocations during these months, with no other requests made from other associations.

265 I now hand over a schedule with allocations from 1st September 2024 until 31st May 2025, although I understand that this information is available in the statistics section of the GSLA website.

270

Madam Speaker: I propose that we move on to the next question and then revert to the hon. Member if he wishes to ask any supplementaries.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 655

Allocation	Day	Time	Game
Tercentenary Sports Hall Court 1	Monday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Thursday	3.30 - 7.00pm	Basketball
		7.00 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.00pm	Basketball
		3.30 - 5.30pm	Netball
		8.30 - 11.00pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 12.00pm	Basketball
	12.00 - 11.00pm	Football	
Allocation	Day	Time	Game
Tercentenary Sports Hall Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	3.30 - 7.30 pm	Basketball
		7.00 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 7.30 pm	Basketball
		7.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.00 pm	Basketball
		3.30 - 5.30 pm	Netball
		5.30 - 8.30 pm	Volleyball
		8.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 12.00 pm	Basketball
	12.00 - 11.00 pm	Football	
Allocation	Day	Time	Game
St. Joseph's Lower School	Monday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Tuesday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Wednesday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Thursday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Friday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
Allocation	Day	Time	Association / School
St. Joseph's Upper School - Sports Hall	Tuesday	6.45 - 9.45 pm	Jewish School Youth Club
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
St Bernard's	Monday	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Taekwondo
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	7.00 - 8.00 pm	Fitness Class
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Taekwondo
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Westside School Sports Hall	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 655

Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Bayside School Sports Hall	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Bishop Fitzgerald School	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
St Anne's School	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Multi Use Games Area Court 1	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Multi Use Games Area Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Europa Sports Hall Court 1	Monday	5.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Friday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Gymnastics
		3.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 6.00 pm	Football
		6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Europa Sports Hall Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Tuesday	3.30 - 8.00 pm	Gymnastics
	Wednesday	3.30 - 5.30 pm	Gymnastics
		6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Thursday	3.30 - 8.00 pm	Gymnastics
	Friday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Gymnastics
		3.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 6.00 pm	Football
		6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball

Q656/2024
GSLA facilities –
Fees paid by users in 2023-24

Clerk: Question 656. The Hon. E J Reyes.

275

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide a detailed breakdown in respect of all fees paid by users of any facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the financial year 2023-24, indicating the purpose of their usage, for example whether sporting, cultural or other types of events?

280

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

285

Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam Speaker, fees paid by users for facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the 2023-24 financial year are as follows: sporting events, £1,100; cultural events, £6,785.90; and community use for sports, £760.

290

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful that, Madam Speaker. Obviously the Minister has given me the total revenue, which I asked for. Does he have in his notes, for example in respect of cultural, which is the higher figure, £6,785.90, is that a payment for one event by one entity, or a number of events and entities that were involved in this? Does he happen to have that information?

295

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I have a breakdown here, which I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman across the floor or behind the Speaker's Chair, whatever is convenient for him.

Madam Speaker: Across the floor or behind the Speaker's Chair?

Hon. E J Reyes: I am happy as long as *[Inaudible]*

300

Hon. L M Bruzon: Take my copy.

Madam Speaker: All right, let's move on and then, if necessary, we will revert to this.

Q655/2024
GSLA sports facilities –
Allocations to team sports –
Supplementary questions

305

Madam Speaker: Are you ready with supplementaries to Question 655? All right, we are moving on to supplementaries to the previous question, Question 655.

310

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing us to return to that. The schedule seems to be well detailed. I have a couple of minor points I wish to clarify. Towards the bottom of the first page, where the allocation premises refer to St Bernard's, for the record can we clarify whether that is premises within St Bernard's Primary School or St Bernard's Hospital? May I start with that?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, I am not entirely sure. It does say taekwondo and basketball, but I will find out for him.

315 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the second page the Minister has kindly given us the information about the allocations at Europa Sports Hall court 1 and Europa Sports Hall court 2. There is no reference to the outdoor facility at the Europa Sports Park. He has detailed the internal part, which we know from the previous question is going to be passed on to the GSLA as from October. Before that, is it the case that it was not under the GSLA and he can identify who it was or how it works?

320 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, no, it was not under the GSLA and it is not under the GSLA again. The GSLA will be taking over the *indoor* areas from 1st October. This has never been under the GSLA, but I can try to get the information on the outdoor facilities and hope that someone has kept the records.

325 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, it would be extremely useful if the Minister is able to get the information because it raises the question ... If Europa sports halls are not being transferred to the GSLA till this coming October, yet the Minister has kindly provided information on what usage it has had ... I think he referred to the date of September. My question was asking from June 2023. Can the Minister enlighten us as to why information from June 2023 to September in his schedule ... It does not actually have a date, which would have been useful for future reference, but it seems to be those ... Is it September to June 2023 that is missing? And is this schedule starting from September 2023, or is it September 2024? I have no idea.

335 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the question clearly says 'premises falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority'. The Europa sports facilities have never fallen, technically, under the GSLA. Therefore, we have given him more information than he requested by giving information on the indoor halls. All I can do is ask the people who were running it at the time whether or not they also kept records. I assume they did not because it was being managed by the teams themselves.

340 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I am grateful to the Minister for that, but can I refer to ...? He gave me a date before and I unfortunately did not make a note of it. This schedule has given me now, with the answer to Question 655 ... Does this go all the way back to June 2023, or is it some other date that the Minister alluded to?

345 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the schedule is from 1st September 2024 to 31st May 2025, but I did also say in my reply that the information he was seeking previously, and some of this as well, is available on the GSLA website.

350 **Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries to Question 656? Next question.

HOUSING AND THE UNIVERSITY

Q657-58/2024

Government hostels –

Department responsible; eviction of residents

Clerk: Questions to the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University. Question 657. The Hon. A Sanchez.

355 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm which Department is responsible for the management and operation of the Government hostels located at Queen's Hotel and the Sunrise Motel?

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

360 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 658.

Clerk: Question 658. The Hon. A Sanchez.

365 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm whether the individuals currently residing at the Government hostel located in the Queen's Hotel will be evicted at the end of this month; and, if so, where they will be relocated?

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

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Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila): Madam Speaker, the Housing Department is responsible for the hostels and JT Security is subcontracted to be responsible for the management and operational aspects of the day-to-day running of the hostels.

375 I can confirm that no one will be evicted from the Queen's Hotel and that all existing licensees of the Queen's Hotel will be offered relocation to the Sunrise Motel by 31st October 2024.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister mentioned that private firm JT Security is responsible for the management of the hostel. Does this mean that the private security is also responsible for the upkeep maintenance of the hostel and ensuring that the hostel complies with environmental health and safety regulations and is also in charge of the rent collection and auditing?

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Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, JT Security is in charge of everything at the moment.

385 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Hon. Minister clarify who monitors all of this to ensure that it is being done correctly and that the hostels are being managed adequately? Does the Housing Department merely subcontract these services and absolve itself of all responsibility? From what we saw when we visited these hostels, it was quite clear that the living conditions were far from pleasant, so could the Hon. Minister clarify who is making sure that the hostels are being managed appropriately?

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Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, the hostels, like I said, are now being managed by JT Security in its entirety. Of course we subcontract, but the Housing Department has a say in what is going on, and we certainly do look into what is going on.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Hon. Minister confirm who holds the post of hostel manager?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, it is up to JT Security to employ their men. I cannot give a particular name. I know that JT Security are conducting the security and everything else involved with the hostels. They are actually taking care of it for us.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Hon. Minister confirm the last time that rent was collected in the hostels?

405 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Last week, Madam Speaker. Rent is now being collected religiously and we are having a very good result. Thank you.

410 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Prior to last week, can the Hon. Minister confirm if there was a significant gap in rent collection? We have information that rent collection ceased for a significant period. We have seen the booklets of the residents that show that rent collection ceased for many months, not because the residents did not want to pay their rent but, in fact, because there was no one collecting rent for a significant period of time. Can the Hon. Minister confirm why nobody was managing the hostels, it seems, adequately and nobody was bothering to charge rent or audit rent collection?

415 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Yes, of course. Rent was not collected because we had Covid at the time and that was the reason why rentals were overlooked. We were going through very hard times and rents were overlooked.

420 **Hon. A Sanchez:** I understand that perhaps rent was overlooked during Covid, but they only started being collected last week. The information we have is that the first time that rent was collected was last week. We have seen the booklets.

425 **Hon. P A Orfila:** No, I am afraid that is not true. They had been paying rent already. You asked me when was the last time that the rent was collected. I said last week, but we had been collecting rent already.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can she clarify since when they have been collecting rent? That is not the information that we have been shown.

430 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Rent is being collected. Some people pay via direct debit, others pay physically, but the rent is being collected, and not just from last week or the week before that. We have had the rent being collected generally, yes; we have had rent being collected not just from two weeks ago.

435 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Origo.

440 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, the Hon. Minister – and she can correct me if I am wrong – in her reply mentioned that the current tenants residing in the Queen’s Hotel in a few months’ time will be offered licences at the Sunrise Motel, but what will happen if these tenants do not accept the licences for the move? What will the Government be doing then?

Hon. P A Orfila: It is not a question of accepting or not; we will terminate their licences.

445 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister then confirm that if these licences are rejected, at that point she will be minded to evict those tenants from the Queen’s Hotel?

450 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, eviction is not something that I think is relevant in the context of what we are discussing. We are talking about licensees, who do not hold tenancies. The process – from the point of view of the administrative process, from the point of view of the Government – is that we simply terminate the licence. Whether it is then necessary to take a different step thereafter if the individual does not comply with the termination of the licence is a matter that would be addressed at that time. In that sense, the hon. Gentleman’s question is a little bit hypothetical because he is seeking to assume failure to comply with a termination of a licence and a desire on the part of the person who is, in those circumstances, potentially not accepting the termination of the licence not to also accept the new licence offered

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in an alternative location. All of that, in my submission, Madam Speaker, is to set up a hypothetical question.

460 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I just ask on this issue, while we are on the subject of the people moving, or not, does the Minister have the numbers of people to whom the offer would be made currently in the Queen's Hotel, the capacity that there is in the Sunrise Motel and the number of people who are presently in the Sunrise Motel? Does she have that information?

465 **Hon. P A Orfila:** I am afraid this was not in my question. You can ask me that question at some other time.

470 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, when we visited the Sunrise Motel, both the residents and the staff expressed concerns that it was almost, if not already, full. We were also shown communal areas that looked like they were being prepared and converted into shared sleeping areas. Could the Hon. Minister clarify if this the case, and perhaps, if she does not have the total number or capacity, at least allay our concerns in this regard?

475 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Well, look, Government takes a different view. We will adequately house everybody in the Queen's Hotel, when the time comes, into the Sunrise Hotel. Plans are already being laid for that.

