



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.15 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 17th May 2012

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.15 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. H K Budhrani QC *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: M L Farrell Esq RD *in attendance*]

PRAYER

Mr Speaker

Order of the Day

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 17th May 2012.

1. Oath of Allegiance.
2. Confirmation of Minutes: the Minutes of the last meeting of Parliament held on 15th, 16th and 29th March 2012.

Mr Speaker: May I sign the minutes as correct?

It was agreed.

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Mr Speaker: Thank you.
3. Communications from the Chair.

15

**Speaker to retire after eight years in post
Personal Statement**

Mr Speaker: Yes, if I may, with the indulgence of the hon. Members.

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The leaking of a confidential report prepared by the Commissioner of Income Tax on my personal tax affairs, and its publication last week by some elements of the local media, prompts me to make this statement to the hon. Members who have placed me in this Chair.

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While claiming the entitlement to confidentiality afforded by our laws, without exception, to all taxpayers, I cannot allow to remain unchallenged the serious allegation contained in the report which links my personal tax affairs with my position as Speaker. The report alleges that I have, after making a few initial payments, failed to honour an agreement entered into by me with the Commissioner for the settlement of outstanding tax liabilities and that, as a consequence, the Commissioner has seen fit to withhold my parliamentary salary.

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Following the issue by the Commissioner, and acceptance by me, of revised assessments, I entered into a binding agreement with the Commissioner, in terms which I was given to understand are commonly afforded to other taxpayers in similar circumstances for the payment of the amount owed.

Contrary to the misleading impression given by media coverage of the report, I invited the Commissioner from the very outset to apply my parliamentary salary from month to month, after deduction of PAYE, towards the payment of the instalments due from me under that agreement.

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The Income Tax Office duly received *direct* from the Treasury sums representing more than two instalments due from me, but the Income Tax Office, for procedural reasons of its own, which were, for the first time, revealed to me by the Commissioner when I met him yesterday, subsequently terminated that arrangement and replaced it with a direction to the Treasury under section 50 of the Income Tax Act.

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I was made aware of the section 50 direction at the time, but since it reflected the very manner which I myself had indicated as my preference for the performance by me of the agreement, I attached no particular significance to it and readily acquiesced. The undeniable fact is that I did not make those initial payments myself and, therefore, there can be no question of my *ceasing* to make further payments, as alleged.

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This has now been incorrectly portrayed by the Commissioner, in his report, as my failure to honour the agreement, after having made a few initial payments, thus compelling him to withhold my net parliamentary salary. What is more, it is clear from my discussion with the Commissioner on 16th April that some of the figures mentioned in his report are incorrect. These are matters I have taken up with the Commissioner and will continue to address them and other issues arising from the report, as I have in the past on all matters relating to my taxation, with the advice and assistance of my professional accountant, and by engaging directly with the Income Tax Office, and *not* by public pronouncements.

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Sitting in this Chair, however, my first and overriding duty is to facilitate the work of this House, whose servant I am. When I was first appointed Speaker in September 2004 – and upon each successive reappointment – I pledged to uphold the dignity of this august body and that has been my objective throughout the years. However, I am conscious of the fact that there will be my detractors out there who are more interested in my personal tax affairs than in the manner in which I perform my duties here. And that will not do for those who have entrusted me with this Office.

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When the Hon. the Chief Minister invited me to accept reappointment as Speaker following the General Election last December, I expressed the view that eight years is just about the right length of a Speaker's tenure, as providing a degree of continuity but ensuring that the Office does not become too closely identified with its incumbent.

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The events of recent weeks have crystallised that belief in my mind and I have come to the conclusion that, as I approach the eighth anniversary of my appointment, I ought to prepare to relinquish this distinguished Office.

Hon. Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, by your leave.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

65 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the Government can make no comment whatsoever in respect of matters related to your tax affairs, which you have referred to now, other than to agree with you the importance of confidentiality in respect of *all taxpayers'* affairs and the need to determine how confidential information relating to one such taxpayer, namely yourself, has been made available to the media.

70 Mr Speaker, you were appointed by us, as Government, for the third time, on the second occasion that you enjoyed our support, because we considered, as I told this House, that you had discharged your functions as Speaker, after your initial appointment without our support, with fairness in dealing with all parties who were before you in this place.

75 I said then, Mr Speaker, that you had, in my view and in the view of the Government, pleased and displeased Members on both sides of the House in equal measure and I could think of no better qualification for an appointee holding your Office. I said then, and I repeat, that I was always very grateful, personally, for how you had dealt with some of the cruellest moments of the last Parliament, which had included me.