Madam Speaker: Next question. It has been 10 supplementaries.

**Q659/2024
Housing Act –
Publication date**

Clerk: Question 659. The Hon. D J Bossino.

480 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the Housing Act be published?

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

485 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, imminently. The Act is undergoing final pre-publication consideration.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Hon. the Minister confident that she will be able to comply with the electoral promises that the Act would be published within a year of being sworn into office?

490 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, yes.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does she appreciate that she does not have much more time left?

495 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, we all understand the calendar.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is she able to advise this House what level of consultation there has been in relation to the production of the draft?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, considerable.

500 **Hon. D J Bossino:** With whom has she consulted?

Hon. P A Orfila: I would need notice of this question but I can assure you that there is a long list of stakeholders that I have been in touch with, and we have discussed very thoroughly.

505 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she able to state whether the Act deals with the issue of private rent control to premises, which, as she knows, is an issue which has caused a lot of concern to private landlords and was the subject of debate that she and I had on GBC television, I think about seven or eight months ago?

510 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, yes.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is she able to provide any further details in relation to that particular issue? What is the Government's policy as to how they intend to deal with the rent control premises issue?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, yes, upon publication of the Bill, when the hon. Gentleman will see the whole thing.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q660/2024

Varyl Begg –

Residents' concerns re ongoing works

520 **Clerk:** Question 660. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Will the Minister for Housing consider addressing the concerns of Varyl Begg residents while the works there are progressing?

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

Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila): Madam Speaker, I have only received one official concern and this was immediately addressed.

530 Construction works will inevitably create a certain amount of disruption to residents, which is unavoidable, but this is being kept to a minimum level. This refurbishment is for the benefit of all residents and will give the estate an extra 20-year lifespan, which will further benefit the taxpayer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the residents of Varyl Begg for their continuous support, patience and understanding.

535 Members will recall that the works done under the GSD were more of a superficial facelift, while we are undertaking a full, in-depth refurbishment, including the investment of millions of pounds in order to ensure that the environment in which our tenants live is massively upgraded. Unsurprisingly, we are criticised by hon. Members opposite when we invest in improving the lives of working people. We make no apology for making this important investment in this estate, as we have in others and will in many more.

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Hon. D J Bossino: With respect to the Hon. the Minister, it is not we who are criticising them, it is the residents whom we met on site who are criticising them in relation to the various issues which were the subject of the press release – and she, I am sure, is aware of them – dealing with

545 issues of parking, scaffolding which is there permanently and no works are being carried out, and all the rest of it.

There is one issue that I would like to raise with her, but before I do, may I ask her to state which one issue she says she has been in receipt of complaints about?

550 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Sorry, but like I said, we only had one complaint. We have no other complaints from anybody else. I can understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but I do know that you were called by one person – and we both know who that one is – because one gentleman had to walk with his food shopping bag an extra 10 metres, or 5 metres, and he wanted things moved out of the way, to encumber somebody else and not himself. I think we both know what we are talking about here. This is hearsay. I have addressed the one concern that was given to me and they were
555 relocated. They were given parking in Midtown, so it would put nobody off; they still have parking areas.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. the Minister says it is hearsay; it is not hearsay, it is what the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and I saw firsthand. We can give direct evidence in relation to the
560 things that we saw, and we reported it by way of a press release so that everybody could understand the issues that residents there were facing. So, with the greatest of respect to her, again, it is not hearsay. Can I please ask her to answer the question that I posed to her? Which complaint did she receive? What was the subject matter?

565 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** And with the very greatest of respect to the hon. Gentleman, Madam Speaker, when somebody says what somebody else told them, that is hearsay. If the hon. Gentleman is telling us that *he* saw things which *he* is complaining about, then that is not a complaint of the residents; that is *his* view. So, when he is talking about the concerns of Varyl Begg residents as relayed by him in respect of what was said to him, that is obviously hearsay – and he
570 will forgive me for not taking his word for anything, let alone what a constituent is said to have said to him.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. the Chief Minister will forgive me for not taking *anything* he says – and he knows the position that I adopt – at face value. That is clear. That is my position and has
575 been for a very long time now. But the Hon. the Minister to whom I am asking these questions, who is the Minister responsible for this area of policy ... I have asked her one question: what was the subject of the complaints? We have now tried on three occasions to elicit the response, and the hon. Member has not answered. They are going around the houses and are simply not dealing with the issue. What was the one issue which she says that she received a complaint about?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I fully respect the fact that the hon. Gentleman will not take anything that I say at face value. He has, at last, adopted of me the position that I have long had to take of him, let alone in respect of what he presents himself as.

585 I have no difficulty with the position that he has taken in the preface to his question. I invite him to look up the definition of 'hearsay' for himself and realise that he has once again made a big mistake in the way that he has referred to this House.

Madam Speaker: Question.

590 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, I have not made a big mistake. This is evidence that we give based on what we *saw*.

Madam Speaker: We are not going to discuss the niceties of hearsay. Is there a question the hon. Member wishes to put to the Hon. Minister?

595 **Hon. D J Bossino:** It is the same question I have been putting, attempting to elicit a response
from the Hon. Minister – and the Hon. Minister ought to be called to order because she is not
providing the answer – which is what was the subject of the complaint that she received. This is
now the fourth or fifth occasion that I have made an attempt at eliciting a response from the
600 Government in relation to this, but it may be that the Chief Minister can enlighten us in relation
to this issue.

Madam Speaker: I am not going to call the Hon. Minister to order, because the manner of
answering the questions is a matter for Government Ministers. If there is one more question the
605 hon. Member wishes to pose, I will allow it.

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask the Hon. the Minister whether at least one of the issues which we
raised and were able to establish ourselves directly was an issue, which is the access of
ambulances – and that may be the complaint that has been raised; it is not, okay – to that area,
which is now basically clogged by the headquarters of where the construction works are being
610 conducted from? I think she knows where I mean; it is a block opposite Harbour Views. That issue
raises a directive not of comfort, as she alleges, which to me actually shows how disconnected the
hon. Member is, but actually of potential danger to residents. I think there was an incident which
was reported recently in the press in relation to that. Can she at least state whether the
Government intends to address that issue once and for all?

615 **Hon. P A Orfila:** That is not an issue.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I understand why the Hon. Minister thinks it is not an issue? For
example, we understand the issue in relation to ambulances to be that when they have access to
620 this particular block, first of all they used to go around the block and get out to the Hospital; now
they have to stop at a particular point and the concern was that because there is a barrier now,
they cannot carry on going forward and they have to reverse their way out with a patient in the
ambulance. I understand from residents that that has happened, so we were raising that issue
constructively to see if that matter could be addressed by the removal of the ... Well, I think I am
625 doing it constructively while the Chief Minister is in guffaws of laughter. I think anyone listening
can hear the constructive tone. The removal of the barrier would at least have allowed
ambulances not to have to reverse on their way out. That is one of the issues.

While I am on my feet, if I can also raise this: there is the deposit of the ... I do not know if the
Minister wants to hear the question. There is also on the estate, very close to the blocks that are
630 being worked on, the deposit of substantial amounts of cladding, which of course will be used for
the particular blocks. It is clear from the way that the works are being rolled out that the cladding
is not being used for some months. Is there not another location where these things could be
placed, so that there could be parking facilities for the residents so that they do not have to carry –
they are elderly citizens – their bags a long distance?

635 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not believe that it is constructive, if you want to
achieve something, to issue a press release criticising the Government, because what you are
doing, actually, is leveraging a matter for party political benefit. It is not constructive engagement
with the Government. If you go to an estate and you are told things and you relay them to the
640 Government – although that is clearly hearsay – by phoning the Minister and saying, ‘Look, I have
been told this. Can you help?’ that is constructive. If you go and see something at the estate and
you give direct evidence of that in a conversation with the Minister, whom you call and say, ‘Look,
I have seen this, you may be concerned,’ that is constructive. If you issue a press release on those
issues, you are not being constructive, you are being party political. We are both in parties. We
645 are both in politics. It is fine to be party political. The issue is when you try to pretend that you are

not being party political, that you are being constructive, because you want to use the cloak of being the nice bloke to pretend that you are doing something which is different.

650 The reality is that we take advice from the experts who are carrying out the works and from the experts in the emergency services, and they do not share the view that there is any reason for concern about the way that the traffic flow may have to be altered for a short period at this estate, as it was altered at the other estates where we did fantastic work in the lifetime of previous Parliaments when we carried out the refurbishment and were subject to, in the lifetimes of those Parliaments, the self-same criticisms that we are hearing now from hon. Members who, if we were not doing the works, would be criticising us for not doing the works.

655 In the context of the cladding, where it is and how long it is going to be there, or whether it could be elsewhere, hon. Members have to realise, as they probably do, that Gibraltar is full of armchair managers of the GFA, armchair managers of Barcelona, Liverpool, Manchester United and England, and armchair chief ministers and armchair ministers – they know that, in particular the hon. Gentleman because he has been a Minister – and it is also full of armchair site managers, people who walk along a site and decide that they would do it in a different way. That may be something that hon. Members got comfortable with when they had a Chief Minister who was a much better manager of Manchester United, a much better site manager of any works going on in Gibraltar and a much better everything than everybody else. At the moment, with the humble Government that the people of Gibraltar have, this Chief Minister knows that he is not better at managing a site at Varyl Begg than the guy who is paid to do it, and this Minister knows that she is not better at managing a site at Varyl Begg than the guy who is being paid to do so. So, with the very greatest of respect to hon. Members, we are going to abide by the advice that we get from the emergency services and from our site managers.

**Procedure re parliamentary questions –
Statement by Madam Speaker**

670 **Madam Speaker:** Before we move on to the next question on the Order Paper, Question 661, I just want to address a matter in relation to that question. For the avoidance of doubt, that question, which I allowed, talks about providing the addresses of the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme. What I want to say relates to Government press releases issued on the subject matter of a question which has already been filed for answer at the upcoming session of Parliament. By way of context, there are two specific issues I want to highlight. One is in relation to this question and one is in relation to a subsequent question on the Order Paper, which I will come to in a moment.

675 In the first instance, in respect of Question 661, on 17th September the Government issued a press release which, by way of summary, stated that there were 17 properties subject to the Rent and Repair Scheme. On 18th September a question was filed in Parliament by the Shadow Minister for Housing asking for the addresses of those 17 properties. On 18th September at 3.05 p.m. the questions were sent by Parliament to the Parliament team at No. 6, and at 3.08 p.m. the questions were sent by Parliament to the Ministers directly. On 19th September a press release was issued by the Government which provided the addresses of the 17 properties, thus effectively dealing with the question filed for answer in this session.

680 The second instance I want to speak about relates to Question 679 on the Order Paper, filed by the Shadow Minister for, inter alia, Youth, but I am going to talk about it now because what I have to say relates to both questions. Question 679 was filed on Wednesday the 18th at 11.30 a.m. and it asked whether the Government had the intention of reintroducing the careers fair. In a press release issued on 24th September the Government announced that it would be running a careers fair in November, thus effectively dealing with the question filed for answer at this session.

Looking back on previous Speakers' rulings, I remind hon. Members that on 22nd February 2013, Speaker Canepa dealt with a similar issue thus:

Once notice of a question is given to the House, if the Government issues a press release on that subject matter, then, in effect, what you are doing is denying the right of Members of Parliament here to question, to hold the executive to scrutiny. That is wrong. It is a practice which in the House of Commons would be deprecated and I deprecate it. The practice should be for the Government not to issue such press releases unless they are matters which are absolutely urgent. I would enjoin upon the Government that they should be very, very conscious of that fact and try, if they can, not to issue press releases which are the subject of questions in the House unless something extraordinary happens, when I think everyone would accept that it would become necessary.

I endorse and adopt that view. That said, I do not ignore that there are new Members in the
695 House who may have been unfamiliar with this rule of practice, and hence the issue of this
guidance for the future going forward. For their benefit and for the avoidance of doubt, I
summarise the position that there is a longstanding rule of practice that when a question has been
filed it should not be addressed by way of a Government press release, statement, interview or
700 other announcement save if it is a matter of urgency or pressing public interest, in which case
exceptions may be made, but those exceptions do not displace the general rule. To bypass that
rule would challenge the practice and very purpose of parliamentary procedure. I urge all
Members going forward to be alive to and observe this important rule of parliamentary procedure
and practice.

705 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government, we
absolutely acknowledge that the statement that you have made is the correct position and is the
position that the Government has abided by in every month in which we have had Question Time
since that statement from Speaker Canepa, except on a number of occasions where we have had
no choice but to make statements which relate to questions in the House.

710 In relation to the first question that you were addressing, which is the list of 18 properties, I
had agreed the issue of the press release for reasons which I will set out now to the House, so that
it has the information. I was not aware of the question on the careers fair. Perhaps the Minister
for Education was, but when I cleared the question on the careers fair I was not aware that we
had a question on it. I had not seen it yet, but the Minister might have. This was brought to my
715 attention by the Hon. Minister herself on 19th September. Hon. Members will know what was
going on, on 19th September. My life and the life of the Deputy Chief Minister were not Gibraltar
centric on that day. They were Brussels centric. The Minister was very insistent, despite the fact
that we were dealing with other matters, that we should agree the issue of this press release and
I made a mental note, which I then forgot to action, which was to get in touch with the Hon.
720 Mr Bossino – with whom the relationship is usually not as tense as it might be when we are across
the floor of the House – just to mention to him that we had been put under extraordinary pressure
by a lot of applicants to know what these addresses were. We had issued the press release on
Rent and Repair and a lot of people were calling the Housing Department. It was literally collapsing
the Department. For that reason, because of the public interest limb – and I think the Minister has
725 already said that we have had over 500 people who have become interested in Rent and Repair –
we agreed that those addresses should be published. This was a huge amount of public interest
that was making the operation of the Department difficult, but we would not otherwise have done
so. We abide by the convention footnote, whatever the Minister for Education may tell us about
the careers fair, which I was not aware of, and I was simply remiss in not being in touch with the
730 hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I came back, I did *Viewpoint*, and at some stage I also had to sleep
and think. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, we entirely accept the ruling and the rebuke in the context
of my not having explained to Members opposite, and indeed to the House, why we had agreed
the publication of these addresses in the context of Question 661.

735 **Madam Speaker:** Thank you. I think that deals with Question 661. I accept the Hon. the Chief Minister's comments in relation to that and trust that Ministers will bear in mind the guidance going forward.

The Hon. Prof. Cortes.

740 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, thank you for that. I totally support your view and obviously the one of the Chief Minister. I was going to raise the issue when it came to the question, but I think it is appropriate that I should take it now.

745 Madam Speaker, the careers fair was being organised, as I will explain later, by different Ministries and different Departments and had a separate dynamic to this. The press release was issued by the Press Office. I had not had sight of the final one, and immediately I spotted it had been published I did communicate that this was going to be an issue and that I would raise it here. All I can do is apologise for that having happened, but I think it is important to point out that the action to organise the careers fair was not stimulated by the question. Meetings had been held since February. The venue was booked in March. So, the action was not in response to the question, but clearly the press release should at least have been cleared beforehand. I think the Press Office was not sighted on the question, otherwise I am sure it would not have been issued. We will make sure that this does not happen again.

750 **Madam Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Minister for his apology, which I accept entirely, and I simply ask that in the future greater vigilance be exercised.

Q661-64/2024

Rent and Repair Scheme –

**Addresses of properties; date when available; details of determining body;
aspect of scheme for which tenant is responsible**

760 **Clerk:** Question 661. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide the addresses of the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme.

765 **Madam Speaker:** Does the hon. Member still want the addresses, despite the fact that it is now in the public domain?

770 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The answer to that question is no, unless the Hon. the Minister was going to do anything other than provide the reply to the question in the very specific terms in which it was put. If she is going to put a bit more beef to the answer, then maybe she can be allowed to respond.

775 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the only thing I would say is that the answer provides them – because they are public, and so they are their public, of course – but there is one more. There are 18. So, maybe for the sake of everyone's sanity and not having to read through something that has already been published (*Interjection*) – oh, there are 17, okay – we can just refer the hon. Gentleman to the list which he has in the wider answer, because the answer comes with the answer to all of the rest of his questions on Rent and Repair together. But there is no need for us to sit through the rereading.

780 **Hon. D J Bossino:** That is absolutely fine, but how will that be recorded for *Hansard* purposes? I have only eavesdropped the very brief remarks that the Hon. the Minister for Housing made to the Hon. the Chief Minister in relation to the number. Are we dealing with 17 or 18?

785 **Madam Speaker:** I will let the Hon. Minister answer the issue of the number, but I think what was whispered was that it was a typo and it was 17. I will let the hon. Member pursue that if he chooses.

In relation to the question of how it is going to be recorded for the purposes of *Hansard*: in the same way as all the other schedules that are handed to hon. Members on request. I am trying to avoid having to read through the whole list if it is unnecessary.

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EXTRACT FROM HMGOG PRESS RELEASE 600/2024

Flat number	Address	Location	Flat composition
14/10	South Barrack Road	South Area	3RKB
15/10	South Barrack Road	South Area	2RKB
3/1	Armstrong Steps	South Area	3RKB
1	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
4	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
5	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
6	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
7	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
2	2/4 Paradise Ramp	Upper Town	3RKB
7/59	Flat Bastion	Town	3RKB
3/59	Flat Bastion	Town	4RKB
3	21/25 Flat Bastion	Town	3RKB
4	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
1	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
5	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
7	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
8	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	2RKB
9	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	2RKB

795 **Madam Speaker:** Are there any supplementaries to Question 661?

Hon. D J Bossino: I do have a supplementary and it relates to the point that we have alluded to across the floor of the House. I asked for –

800 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Will the hon. Member give way?

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, of course.

805 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I think it would be easier for everyone, Madam Speaker, if the answer to Question 661 is taken together with Questions 662 to 664. I think it is probably better if we do all of them together and then – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Yes, because they are all about Rent and Repair, so I think it will save everyone's time if we do that.

Clerk: Question 662. The Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: When will the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme be made available?

Clerk: Question 663. The Hon. D J Bossino.

815 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Which body will determine who will be able to participate in the Rent and Repair Scheme and will the names of the determining body be published?

Clerk: Question 664. The Hon. D J Bossino.

820 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What aspect of the repair element of the Rent and Repair Scheme will be the responsibility of the tenant?

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

825 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, there are 17 addresses and they have already been published, as we know, in a press release. I do not mind giving the list of the 17 addresses, if the hon. Gentleman wants me to. No, okay.

An open house is being held to enable the viewing of the properties. This commenced on Monday, 23rd September 2024 and viewing will continue until this Friday, 27th September 2024.
830 Expressions of Interest will be collected and reviewed.

Everyone eligible to be on the housing waiting list is able to apply. Priority will, however, go to those already on the waiting list and those releasing other Government properties.

The determining body for allocation of the properties will be the Housing Allocation Committee.

835 Applicants will be responsible for all internal repairs and refurbishments to HMGoG standard.

I must add, Madam Speaker, that this exercise has been a huge success and my thanks go to my hardworking team at the Department.

840 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister has confirmed the number 17. It is the number which she set out in the initial press release, which is what provoked this question, but then in the press release which lists the properties I count 18. Can she clarify the difference? Is it that one of the properties which is listed in the second press release, of 19th September, will no longer be available?

845 **Hon. P A Orfila:** That was human error. It was a typo. It was one in Crutchett's Ramp which already was allocated to someone; it was someone's house. Obviously it was a typing error. It was just a typo. Okay?

850 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Okay. There are 6 in Crutchett's Ramp. They are all numbered 9. The thing is, four of them are 3RKBs and 2 of them are 2RKBs. Can she state which is the one that has been removed? One of the 3RKBs? In fact, no, there are flat numbers. I apologise. It makes my life and her life easier. Can she state which flat number is now no longer available? I think that would be of public interest.

855 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, of course. If you check, it is 9 Crutchett's Ramp, Flat 4, and it was a 3RKB.

860 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When I asked in Question 662 when will the properties be made available, I think the answer was that they are currently being made available for viewing, but beyond that, when does she envisage that these properties will be identified to the successful applicants and then properly be made and titled? Well, not titled because title is remaining with the Government. Does she have a timeline within which the Government expects this process to be completed in relation to these 17 properties? I understand that the Government's policy position is that they will be making more properties available.

865 **Hon. P A Orfila:** We do not really know how long it is going to take, but maybe months, certainly not years.

870 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she also able to state with any manner of precision what she thinks will be the anticipated cost of the repairs to the successful tenants? If she is not able to provide that answer now, even a ballpark figure of what she expects is likely to be reasonable cost, whatever it is, is that information being provided to the tenants, and at what stage? In other words, is it being provided to those who are currently applying and want to benefit from this policy, or is it only being provided at the stage that the tenant is told, 'You are successful and it is going to cost you this'? At what stage will the tenants be provided with that information, which I would have thought would be crucially important before you proceed with that particular expenditure?

880 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, with the very greatest respect, I think that question is incapable of answer because a potential tenant – an applicant, if we can better call them that – might take one view about how much they are going to spend, and another tenant might take another view of how much they are going to spend, and there are 17 different properties (**A Member:** And 500 different applicants.) and 500 different applicants. The Government Housing Works Agency may take a view as to what their estimate of the cost of repairing that property may be to bring it up to our standard, which may be completely different to the view that the applicant has of what they are going to do, and the successful applicant, who will be one of 500, may be one who is going to spend more or is going to spend less, but the assessment is going to be made on the basis of the need of the applicant who is able to discharge the requirement to bring the property up to their standard. So, with the very greatest respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman's question is incapable of being answered in the way that he has set out. I think I can interpret his question in a particular way which might be capable of answer, but that is a matter for him, not for me.