80 Mr Speaker, it is in that context when I approached you for appointment, that you indicated to me, as you have now publicly, that you believe that eight years was the right period of time to hold that silent, brooding presence that is incumbent on the Office of Speaker, and that you believe that, having bedded down the new Government, eight years would be the period after which I should, on behalf of the Government, start consulting on who should take your post. In those circumstances, Mr Speaker, I am grateful for your indication today, so that the Government and Members of the House opposite are aware by when we will have to have determined who will be taking your post.

85 Thank you.

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

90 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for your indication, as are the Hon. Members on this side of the House – for Mr Speaker's indication of his intention to stand down, in the context of the eighth anniversary of his accession to the Chair.

95 I sincerely hope... Well, I should add, of course, Mr Speaker, you are not an employee of the Government, you are not accountable to the executive, except as a taxpayer. In your capacity and in respect of your functions as Speaker, you are accountable to this House and not to the Government, or to its Chief Minister, and I sincerely hope that, to the extent that Mr Speaker asserts, and until the contrary is demonstrated – if it is capable of being demonstrated – I accept what you have said, solemnly from the Chair about the facts that have entered into the public domain. In those circumstances, I sincerely hope that the Speaker of this House has not to any degree been forced to consider his position, or even the timing of his standing down, by reference to mischievously leaked confidential documents.

100 I *accept* your assurance implicit in what you have said, that that is not the case and I sincerely hope that commentators outside of this House will not, contrary to what you have said and what both sides of the House, having heard the Chief Minister, appear to accept, I hope that nobody outside of this House will mischievously make the link between the two events.

105 I have said that Mr Speaker is the servant of this House; and I believe that, regardless of Mr Speaker's tax affairs, whether they would, or would not, have raised issues about the appropriateness of him carrying on in this Chair, I think that there are issues which are thrown up by this matter which this House – not the Government – needs to look into.

110 This House needs to be absolutely satisfied that there has been no degree of political or administrative – in other words, no degree of executive in its two branches – behaviour designed to bring about a particular result with a servant of this House. And I believe that, frankly, for the Government itself to call an enquiry into the leaking of a report, a report which can only have been leaked either by a civil servant in the Income Tax Office, by a civil servant in the Office of the Chief Minister to whom the report was sent or, for the sake of equanimity, by the Chief Minister or by somebody to whom the Chief Minister gave a copy – it cannot be anybody else: one of those four must be the source of the leak! – I believe that that is a *very* serious matter which needs a degree of *independent* parliamentary enquiry and investigation and *not* an investigation by the
115 very institution that has to account and explain and justify and demonstrate that *its* fingerprints are not on this

matter.

Therefore I, on behalf of the Opposition Members of this House, call now for a parliamentary investigation of the circumstances in which, not just this document was leaked, but the circumstances and timing of its creation, and the circumstances and timing of its leaking into the public domain. (*Applause*)

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Mr Speaker: I am not sure I should allow a debate on this matter.

I have made a communication from the Chair. I have given both sides the opportunity to express their thoughts.

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If the Hon. the Chief Minister wishes to add anything without going into the debate of the matter, of course I will allow him to say it.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has strayed from dealing with the issues that you have raised in this House into making what can only be seen to be imputations, if not allegations, about manners in which reports may have been leaked to the press, which he has seen fit to personify, potentially including me as the holder of the Office of Chief Minister.

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I think it is incumbent upon me to put on the record straightaway that there is absolutely no question of my, or my office, having been involved in leaking any documentation and hence why I agreed with you, in the context of the first phrase that you uttered, that the Government considers it to be as important as you consider it to be, to get to the bottom of how it was that the confidential information that related to you as a taxpayer was, or came to be, leaked to the press. And that will, of course, include *when* it was leaked to the press, which is the issue as to timing.

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In those circumstances, Mr Speaker, the Government is satisfied that what it is going to do to determine how that breach of confidentiality came about will enable us to be satisfied as to the source of the leak, and the timing of the leak, and that the histrionics from the hon. Gentleman opposite are just designed to try and make a political point when none was due.

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Mr Speaker: I think we have to leave the further debate on the matter to a proper motion.

Anyway, I am grateful to the Hon. the Chief Minister and to the Leader of the Opposition for the kind words expressed and for the understanding they have both shown to my position. We shall proceed with the remainder of the business.

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Clerk: 4. Petitions.
5. Announcements.

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Papers laid

Clerk: 6. Papers to be laid: the Hon. the Chief Minister.

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Hon. the Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the following documents.