895 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, I appreciate that perhaps the way I put the question initially is very difficult to answer at this stage, but the Hon. the Chief Minister has said that the Government may have a view as to what the cost is, and I would have thought that likely to be better qualified to provide a more specific estimate in relation to the costs of repair, and the applicant may have another. At what stage is that discussion held? Is it at the stage of when I file the expression of interest? I simply do not understand. Presumably there must be a point where the cost estimates of one party and the other must be aligned, because the Government may say that property A requires expenditure of £50,000 but a confident applicant may say, 'I can do it for £1,000', and the Government may say, 'You are not going to be successful because this too low.' There must be a stage when the cost estimates must be aligned.

905 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman at all. Of course, there will be work that will be required to be done. The Government will require that in relation to property X, for example, the person who becomes the successful applicant will do A, B or C, and indeed, knowing Gibraltarians as I do, Gibraltarians will do A, B, C, D, E, F, G, the television from here and all of the rest, which is exactly what we all do in our homes and is exactly what we want them to be able to do. So, we will require them to do things. The cost to Government of doing things is usually higher than the cost of an individual doing things, so we will not be saying, 'If you are not prepared to spend £30,000, you will not get this property in Crutchett's Ramp.' We will be saying, 'In order to get this property in Crutchett's Ramp, you have to satisfy us that you are going to deal with A, B and C, at your cost, to the standard,' but no doubt people will be doing that and more. They may be able to do it for considerably less than we can do it but just as well, and therefore I think the hon. Gentleman is getting his metric wrong, and that is why I cannot agree with the way that he is posing his question.

920 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. the Minister able to ...? I ask this by way of seeking a confirmation from her, because I think that there may have been confusion created by the interview that she gave on GBC when she was interviewed following the publication of the list of properties. She is smirking. Can I ask her this: is it the position that it is possible, it is Government's policy, that applicants can be drawn from outside the housing waiting list? Is that the case? I always understood that the pool of applicants would be exclusively from that category, but as I understood it, she was then opening it out. Is that not the case?

925 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, this has been an eye opener, really. I was not expecting 500-plus. The telephone lines collapsed, the emails were flooding in, and they were all applicants. I said that maybe on hindsight, and I just suggested that maybe – I said maybe – if we do not get any applicants and there are people out of the housing waiting list who want to apply, they may do so, and I did say in my interview that that is not possible anymore; I do not think it is going to
930 be the case.

Hon. Chief Minister: Only because he was telling you it was going to be so unsuccessful.

935 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Yes, I did doubt myself. I did doubt the scheme completely after having heard you talking so negatively, doom and gloom. I thought, 'This is definitely not going to succeed.' It has been overwhelming.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am chuffed to see that the Hon. Minister listens to me and I am almost influential on this side of the House as to what Government policy is going to be.

940 The hon. Member, as I understand it, is saying that she considered the possibility of opening it out, thinking that the response was not going to be successful – but it has been hugely successful – and that the 500 or so applications which her Department has received are taken exclusively from the housing waiting list, if right. May I ask this, again by way of confirmation: can she say that the property, if you are a successful applicant and you enter into personal expenditure in repairing it,
945 will only ever be available to you for renting from the Government? Have I expressed the policy accurately and does that policy remain?

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker.

950 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am very surprised by that answer because I thought, unless I have explained it incorrectly, that that was the Government's position, that the Government would always retain those properties as part of its housing rental stock. Therefore, the successful applicant could only ever rent from the Government and never receive title on it, but the Hon. the Chief Minister is saying no to that proposition. Can he explain why that is the case? Indeed, has the Government
955 changed its policy in relation to this?

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has changed his question. His question was will it only ever be available to rent to the person who has repaired it; that is the question I answered no to. In other words, that person who rents today on the terms of rent and relief might, for some reason, in the future become a Government pension property tenant when
960 their family goes, or they might decide to buy in 50/50, or they might have a much larger family and need a larger property and they could go on the housing waiting list and go somewhere else. That property is not theirs to continue to own if they have moved on elsewhere on the housing waiting list. That is why the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman posed was no, but
965 he then got up and asked something else, which was 'Will the Government continue to own the property?' That is a different question, because the Government can take a different view after the tenant who has done the Rent and Repair has moved on – because they have wished to, because they have passed away, or because they have, in all the circumstances that we can

970 imagine and not imagine, moved on to a different Government property. That is the issue, Madam
Speaker. The Rent and Repair will be set out in a document, and the terms of it will be set out very
clearly.

975 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Chief Minister is, in his usual word salad ... It may be very clear
in his mind. Look, it is not clear in my mind. A very simple question and I will ask it in a different
way – a third different way: is it the position that I, as a successful applicant under this Rent and
Repair Scheme, can own the property I am given under this scheme, or I repair it but I continue to
rent from the Government irrespective of what I then do? Is that the position, that I can only rent
from the Government, the title can never pass to me and I can never own the property? Is that
the position? Yes or no?

980 **Madam Speaker:** That question borders on the hypothetical as to whether you could ever own
the property.

985 **Hon. D J Bossino:** No, it does not.

Hon. Chief Minister: It does border on the hypothetical, Madam Speaker, you are absolutely
right. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* I can give the hon. Gentleman – *(Interjection by Hon. D J
Bossino)*

990 **Madam Speaker:** Just a minute.

Hon. D J Bossino: I will explain the position. It is not a hypothesis. It is investigating further and
putting the Hon. Minister on enquiry and asking her to provide a confirmatory yes or no. I would
have expected the hon. Member to have said yes, the position of the Government –

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Madam Speaker: If the hon. Member is asking whether that person could ever own the
property under any circumstance, that is hypothetical and that is how I am viewing that question.
If the question is framed differently, then it is framed differently, but the question was, 'Can I ever
own that property?' That is a hypothetical question.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, if I can assist the House – *(Interjection by Hon. D J
Bossino)*

1005 **Madam Speaker:** Just a minute. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* No, just a minute, please.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, if I can assist the House and hopefully the hon.
Gentleman, this is going to do what it says on the tin, and what it says on the tin is Rent and Repair.
You are absolutely right that a different Government might take a different view, and so looking
at the hypothesis of what might happen in the future is impossible, but in our scheme you will
only be able to rent, because that is what it says on the tin, that is what you are going to sign up
for, and that is what we have said is our position in respect of post-war properties.

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On pre-war properties, we have a different policy. Some of these properties are pre-war
properties, but they have been put into the *Rent* and Repair Scheme, and so this not 'Buy from
us,' this is not 'Repair, and we will sell to you,' this '*Rent* and repair'. I am surprised, Madam
Speaker, that we are taking quite so long and the hon. Gentleman feels the need to penetrate
further on the thing that is the first word in the title of the scheme that we are pursuing.

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Madam Speaker: We are going to move on. There have been nine supplementary questions
on this, so we are going to move on.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker –

Madam Speaker: We are going to move on.

1025 **Hon. D J Bossino:** There were five questions bunched up together.

Madam Speaker: We are moving on from *this* question, from this subject. If there is another supplementary question on the other questions then the hon. Member can put it, but not on this subject.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has the last word. The reality –

Madam Speaker: I am not interested in who has the last word. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) I have ruled – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Order, please! (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) I have – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Order, please! Can we just calm down? I have ruled that there are going to be no more supplementary questions on the issue of ownership vis-à-vis rent. If the hon. Member has any other supplementary questions on this, I will allow a reasonable number because we have already had nine on one question.

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1040 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes I do, and –

Madam Speaker: I would also ask hon. Members that when the Chair is speaking, please contain yourselves and remain seated and silent.

1045 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I do. Madam Speaker, in relation to the cost element, the concern that I have is whether there will be any expenditure on the part of the Government in relation to the infrastructure surrounding these properties. The Hon. the Minister knows that where this, in effect, started was in the Road to the Lines area, which has gone from one Ministry to another and all the rest of it; now I think it is with the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, and there are no questions in the Order Paper on this occasion but there may be in the future, so I do not want to go into that. As I understand it, looking at it from the outside, the issue when you are dealing with the old Town area is that there will be a significant infrastructural cost to the Government. Can the Hon. Minister please state by way of confirmation, ergo capable of a yes or no response, I would say, that the Government will be the party which will be responsible for all the infrastructure works which will inevitably have to be undertaken in respect of these properties?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not know which part of the hon. Member's first answer the hon. Gentleman did not understand; perhaps he is going to accuse her of a word salad too. Frankly, just to adopt things that the hon. Gentleman has heard the Republican Party accuse the Democratic nominee in the United States of doing is not edifying. The hon. Member said this: 'Applicants will be responsible for all internal repairs and refurbishments to HMGoG standards.' That is what they are going to be responsible for.

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Responsibility for infrastructure in Gibraltar is our responsibility. When people buy from the Government, they take an obligation in respect of infrastructure works, usually the connection to the sewer, the connection to the main etc., but as I have told the hon. Gentleman in answer to his question a few moments ago, this is about rent, not buying. The obligation to do works in respect of infrastructure is in leases when people buy from the Government. That is not the situation that we are dealing with here. I hope that the words I have used have been organised in a manner that the hon. Gentleman has been able to understand, whether he considers them worthy of a salad or not. One is left with the view, Madam Speaker, that hon. Members want to come here being

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the ones who write out the questions and write out the answers, but I hope he has understood the position.

1075 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes would have been fine. Can the Hon. the Minister state, in relation to these properties, whether she has an idea of what the cost to the Government will be to have the infrastructure in such a place that the successful individuals will be able to walk in and reside in these properties? This will be a significant issue, not just in relation to cost but also in relation to delay, and also, thirdly, it will have an impact on the expectations of these people who she says
1080 have been so eager to participate in the scheme and will want to be advised about.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, in my capacity as Minister for Public Finance, I have been advised by the Minister for Housing that infrastructure works will not be required to be paid for from the public purse or indeed from the potential renters in respect of these properties, as
1085 infrastructure works, I am told, are not likely to be necessary at all.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, I am grateful. Can the Hon. the Minister for Housing, who is responsible for this area, state how many more properties she envisages will form part of the scheme? The press release of 17th September said that many more would be made available, so I would ask her ... I will correct that for the sake of the record: she did not say many more, she said more. Can
1090 she state how many? Does she have a figure in mind?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, first of all, I do not think I said many more. I am sure there are some more. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* Okay. When the time comes, you will be the first
1095 to know. The hon. Member will be informed immediately.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, presumably we will be the first to know because we will read it in the press, so we will ask questions about the matter and we –

1100 **Madam Speaker:** Is there another question?

Hon. D J Bossino: Did this policy – which, as far as I can see, but the hon. Member can correct me if I am wrong – form part of the electoral pledge; in other words, the manifesto? I raise this point because of this issue: is it in any way different to the pledge that they had on page 93 under
1105 the heading Upper Town Affordable Housing, where it said, amongst other things, ‘All housing stock will be refurbished and will be sold to registered Gibraltarians’? Is that a separate policy or is this a replacement of that policy? Can she clarify and edify us on this side of the House in relation to those two points?

1110 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, it is a separate policy, but I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are here – *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* Yes, absolutely. Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the anger that the hon. Gentleman seems to bring to this Question Time, to tell you the truth; but anyway, never mind, that is a matter entirely for him. Passion is one thing, Madam Speaker; anger is quite another. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)*

1115 **Madam Speaker:** Let’s not discuss emotions any further. *(Interjection)*

Hon. Chief Minister: I agree, Madam Speaker. We are not answerable for the General Election here; we are answerable for the policy of the Government. We have announced the policy of the
1120 Government and we have now confirmed to him that it is a different policy in any event.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q665/2024
Housing Allocation Scheme –
Publication of amended rules

Clerk: Question 665. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1125 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, will the Government publish the amended rules of the Housing Allocation Scheme?

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

1130 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, yes, the Government will publish the Housing Allocation Scheme.

1135 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Would the Minister be able to indicate when that will happen? I believe that they have already been revised and so on. Does she intend to do that ahead of the Act or shortly thereafter?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, I think I will have a conversation with the hon. Member behind the Speaker's Chair.

1140 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): I think, without delving into emotions, this might be a convenient moment for bodily functions, and I would invite the House to recess for 15 minutes.

1145 **Madam Speaker:** All right, we will recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed at 4.35 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 4.50 p.m.

JUSTICE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Q666/2024
Parking fines against foreign-registered vehicles –
Enforcement

Clerk: Questions to the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.
Question 666. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

1150 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how is the enforcement of parking fines against foreign-registered vehicles that have committed violations in Gibraltar being undertaken?

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

1155 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, both the Royal Gibraltar Police and Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd are responsible for issuing parking tickets for parking traffic violations. Any foreign vehicle committing a parking offence is clamped and issued with a parking ticket. The clamping of the vehicle happens in order to ensure that the driver or rider who is not resident in Gibraltar meets the payment of the fines.

1160 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful and I appreciate that my question does not stretch to what I am about to ask, but perhaps the Hon. Minister may have the answer to hand. Is the Hon. Minister aware of how other driving violations are being dealt with in respect of foreign vehicles?

1165 **Hon. N Feetham:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not have that information. The question was specifically phrased in relation to parking. If the hon. Member wishes to give notice and table a question, then we will come back with the relevant answers. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q667/2024
Royal Gibraltar Police –
Towing service

Clerk: Question 667. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, does the RGP currently have use of a tow truck?

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

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Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, yes.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is that tow truck part of the RGP's fleet of vehicles, or is it leased from a private company?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the RGP has access to the towing service provided through Gibraltar Parking Management Services Ltd.

Hon. J Ladislaus: I am grateful. Is there a formal contract in place in respect of that leasing?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I understand the answer to the question is yes, but I defer to my hon. colleague the Minister for Transport if the information that I have just provided is incorrect.

Madam Speaker: Any further supplementaries?

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Yes, Madam Speaker: is the leased tow truck operated by RGP officers or is it operated by employees of Car Parks Ltd?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I understand it is operated by the company.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Has there always been a tow truck available for those employees to operate on behalf of the RGP, or has there been a gap in service in, say, the past six to 12 months?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, that precedes my time in office. I believe there are some legacy issues, but it is not something which I am dealing with as the Minister for Justice. Perhaps the hon. Member the Minister for Transport can elaborate further.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, no, I am not aware of the arrangements before it was passed over to Car Parks, which

comes under my responsibility. I am not aware of what arrangements there were with the RGP in the period that the hon. Member is alluding to. It is information which I am sure can be sought if the question is asked.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q668-71/2024

Sex offenders –

**MAPPA training; number of dedicated risk managers monitoring;
numbers resident in Gibraltar; legislation to allow limited access to Sex Offenders Register**

1205 **Clerk:** Question 668. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, how often is specialist training relating to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) being delivered in Gibraltar to designated risk managers? When was the most recent training in this regard delivered and by whom?

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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 669 to 671.

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Clerk: Question 669. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, how many dedicated risk managers are there currently in Gibraltar managing and monitoring those who have been convicted of sexual offences and are subject to monitoring requirements?

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Clerk: Question 670. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many registered sex offenders are there currently residing in Gibraltar?

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Clerk: Question 671. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the Government plan to introduce legislation or a scheme similar to the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales, otherwise known as Sarah's Law, or the Keeping Children Safe Scheme in Scotland, which allows for limited access to the Sex Offenders Register?

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

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, with respect to Question 668, MAPPA training for designated risk managers is delivered annually. The most recent training relating to MAPPA was delivered in March 2024. The training was delivered by Marcela Leonard of Leonard Consultancy, along with her associates Gareth McGibbon of McGibbon Consultancy and Duncan Sheppard of Sheppard Associates.

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With respect to Question 669, there are nine designated risk managers currently in Gibraltar managing and monitoring persons convicted of sexual offences. Furthermore, there are four qualified designated risk managers who provide assistance when required.

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With respect to Question 670, there are 28 registered sex offenders currently residing in Gibraltar: 24 out in the community and 4 remanded in His Majesty's Prison.

1245 With respect to Question 671, this is a subject that I understand has been considered by Government in recent years. I am advised that the position taken, based on advice from relevant professionals, was that no such legislation should be introduced, due to the small size of our community and the potential risk for the offenders' information to be shared. It is a live issue that I understand is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Notwithstanding this, I am informed that registered
1250 sex offenders who are managed are encouraged by their designated risk manager to provide disclosures to employers or partners themselves if the manager identifies risks. If a stakeholder has a legitimate concern, a request can be made to authorise a disclosure to the affected parties without the offender's consent. At the time, this was considered a measured alternative.

1255 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, I am going to ask supplementaries on Question 671 specifically. I take the point that Gibraltar is a small jurisdiction. In fact, I expected that that would be the response as to why we do not have one. Nevertheless, is the Minister aware that the scheme in the UK allows for disclosure only in very specific and very limited circumstances? Could that scheme not be adapted to suit the needs of our community?

1260 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the Government can only take advice from those who are better placed than we are, and certainly the advice that we are getting is that the scheme is not necessary in the context of the community. It is a small community, as I have just said. I met one of the stakeholders this morning and I put it to him. He is an adviser to the Justice Ministry, a
1265 consultant with huge experience and knowledge of similar schemes operating in other jurisdictions, specifically those that do have a register. I am quoting from the notes that I took pursuant to these discussions. He said Sarah's Law is not a silver bullet, it is just a tool. Small communities such as Gibraltar can end up policing themselves, which presents other significant risks. He said Gibraltar has an excellent multi-agency approach that is the envy of the other
1270 Overseas Territories that certainly he has been involved in, in terms of consultancy services that he has provided. I take the advice as being that this not something that certainly he or others have recommended to the Government or even attempted to put a case forward to the Government and to my Justice Ministry.

1275 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful. Again, I take the point about the community policing itself and there being a risk, but doesn't that fall on protection of convicted offenders rather than on protection of victims of these offenders? How does the Hon. Minister suggest that individuals who have issues as to whether their child or a child close to them should be in the presence of someone who could have such convictions ...? How would information be passed on to this individual?

1280 **Hon. N Feetham:** I think I attempted to answer that when I answered the question originally. There are circumstances in which the Police can disclose the information to relevant individuals, Madam Speaker. I stand by the answer that I have given and I stand by the advice that I have received as the Minister with responsibility for justice.

1285 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Just one final question. When the Minister refers to relevant individuals, is that relevant individuals as part of an organisation, or can that be just a member of the public?

Hon. N Feetham: That could be anyone who has an interest in the subject matter, Madam
1290 Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: On Questions 670 and 669, am I right in my understanding that dedicated risk managers are presumably police officers? I am not sure if the Hon. Minister has that, but in terms of those individuals, I assume that they are not ... He said that they have nine dedicated risk

1295 managers. Presumably they are not full time doing this job, but perhaps he can clarify. There are
28 registered sex offenders in Gibraltar, he mentioned in answer to Question 670. How does that
work in terms of the dedicated risk managers? Does he know whether they have some assessment
into lower-risk, medium-risk and higher-risk individuals? Is that the kind of thing that those risk
managers do?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I have a breakdown of the DRMs per agency and I am happy
to share that with the hon. Member. I am advised that within the Royal Gibraltar Police there are
three DRMs; Probation Service, two; Care Agency, one; His Majesty's Prison, two; and the
Gibraltar Health Authority, one. There are four other DRMs which I have also mentioned, and
these are broken down as follows: Care Agency, one DRM for risk assessment tools for persons of
low IQ and learning difficulties – this the information that I have been given and I am just quoting;
Care Agency, one DRM for cases involving risk assessments for juveniles; and the Royal Gibraltar
Police, two further DRMs, and these are officers who expressed an interest in the subject.

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In terms of his second question, Madam Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Leader of the Opposition
can table a specific question. I am very happy to provide the answer, but I do not have that
information with me.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q672/2024

Domestic abuse –

Legislation re disclosure of previous abusive or violent offending

Clerk: Question 672. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, does the Government plan to introduce legislation similar
to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales, otherwise known as Clare's
Law, and the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland, which would enable the RGP to
disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner or
former partner's previous abusive or violent offending?

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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, in response to
the question, His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is not currently seeking to bring legislation at
this time because I am advised that the Royal Gibraltar Police and/or any of the strategic partners
can disclose information to victims or potential victims in appropriate circumstances.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: I ask much the same question as in respect of the previous scheme: can
anybody from the public make an inquiry, or is it just that the RGP will consider when to make
that disclosure themselves?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member can table notice of that question, I will
endeavour to provide the information. I do not have that specific information here with me.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q673-74/2024
Income and Company Tax –
Amounts collected in June, July and August 2024

Clerk: Question 673. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the amount of Income Tax collected in the following months: June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024?

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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 this question together with Question 674.

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Clerk: Question 674. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise the amount of Company Tax collected in the following months: June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024?

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

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, the amount of Income Tax collected for the months of June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024 is as follows: June 2024, £23.76 million; July 2024 £24.34 million; August 2024, £20.33 million.