First, the Annual Accounts of the Government of Gibraltar for the year ended 31st March 2011; and, second, the Gibraltar Annual Policing Plan for the year 2012 to 2013.

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Mr Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Clerk: The Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

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Minister for Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the following accounts.

The reports of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Gibraltar Port Authority for the financial years ended 31st March 2007, 31st March 2008, and 31st March 2009.

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Mr Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Clerk: The Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lie on the table the report of an audited – Sorry... (*Interjection*)

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I will ignore those comments. The audited accounts on the Gibraltar Electricity Authority for the year ended 31st March 2011.

Mr Speaker: Ordered to lie.

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And I have the honour to report that, in accordance with Standing Order 12(3), the report of the Principal Auditor on the Annual Accounts of the Government of Gibraltar for the year ended 31st March 2011 has been submitted to Parliament and I now rule that it has been laid on the table.

I should also take this opportunity to record that the draft Estimates required by the Constitution to be laid before the House not later than 30th April of this year were duly delivered to the Clerk before the end of April and that they are now deemed to have been properly laid before the House.

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Clerk: 7. Reports of Committees.

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Questions for Oral Answer

Clerk: 8. Answers to Oral Questions.

195

TOURISM, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND THE PORT

Maintenance of Gibraltar's beaches Long-term policy

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Clerk: Question 343 of 2012, the Hon. S M. Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Tourism indicate to this House its policy in respect of the long-term maintenance of Gibraltar's beaches, particularly those affected by severe weather during the off season?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Yes, Mr Speaker, the Government is considering its policy on the long-term maintenance of the beaches. I will make this public once this has been determined.

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The Government's Technical Services Department is currently developing schemes to provide protection to those beaches that have historically been subjected to storm wave action. These schemes will vary depending on location and, until detailed engineering assessments are completed, it will not be possible to advise conclusively on what is planned.

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However, by way of an indication, at Sandy Bay consideration is being given to the construction of an underwater breakwater, which will reduce wave action reaching the shoreline whilst, at the same time, helping to retain the sand.

At Catalan Bay a similar project is being considered, although the addition of groins is also a possibility.

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No works are currently envisaged at Eastern Beach, as this has been stable for a number of years, ever since groins were constructed in 1992.

At Camp Bay, the extension of the existing groin and the provision of an additional groin are being looked into, with a view to increasing the size of the beach.

225 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer to the question.

I wonder whether, perhaps, the Minister could provide any further details in respect of Sandy Bay for the bathing season which is imminent and upon us in a few weeks' time: is there any intention – though I suspect it is late in the day – to replenish the beach at all? Is there a need? Has the Minister been able to identify whether there is a need for that?

230 **Hon. N F Costa:** Yes, there will be.

There has been a lot of loss of sand during this last year. As you know, the previous administration did replenish the beach at quite considerable cost but, because of the absence of any groin or any other facilities stopping the sand from being taken away from the beach, there has been a considerable loss but the public will certainly be able to access the beach. Works are currently being conducted, or will start, next week in order to facilitate that.

240 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In relation to the other projects – the underwater breakwaters, which we understand certainly from this side of the House will incur considerable costs – is the Minister able to give any indication in respect of the timelines that we are looking at in respect of these measures and any costs at all, any ideas that the technical officers might have given them?

245 **Hon. N F Costa:** Well, Mr Speaker, as I said in the original answer, the scheme will vary depending on the engineering assessment, but works could possibly start after, of course, the official bathing season is over, which will be October.

In terms of costs, I am still waiting for a detailed analysis on that.

250 **Hon. S M Figueras:** I am grateful.

Tourism policy New ideas being formulated

255 **Clerk:** Question 344. The Hon. D J Bossino.

260 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port provide details of the new ideas it is formulating in the context of Gibraltar's tourism policy?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

265 **Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N. Costa):** Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Government is engaged in considering tourism in the short and the medium-term but also, of course, having to bear in mind the long-term interests of Gibraltar.

270 The Government has, initially, two short-term priorities in the context of the tourism industry: firstly, to invest in badly needed improvements to the visitor attractions in the Upper Rock, some of which have been very sorely neglected for very many years; secondly, to improve as quickly as possible the manner in which Gibraltar is marketed as a tourism destination and the methods employed to market Gibraltar.

275 As the hon. Member is aware, my Ministry and the Gibraltar Tourist Board are currently involved in consultation and feedback with the industry at large. The hon. Member will also have read in the press that we have decided to hold monthly meetings of the Tourism Advisory Council. In addition, teams lead by my colleagues, the Hon. Dr John Cortes and the Hon. Mr Steven Linares, are assisting in formulating policies that this Government can develop, thus reflecting the importance the Government is attaching to the tourism industry.

The hon. Member is also aware of the inter-ministerial committee of the Ministries of the Environment, Heritage, Culture and Tourism, where the Government is engaged in formulating ideas that develop tourism in an environmentally friendly and heritage sensitive manner. I personally have, over the last five months, engaged in very intense one-to-one stakeholder engagements. As and when the new initiatives are finalised

280 and implementation started, the Government will be delighted to provide details to this House and to the hon. Gentleman in particular.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, can the Minister give an indication as to when he will be able to make such a statement?

285 **Hon. N F Costa:** Mr Speaker, my Ministry is working to be able to unveil some of our policy initiatives during the Budget session.

290 **Hon. D J Bossino:** In relation to marketing – a reference was made by the Minister to marketing – he said... he is quoted as having said in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* of 25th April that the new Government, which is really what prompted this question,

‘ the new Government is currently formulating new ideas and marketing new ideas.’

295 That suggests that the marketing of those new ideas is already in train. But is that still at the planning stage? Can he clarify what the situation is in relation specifically to marketing?

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr Speaker. It gives me the opportunity to explain the position the Government is at in respect to marketing.

300 The Tourism Advisory Council will be reporting back at the next meeting – which I think is scheduled for next week – with their ideas and recommendations on how best to market Gibraltar, what methods to employ and whom to target, in other words to be able to assist Government to develop a general policy as to how we achieve that.

305 I personally have met with two companies and two entities that have provided to the Government ideas on the website platform that could be used by the Gibraltar Tourist Board in marketing Gibraltar.

As the hon. Member is aware now, with new technology there are very interactive websites, there is the use of podcasts and so on, and whereas I have seen two websites in particular, we are in discussions with those entities in order to decide which one would provide the best platform for the Gibraltar Tourist Board to be able to sell Gibraltar as a vibrant city etc.

310 **Hon. D J Bossino:** This is just by way of a short preamble to the question I am going to ask now: I just want to congratulate the Minister and the Government generally that it is giving tourism the priority it deserves – certainly our policy when we were in government – and I sincerely hope, for Gibraltar Plc’s sake, that you are able to harness the clear success story that Gibraltar, the running of our tourism policy when we were in government, was a result of.

315 So, in relation, by way of supplementary, can I ask the Minister, who comprises... who are the members of the... is it the Tourism Advisory Council? Who are the members? Can you advise us who they are?

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr Speaker.

320 In the first place, I am afraid that I cannot accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman to say that we are simply continuing the ‘success story’ of the GSD.

325 The Tourism Advisory Council is comprised of various people, representatives of the Caleta Hotel, Bland Group International, the Taxi Association, Gibraltar Museum, the Queens Hotel, the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses, and the Chamber of Commerce.

And the reason why I do not accept the premise to the hon Gentleman’s question is because all but one of the members of this Tourism Advisory Council started their introductions by saying ‘not enough priority has been given to tourism in the past 15 years; none of the recommendations have ever been acted on; something actually *must* come out of these committee meetings, because they never did before; the product was undervalued; nothing seems to get done...’ – so I cannot accept his premise.

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335 **Consultation on Upper Rock**
Submissions and views relative to tourism

Clerk: Question 345, the Hon. D J Bossino.

340 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port provide details of the submissions and views received in relation to the consultation exercise recently undertaken in connection with the Upper Rock as are relevant to tourism?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

345 **Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa):** Yes, Mr Speaker.
The administrative process on the consultation exercise is being taken by the Department of the Environment.

350 The Department has received a total of 19 submissions as part of the Upper Rock consultation. The process is still in progress and the next step is that a paper will now be prepared by the Department of the Environment, based on the submissions received for discussion with the contributors before a strategy is actually developed.

355 Specific details on the submissions in relation to tourism cannot be provided at this stage, due to the commercial sensitivity of some of the submissions – in fact, an issue that has been raised by some of the contributors themselves and which the Government must accept, of course, at this stage.

355 But I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the views received are very varied and they relate to all of the aspects of the Upper Rock and the management of the Rock Nature Reserve, such as the management of the Barbary macaques, the conservation of wild flora and fauna, improving the main tourist sites in the Upper Rock and issues common to residents of the Upper Rock.

360 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Do the submissions cover... can the Minister, Mr Speaker, clarify this, do any of the submissions received cover the issue of the access by taxi drivers for the Upper Rock?