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The amount of Company Tax collected for the months of June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024 is as follows: June 2024, £0.38 million; July 2024, £1.56 million; August 2024, £2.71 million.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q675-76/2024
Removal from EU grey list –
Talks re process; European Commission conditions

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Clerk: Question 675. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, has Government had discussions with the European Commission, directly or via the UK, following the June 2024 European parliamentary elections, on the process to achieve the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list given the FATF's reclassification of Gibraltar earlier this year?

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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 this question together with Question 676.

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Clerk: Question 676. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is the European Commission now placing, seeking or intimating any conditions on the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list given the FATF's reclassification of Gibraltar earlier this year?

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

1385 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the Government has not had contact with the Commission, either directly or via the UK, on the process to achieve the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list since the European elections took place earlier this year.

As far as the Government is aware, the Commission is not placing, seeking or intimating any further conditions on the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list. That said, I refer to my response provided to the Hon. Member to Question 465/2024, that on 31st May 2024 the Government received an unequivocal written assurance from the European Commissioner for Financial Services, Mairead McGuinness, confirming that 'the Commission remains committed to delist Gibraltar from the EU list as soon as possible and to engage with Gibraltar on the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing'. This letter followed from the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 23rd April 2024, in which it objected, under pressure from actors having an agenda on the economic destabilisation of Gibraltar, to the adoption of the European Commission's Delegated Act of 14th March 2024 in which the Commission decided to remove Gibraltar from the EU list of high-risk third-party countries. In the same letter, the Commissioner informed that the Commission will 'have to present a new Delegated Act' in order to once again seek to have Gibraltar's removal from this list formalised.

1400 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for reminding us of the Commission's letter of May. The reasons for the question were twofold. One was to ask for an update on whether there had been any discussions following the European parliamentary elections; the Minister has confirmed there have not been. The second was because the Minister may have seen, as I have, reports in the press where an official was quoted as saying that perhaps there might be conditions attached, so I was trying to probe whether that information was verifiable in terms of any discussions that the Government had had. The Minister says the Government has not had contact with the EU. Given that he has reminded the House that in the context of the assurance repeated by the European Commission, there is a need to have a new Act introduced so as to implement that commitment, will the Government be getting in contact with the European Commission, either directly or through the UK, so as to understand when that will happen?

1415 **Hon. N Feetham:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. As the Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, the Commission is in transition. Only five or six days ago, the Commission put forward the names of the new Commissioners, which included the Commissioner with responsibility for financial services, a lady who was formerly Minister of Finance in Portugal. The process, I am advised, within the European Commission is that the names are then scrutinised by the European Parliament and subject to a parliamentary vote. So, there is a process. Subject to that parliamentary process, if the names are confirmed, as they are expected to be confirmed, our advice is that the new Commissioners will be in situ by the middle of November, or early November, in which case certainly the Government will engage with the European Commission, and the Commissioner with responsibility for financial services in particular. We have plans to visit Brussels in order to be able to understand more clearly if there are any specific requirements which the Commission is expecting of the Government. Certainly, the information that we have is that the Commission is not seeking to impose requirements on the Government. We are aware of media reports. I am quoting from one of the reports that we have seen, which says 'the Commission did not see the need for additional benchmarks for Gibraltar'.

1430 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q677/2024

Government hostels –
Health and safety inspections

Clerk: Questions to the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.
Questions 677. The Hon. A Sanchez.

1435 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm the dates, providing the exact dates, of the most recent health and safety inspections carried out by the Environmental Agency at the following locations: (a) the government hostel at the Queen's Hotel; (b) the government hostel at the Sunrise Motel?

1440 **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 Environmental Agency carries out pest control treatments and inspections in relation to public health matters at both hostels.

1445 An in-depth inspection was carried out on 19th March 2024 at the Queen's Hostel and the findings were reported to the management of the hostel. Pest control has been carrying out by the Environmental Agency, both monitoring and treatment, on a monthly basis, with the last visit carried out on 2nd September.

1450 Similarly, an in-depth inspection was carried out on 25th March 2024 at the Sunrise Hostel and the findings were reported to the management of the hostel. Environmental Agency Pest Control have been carrying out monitoring and treatments and do so also on a monthly basis, with the last visit carried out on 29th August.

1455 **Hon. A Sanchez:** In terms of pest control and the Sunrise Motel, we have received concerns from the residents and staff reporting ongoing issues with infestation of cockroaches and even rats. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether there has ever been fumigation carried out at the Sunrise Motel in relation to this, and if so, when the fumigation was carried out?

1460 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in relation to the Sunrise, on the visits in March rodent indicator blocks were placed. I am just checking the rest of the information but I do know that at the last inspection, which I believe I said in that case was on 28th August, there was no detection of rodents being present in the detector blocks. So, if there were on the first inspection, clearly there has been treatment because they were not identified at the last inspection, in August.

1465 **Hon. A Sanchez:** And in relation to the repeated concerns about infestation with cockroaches, has there ever been fumigation in relation to this at the Sunrise Motel?

1470 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, there have been treatments. I am told that at the last inspection, two of the rooms still had the presence of a numbers of cockroaches, which were found in the traps, and the treatments are ongoing, but there was much less than there had been on some occasions in the past.

1475 **Hon. A Sanchez:** And in relation to the Queen's Hotel, we have concerns being expressed to us about maggots in the kitchen. We have footage of maggots crawling everywhere, actually, around the kitchen. Can the Hon. Minister confirm that something is being done about this by the Environmental Agency?

1480 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have a summary of the report on the Queen's at the March investigation, which was the most thorough one, other than the monthly visits, and there is no reference here to the presence of maggots, so I am not aware of that and it does not appear in the information I have been given.

Hon. A Sanchez: Perhaps the Hon. Minister might alert the Department to have a look. In relation to all of these issues that are quite concerning, and in relation to all the questions that have been asked about the hostels, would the Hon. Minister or one of the other Ministers be able to clarify the Government's plan moving forward in relation to the hostels and how it intends to provide more suitable living arrangements for these workers in the future – what plans the Government has in mind?

1490 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is not –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, as I understand it, there is a question on the Order Paper from the hon. Lady which says 'Can the Government clarify its plans to improve Government-owned hostels located at the Queen's Hotel and Sunrise Motel to ensure they adequately meet the needs of elderly residents and persons with disabilities in the future?' I understand that question is coming, and so it would be completely out of order for a supplementary to be the same as a question that is down for answer during the course of this meeting.

1500 **Madam Speaker:** What was the question the hon. Member asked?

Hon. A Sanchez: I think this a different question; it does not mention disabilities or elderly residents. This one is a wider question, but if you want me to ask this question as a supplementary in the other question, then that is fine, I will ask it there.

1505 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, it seems to me, Madam Speaker, to be about future plans in relation to the Queen's Hotel and the Sunrise Hotel, which is what the hon. Lady is asking about, and if it is on the Order Paper it would be inappropriate to take it before it comes up on the Order Paper.

1510 **Madam Speaker:** Take that question on the Order Paper and then, if you want to ask a supplementary that has not been answered, you can ask a supplementary on that.

1515 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, we have heard about rodents, we have heard about maggots and we have heard about cockroaches in respect of each of these establishments. Is the Hon. Minister able to share with this House, in summary form, the totality of the findings which were then passed on to, as he puts it, the management of each of these hostels? And may I ask further, are those findings capable of being shared, at least with the Opposition in confidence, if not necessarily in public?

1520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to share the outcome, I think, behind the Speaker's Chair, to send it to the hon. Members, and they will see a summary of what was found and the treatment that followed, and then I can give them an update as to the latest. I think they will notice that there has been a lot of work done and that the infestations are now much lower than they may have been in the past. As I said – we have mentioned maggots – I certainly cannot see, as I read this now, that there were any maggots, but I have no problem in sharing this. If the hon. Member would like to remind me and send me an email, I am very happy to share it. There is nothing that I cannot share.

1530 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I understand that this is an answer that was provided by his hon. colleague the Minister for Housing, but may I ask the Hon. the Minister what is the thinking and rationale behind the rehousing of those current licensees at the Queen's Hotel and moving them to the Sunrise Motel? Has it to do with the answers that he has provided in this House right now in relation to the environmental aspects of it, or has it more to do with the fact that there is a project in tow in that particular area?

1535 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, it is nothing to do with that; it is to do with giving vacant possession of the site that was put out to tender, which is something that hon. Members are aware of, and because, as they may recall, when we were elected we found ourselves with a situation where hon. Members had sold the Buena Vista site, which is where the hostel was at the time, without finding an alternative site for the workers who were there. We then had to acquire the Queen's Hotel in order to find a place to put them. The Queen's Hotel was then a three-star hotel. The Buena Vista site would have considered just infestation with maggots, rats and cockroaches a luxury, and we therefore moved people to a three-star hotel and are now moving them to another facility that will be very fit for purpose and entirely in keeping with our obligations when we lease property of this sort.

1545 **Hon. D J Bossino:** It is to do with the proposed development at the Queen's Hotel. What I offered to the Hon. the Minister was is it to do with (a) the environmental issues or (b) the proposed developments? The Hon. the Chief Minister – just to clarify, for the sake of the record – is, in fact, answering because he says no, but I need to ask him to clarify his position. The answer is yes, insofar as the second limb of what I proposed in my question.

1555 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman *no se aclara*. He just does not manage to get things clear in his mind. It is very difficult to follow his logic when he presents it in Monty Pythonesque manner, as he has done right now. I have given the answer that I have given; I think it is very clear. He can check *Hansard* if he has not understood what I said.

Hon. D J Bossino: Next question.

Q678/2024

St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery – Additional spaces used as classrooms

Clerk: Question 678. The Hon. A Sanchez.

1560 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government clarify how many classrooms or additional spaces are being annexed or used as classrooms for St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery from the following schools: (a) Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School; (b) Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary School?

1565 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1570 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there are four classes used in Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School and one class used in Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that answer. Would the Hon. Minister be able to provide clarity as to whether this is the Government's long-term plan in relation to

addressing capacity issues at St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery or whether the Government is considering other plans; and, if so, could the hon. Member elaborate?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, we planned Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald in order to cater for an increase in the number of students on the Wessex campus as a whole, which links St Martin's, Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald, so there was room for expansion that we have been able to keep. The hon. Member may recall that in our manifesto we expressed plans to extend the provision. We are discussing exactly how we are going to do it, but the intention is that we will be able to provide the classes as available without necessarily using Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald, but as I said, they were designed to be larger than we needed for the foreseeable future in order to be able to absorb the increase in the school population.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q679/2024
Careers fair –
Plans to reintroduce

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Clerk: Question 679. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, will the Government reintroduce the careers fair that traditionally was run by Bayside, Westside and College schools this academic year?

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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 Government will be reintroducing the careers fair this academic year, on 28th November at the Muga Complex. The careers fair will initially be held during the school day for year 9 pupils, to help them better understand their GCSE options. It will then be open to the public.

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The aim is to provide a meaningful and inclusive experience through the representation of associations and industry boards to promote various career pathways. My Ministry is working closely with the Employment Ministry and the Chief Secretary to make this a meaningful event, particularly when combined with other initiatives organised by both Ministries, some of which were explained by me in June in answer to Question 516. This will enhance the work already being undertaken in schools, which since the pandemic has replaced the careers fair traditionally run by the schools.

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The 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, will continue also to be offered to Bayside, Westside and College students.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. If I may just address a few points, as this was one of the questions submitted which was addressed by way of a press release, firstly responding to the hon. Member opposite, I accept that this press release was not prompted by the fact of my question. He alluded to the same in his Budget address and I recognise that, and therefore I do not accept that this was prompted by my submission. Secondly, we on this side of the House would like to welcome the reintroduction of the careers fair, which has been missing for the last four years. It is important that our students get the right guidance

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for the future prospects of available work in Gibraltar. On that note, that is welcomed and we hope that it does indeed become a success.

On the press release that was issued, which I am grateful for, there are a number of questions that I intended to ask, most of which were addressed, but there is one which remains outstanding.
1625 I can see that the Government this time around intends to have a different kind of approach, one which is industry led. Can the Minister confirm what associations will be leading the careers fair and whether he is satisfied that this new approach will enable as many careers and industries as possible to be represented at the fair?

1630 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not know which associations; that is being organised by officials, but I believe they are calling for associations and businesses to come forward if they are interested. I do not think the list is yet complete. It is a different approach. The target audience, so to speak, is slightly different because, as we also have the Future Pathways event, which is targeted directly at the older students, we believe that they complement each other and we are capturing more of the young people who need guidance in planning their future
1635 careers.

Hon. D J Bossino: The hon. Member mentions, in relation to the answer he gave in connection with the Future Pathway event, the schools that this being offered to, the comprehensives and
1640 the College of Further Education, but can I ask him this in relation to that offering and also the careers fair, where I think he mentioned there is a special viewing, if I could put it in those terms, for year 9 students because they will be choosing their courses for GCSEs: is that open to children at the private school in Prior Park? Is there any liaison in relation to that by his Department with that particular school? If not, may I perhaps encourage that that be taken on board, or at least
1645 considered?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, yes, there is close liaison. In past years, at similar events, obviously not the same because this is different, it has been open to students at private schools. As Minister for Education, I feel I have a responsibility for the whole of education and not just for
1650 the government schools, and therefore they will be more than welcome. I would be surprised if they have not already been invited, but I am sure they will be.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q680/2024
Museum visitors –
Numbers since January 2023

1655 **Clerk:** Question 680. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Government please provide the total number of museum visitors by year and month since January of 2023?

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, there have been a total of 21,323 visitors from January 2023 to August 2024. The breakdown, including visits to the Natural History Museum, is as follows.

1665 In 2023: January, 716; February, 804; March, 1,221; April, 1,130; May, 964; June, 1,090; July, 1,182; August, 1,138; September, 1,164; October, 1,476; November, 1,749; December, 608.

In 2024: January, 977; February, 1,057; March, 1,277; April, 1,314; May, 1,138; June, 682; July, 781; August, 855.

1670 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for that update. The reason I premise this question is because although these statistics are ordinarily available on the government tourist website, there was some lapse on the months that I have requested, so I appreciate the update.

1675 The stats provided seem to be in line with the tourist visitor numbers of previous years. It appears, in my experience, that tourists rarely go to visit the museum. In fact, when I speak to them, of all the attractions that they regularly mention they are going to see, the museum is one which rarely gets mentioned; some do not even know that we have a museum at all. They are typically the hallmark of most cities, showcasing culture and heritage, and yet, despite having both of these things, we fail, it seems, to market our museum properly. Does the Minister have any plans to improve and invest in our National Museum, so that it can attain the hallmark status that every other major city or tourist destination has?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, clearly the work of a museum is not just the visitors. Museums all over the world have a great deal of work which goes on behind the scenes to do with research. They also have collections which are not on public display, which are of immense importance to preserve and curate, and the museum also works in providing curatorial services in restoration of buildings and monuments. So, we cannot just go by visitor numbers.

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The museum is promoted worldwide in relation to the work that it does, at the World Heritage Site, on Neanderthals. We know that it is a world leader in Neanderthal research. Recently it featured in a Netflix series, and that is free publicity which we do not have to specifically pay for. So, I believe that the museum is well known. In order to promote visits to it, we have included it in the Alternative Gibraltar tour, which is one which has been publicised before, which covers parts of the Rock excluding the Upper Rock. That should kick in shortly and we expect to have a significant increase in visitors as a result. All publicity is good publicity. I think that with this inclusion in the alternative tour we will see an increase. Time will tell.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just probe on that issue? I am a big fan of museums worldwide, by the way, and I am a big fan of at least ensuring that our museum attracts more visitors, as the Hon. Minister, I am sure, agrees. Has there been any correlation between the visitor ...? Just looking at the stats, a thousand attendees per month when we are having visitors in the millions per year: I think that is the striking statistic. Not everyone is going to go to the museum, clearly, but it must be about the product and it must be about a re-evaluation of the product and what it does, what it is selling, what it is marketing and the interest it is attracting.

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To give the hon. Member some comparison of the thrust of my question – and this why I am suggesting that this is about a re-evaluation of the product – as I understood it, London had about 30 million visitors last year; the British Museum had nearly six million visitors and the Natural History Museum around five million visitors. Not every visitor goes to a museum, but if you look at those percentages you can say a very substantial number of the people who go to London will go and see these museums because they are emblematic, significant to the place's heritage and history. I do not think we are in a position where people who are coming to Gibraltar are forming that view of our museum, and that must be about the product. Does he not agree that it is high time to re-evaluate what is now a very old and slightly jaded product?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker. I think what is dated is the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's recollection of the Museum. I have opened new exhibits at least once a year for the last few years. We have opened a new exhibit in relation to, I believe, the Phoenicians. We have had the reconstructions of prehistoric man, not just Neanderthal, but other former residents of the Rock based on the genetics and on the skulls and so on that have been found. There is a

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1720 tremendous presence of interest in the virtual museum, which is available online. I believe that particularly during Covid there were many visitors to the virtual museum. So, I do not think the hon. Member's assessment is correct. Perhaps it is the fact that visitors to the Rock, all those
1725 millions that the hon. Member has referred to, tend to concentrate on the Upper Rock tour, which is why we are trying to diversify and why we are trying to introduce alternative tours and other attractions in other parts of Gibraltar that will take visitors to other places as well as the Upper Rock. I do not think it is a reflection on the relevance of the museum or the dynamism of the museum; I think it might be more an artefact of the way that tourists travel around Gibraltar.

1730 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, just for the purpose of the record, seek the Minister's clarification: is it the Government's position that no further investment by way of capital is going to be made in the National Museum product? Is that the position?

1735 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have not said that at all. In fact, more than that, I have said that they are opening new galleries on a regular basis – they opened the Parson's Lodge not that long ago – so clearly there is investment. There is no way that the hon. Member could have assumed what he seems to have assumed from my statement. I certainly did not say that.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q681/2024
Alameda Estate courtyard –
Olive tree causing damage

Clerk: Question 681. The Hon. G Origo.

1740 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, there is an olive tree sitting on the top of the beginning of Rosia Road, which appears to be pushing out a concrete wall having currently dislodged it from its place. Is the Government aware of this; and, if so, does it have any plans on relocating the tree, given the damage it is doing to the wall and also to the courtyard of the Alameda housing estate?

1745 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1750 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, before I read my prepared answer, I have to acknowledge and thank the hon. Member for kindly, when we bumped into each other – that is a figure of speech; I was not actually bumping in any aggressive way – in Main Street not a week ago, giving me a preview of the question by showing photographs, which was very helpful because I was able to have a look at the actual tree and the wall. That is my preamble to the answer.

1755 The Technical Services Department's engineers have inspected the wall and can confirm that there is no cause for concern at this time. There is some hairline cracking which may have been caused by the tree that is growing adjacent to the wall, but there is absolutely no concern over its continued structural stability. The Technical Services Department will monitor this and take action, if and when required.

1760 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer and grateful for him having acknowledged publicly the fact that we do communicate across the floor when it is designed to further the interests of this House and the people of Gibraltar.

I do not have any supplementaries, other than to just comment that the residents will be pleased to hear that the Minister will be reviewing the situation to address the matter at hand should it be required. I am grateful for that.

1765 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q682/2024
Accessible toilets –
Plans to increase or replace

Clerk: Question 682. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, does the Government have any plans to increase and/or replace any of the accessible toilets situated around Gibraltar?

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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 Government has increased the number of accessible toilets in Gibraltar since it came to office and has a programme of repairs in place as and when this required. At present, there are no specific plans to place toilets in other areas, although this may change if specific needs are identified.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, thank you to the Minister for that answer. On looking at the situation on accessible toilets in Gibraltar from a tourist perspective with my shadow tourist hat on, I noticed that there was a document issued on the Gibraltar tourist website which had the specific locations of all these accessible toilets but was only updated, as far as I can see from the notice, in May 2023. Can the Minister confirm whether this document is up to date and whether there have been any new accessible toilets since that time, as these are maps that are referred to by tourists and Gibraltarians alike who are looking for accessible toilets, or public toilets for that matter?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, is this what the hon. Member ...? I was about to offer to give it to him, but he has got it already. I have not checked toilet by toilet as to whether this is updated, but I undertake to do so and inform the hon. Member accordingly if there is any change.

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Hon. G Origo: I thank the Minister for that answer. Another question that I had, having looked at this sheet, was the references to accessible undersized toilets. Can the hon. Member explain what these accessible undersized toilets are? Does he have an understanding of what the difference is between these and the normal accessible toilets?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: They are toilets that are smaller, probably because of the lie of the land, and perhaps they may not be suitable, for example, for large wheelchairs or whatever. I think that is what is been pointed out there, that they have other facilities, but I stand to be corrected; I am just trying to understand. They may be toilets that have been converted and therefore they may not be as large as we would like, and that is pointed out in advance. I am just assuming that that is the case, subject to confirmation, and if I am wrong I will let him know.

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Hon. G Origo: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer, Madam Speaker. The reason I asked this question by way of supplementary on the undersized toilet was that having looked at the list

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of accessible toilets available, there were at least four, around 10% of all accessible toilets, that are accessible undersized. One of these I walk past on my way to work every morning. Even though on this spreadsheet it is listed as being located in Waterport, it is actually located in Water Gardens. I pass it every day. In one instance, I saw tourists who were wheelchair users trying to access the toilet, but because it is undersized accessible, the doorway is much smaller to access this toilet located in Water Gardens, which does not have any deficiencies by way of space or surrounding area, so my question to the Minister is will it still be the practice for the Government to install undersized toilets, given the concerns raised and the fact that most wheelchair users will not be able to access them?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, Water Gardens are in the Waterport area, but perhaps the hon. Member wants it to be more specific. I will have a look at this. It is not something that I was aware of. I am grateful for the Member pointing it out. Whether we are able to do anything about it or not ... we will certainly try.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, in relation to the equipment in these toilets, would the Government consider installing more? I understand that the size of the toilets, given our size, is an issue and that we cannot have oversized toilets everywhere, but perhaps they can consider building some more that are big enough to have some ceiling track hoists and some adult-sized adjustable changing tables. We do find that there are a lot of toilets that have baby changing tables that are not suitable for those who need changing who are now adults or are now older, and parents do find it very difficult to use the baby changers; they are not suitable. We find that the toilets are sometimes not fit for the purposes that they are needed for. Also, very often it requires two carers going in, and the toilets are not big enough to fit so many people. Would the Government review, perhaps, the size of some of the facilities and consider, in some key locations, perhaps making them bigger, to fit this equipment?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am happy to talk to my hon. Friend and colleague the Minister for Equality, so that we can tackle this together.

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Clerk: Next question.

Q683/2024

Wastewater–

Advanced works contract re treatment plant

Clerk: Question 683. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Minister please provide an update on the advanced work contract for the wastewater treatment plant, including what the cost of the contract will be and when he expects it to be signed?

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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 evaluation process is still active and discussions on the advanced works contract are currently being held. I am hopeful that this stage will be completed soon.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, thank you to the Minister for that confirmation. If I may just ask: why is this negotiation taking this long? I issued a press release a few weeks ago, in which I

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commented that the preferred bidder stage for a company was announced on 7th September 2023, 13 months ago. Is there just not a desire to stop pumping sewage into our oceans and to stop having our reputation tarnished by groups such as Verdemar, who attack us on an international stage? Is this not a government priority, despite having it on four manifestos consecutively?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Hon. the Chief Minister replied to something similar on television, on *Direct Democracy*. I just have to add that we have very clearly stated why there have been reasons completely outside the Government's control in delaying the process. I am talking to the tender board, so that I am satisfied that all the complex due diligence is being carried out. In fact, I had discussions with them only last week and I am satisfied that although it is taking much longer than any of us would like, the progress being made certainly lets me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Hon. D J Bossino: Next question.

Q684/2024
Wastewater –
Complaint by Verdemar

Clerk: Question 684. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, further to the complaints raised by Verdemar on Gibraltar's wastewater management and their calls to remove Gibraltar from the Emerald Network, can the Government confirm whether such a formal complaint has been raised?

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, a formal complaint has not been raised with my Ministry and I am not aware that one has been logged elsewhere.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q685/2024
Tuna fish –
Sanitary issues re gutting, cleaning or filleting

Clerk: Verses 685. The Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, how many reports have been made on sanitary issues relating to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish in our ports and/or territorial waters?

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, none have been made.

1895 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I must highlight that a series of images were brought to my attention on this issue. I am concerned that no such report has been made to the Government. I would have hoped that these images were shared with the Minister, so I ask again whether he personally has seen these images, despite there being no reports; and, if he has, was he as concerned as I was?

1900 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** What images, Madam Speaker? We do not know what images they are. How do we know that they are the ones that have been shared with us? We might have seen other images. Unless the hon. Gentleman shares the images with us, we cannot tell him whether we have seen them or not.

1905 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the premise of my question related to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish. Therefore, the images evidently would relate to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish.

1910 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have seen many images of tuna being gutted. None of them have given cause for concern to us, so we cannot say that we have seen the images that the hon. Gentleman has said he has seen until we see those images to tell him whether we have seen them before or not. I would have thought that is obvious.

1915 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Obviously you cannot tell whether they are the same images. The Minister has answered that there have been no reports on sanitary issues relating to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish. My hon. colleague asks – he has seen images – whether, despite there being no reports in relation to sanitary issues, they have seen images in respect of gutting, cleaning or filleting which give the Government concern.

1920 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The answer to that I have already given, and it was no. If hon. Members have images of gutting which should give rise to concern, we would be grateful to receive them.

1925 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the images which were drawn to my attention – and I will describe them here for the benefit of the other Members of this House – concerned local individuals who were gutting and filleting a large tuna on what appeared to be one of our marina pontoons, which was, quite frankly, based on the image I saw, filthy and posed serious health risks and concerns and, most importantly, on a side note, is also illegal to do because I understand that there is a weighing area where the fish are supposed to be cut, cleaned and gutted in a specific place. Given that this was done on a pontoon near one of the marinas, my question is, in light of the fact there have been zero reports on this issue, is it down to a lack of enforcement or resource in this area that we are getting no reports?

1935 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his generic description of the images that he has seen. If he shares those images with the Government, we may or may not agree with his analysis, but until we have seen them he will understand that a generic description of somebody doing something in a particular place is not something that the Government can then be led to saying is something that should cause us concern or is something that might or might not reflect on enforcement. I would have thought this is really an instance where the old adage that a picture speaks a thousand words is entirely apposite, and if he shows us the pictures we might all agree, but if he does not he will understand it is going to take a thousand words for him to describe it, and we are not really here for that.

1940 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q686/2024

**Beaches –
Cleanliness**

Clerk: Question 686. The Hon. G Origo.

1945 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, is the Government satisfied with the state of cleanliness of our beaches?

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

1950 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, it depends on when. During the summer months, all beaches are cleaned on a daily basis, and on the sandy beaches machinery is used to move and clean the sand. At the end of the day, if litter has been deposited, it will not be satisfactory but this will be picked up early next morning. On occasions when the machinery is out of order for a couple of days, cleaning is manual and then
1955 may not be as thorough. In autumn and spring, beaches are cleaned twice weekly and once a week during the winter period. When there are storms, a great amount of debris can be washed up, which is addressed as soon as the weather improves.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, the reason I have asked this question is due to what has been reported to us as a high volume of injuries which have been taking place over the course of the summer months at our beaches. My understanding is that a lot of these injuries have resulted from debris, rusty iron construction materials, some of which are found on the beach shores. Does the Minister have any data or statistics on the number of injuries which have been treated at our beaches connected to construction debris and hazards which are still remaining on our beaches?
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1965 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, a number of interesting points, perhaps opportunities, have just been raised. Had I been asked for the number of injuries, I would have had that information. I do not have that information here. I have weekly meetings with the team that looks after the beaches and I have not had a large number of reports, which would normally have been mentioned during the course of those meetings, but we are able, if asked, to find that information.
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I can say that in addition to the regular beach cleaning we have had daily collection of stones on most of our sandy beaches in order to remove them. There has been rusting material found there. Immediately we are alerted to this, steps are taken to remove it. The hon. Member may not recall, but the area was used in years gone by to deposit material which perhaps had not been properly screened. This is all screened now, so this could be historic material that is washing ashore. I can assure the hon. Member that cleaning is done regularly and whenever anything is found that should not be there, it is dealt with. I repeat, I do not have the information on cuts and injuries but I can find it if I am asked.
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1980 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer. The reason I mentioned the possible use of having data, such as the statistics and reports from lifeguards, was to satisfy and evidence the reports that are being given to us that there is a concern. People are going to the beaches and they are experiencing injuries and getting pinches, cuts and bruises. So, my question to the Hon. Minister is: is the Government not concerned that some of these injuries are still taking place and are related to debris and construction materials from neighbouring construction sites that have been there for the better part of the last decade?
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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, without knowing what the injuries are, I cannot say whether they are related to what the hon. Member is alleging and whether there is any concern that it is something untoward. I do not have that information, so I cannot comment on that.
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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q687/2024
Rosia Bay beach –
Whether plans to refurbish or improve

Clerk: Question 687. The Hon. G Origo.

1995 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, does the Government have any plans to refurbish or improve the state of the beach at Rosia Bay?

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

2000 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the policy of the Government in relation to the refurbishment or improvement of the beach at Rosia Bay remains unchanged and continues to be dependent on the funds raised from the sale of the old AHQ building.

2005 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer that the Government's policy with regard to Rosia Bay development is unchanged. For the purposes of clarity, may I ask the Minister to confirm: is it still the Government's plan, in accordance with page 88 of its manifesto promise, to develop the Rosia Bay area ensuring the restoration of the area is sensitively handled, bearing in mind the heritage and environmental value of the area?

2010 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes.

2015 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, although not officially a beach, Rosia Bay is still very regularly used by a lot of members of our community. A few reports this summer evidenced just how many people use it frequently. There are people who go there with their dogs, with their families; it is packed. Notwithstanding, in that report we could see the pier which forms part of Rosia Bay is exposed, has rust, there is iron everywhere and it poses a health hazard. Is the Government intending to make this area safe for Gibraltarians, and are those things part of the refurbishment plans that the Government alluded to earlier?

2020 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes.

2025 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Given that the progress of this project is predicated on the basis of whether the Government is able to ... I put it in those terms. I do not know the detail. Was it the FHQ? Yes. We all know which one we mean, which is the building that overlooks the bay. Can he give the House any progress as to how that is developing, if at all?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is the subject of an expression of interest which is actively being discussed, run by the office of my friend and colleague the Deputy Chief Minister.

2030 **Hon. D J Bossino:** So, whether the Hon. the Minister or indeed the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister could enlighten us and provide a response to my question ... He states what I assume – I am not aware – is a matter of fact, that it is the subject of an expressions of interest, but is he able to state how that is progressing and when, if I can put it in different terms, he thinks the Government will be in a position to announce the sale? That will then impact on the question
2035 asked by my friend in relation to the progress of the works at Rosia Bay.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, it is not possible to put a timescale on this, but at this stage there have been presentations made, by a number of interested parties, to a panel and the Government is now considering the presentations and the detail of those submissions that were made.

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Hon. D J Bossino: And, if I may, is the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister able to state what number the Government has received?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, we would need notice of the question but I think it was five or six, if I am not mistaken.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q688/2024
Energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings –
Strategy

Clerk: Question 688. The Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether it has now developed a strategy for the energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings, including those with heritage sensitivities?

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, energy efficiency of buildings is governed by the Environment (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2012. In addition, the Department for the Environment continues to work closely with the Town Planning Department, the Ministry of Heritage and the Heritage Trust, as well as industry representatives through the Gibraltar Sustainable Buildings Group, to determine the most appropriate methods and standards for the energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings. The recently approved policy of the Development and Planning Commission on roof-mounted solar PV and solar thermal is one of the tangible outcomes of this ongoing collaboration. It is expected that the new development plan will address this issue in more detail.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Adjournment

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to tomorrow at three o'clock in the afternoon, when it will start with my questions.

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Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against. Passed.

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This House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.07 p.m.