365 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, if I may, as this is something that is being dealt with by my Department, there has been a submission by the Taxi Association to the report, so obviously that is one of the aspects that is going to be considered; but they did make representations.

370 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Now, there is a point of clarification which I would like to seek from the Minister, who I am questioning at the moment, Mr Speaker, but I must admit that it was the quote in the *Chronicle* was attributed to the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, where he says, if the House would permit me:

‘It is not just the tourists that need to be looked after’

and this is in relation to the Upper Rock,

375 ‘but locals and workers too.’

The Minister explains that:

380 ‘We are going to be very careful to ensure that anybody who relies largely on the Upper Rock for their livelihood will be able to continue to do so. That is very important, but we have to do it in such a way that does not conflict with the amenity value for other users. It is quite a challenge.’

And then he makes another reference to the amenity value where he says:

385 ‘Like many other nature reserves and protected areas in the world, the number of visitors to these sites can result in unwanted side effects, such as the pollution and excessive wear and tear. Many of these sites now restrict the number of visitors allowed with regards enforcing a restriction in the Upper Rock.’

390 The Minister said:

‘There must be a maximum number of potential visitors, but I do not think we are necessarily there yet. I think what we have to do is manage it in a way which does not conflict with the amenity value of the Upper Rock.’

395 And the question, by way of supplementary, Mr Speaker, is what the Minister means by the ‘amenity value’?

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, its value as an amenity. How does one define an amenity? I can probably look it up on my iPad.

400 An amenity, I would have thought, is something that people use and enjoy, so its amenity value is its value as an amenity. I do not really see what the questioner is alluding to. Perhaps he would like to clarify?

Hon. D J Bossino: What interest is he putting into the balance?

405 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** Sorry, could you repeat that?

Hon. D J Bossino: What interest is he putting into the balance?

410 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** At the moment what we are doing is looking at all the representations and the exercise is ongoing. It is a challenge and I have used the word ‘challenge’ on a number of occasions because the management of a nature reserve which is accessed by tourists is a challenge throughout the world.

It is a challenge, Mr Speaker, that I think that we are certainly up to, but I cannot predict what the outcome is going to be. So I do not really think I can say anything. When the report is actually published, then obviously we can discuss it then.

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Hon. D J Bossino: So, clearly, the Government at this stage does not have a policy or a view or, indeed, even a preliminary view as a result of reviewing the data received in connection with the consultation exercise. Is that correct?

420 **Hon. N F Costa:** Well...

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: A consultation is a consultation in order to form a view. You cannot have the conclusion before you have given due consideration because if you have the conclusion already, then the process is not valid. So we are open to discuss and see what comes out at the end.

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Hon. N F Costa: Merely to add, Mr Speaker, that the proposals that have been submitted, some of them are actually quite detailed, and the deadline for submission was the 4th of this month. So we have just recently received them. So, of course, we need some time to analyse them before we can present the policy of the Government.

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Hon. P R Caruana: Mr Speaker, would the hon. Members concede, and I accept in part the point made by the Hon. Dr Cortes that there is no point holding a consultation process if you are firmly committed, or firmly entrenched, in a particular view or a particular objective.

435 Would he not agree with me that it is not correct to suggest that those who consult *others* to seek their views are required not to have a view of their own? The Government must have a view of its own. It may *rightly* and with every good governance justification have decided to test other people’s views to see to what extent other people’s views may cause the Government to modify its own, but the Government *surely* does not think that it is the only party in Gibraltar who should not have a view on an important matter affecting the public interest of Gibraltar.

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So I think it is just as well... I mean this is something about which the Government has said things in their manifesto. The Government *clearly* have a view that they do not want to *impose* their view without seeking the views of others, to see to what extent they can be accommodated as well, or instead, may well be true, but they must have a view of their own. Otherwise, does he not agree that they would be in dereliction of the Government’s duty to *have a view*, albeit subject to the views of others?

445 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, there is no duty to have a view, but I take the hon. Gentleman's point that the Government, if it is embarked on a course of consultation, is embarked on a course of consultation because clearly it is an area of policy that the Government wishes to develop its *own* thinking on; but, of course, the Government has views on issues on which it goes out to consultation.

450 But the hon. Gentleman alluded to the reasons why we do not want to be labouring our own views, in saying that the Government does not want to impose its views and, therefore, goes out to consultation to see what it is that either members of the public, or a particular sector or [*inaudible*] interest, views (*Interjection by Hon. P Caruana*) believe on a particular subject and then, at the end of that period, taking its initial view in the context of the replies in the consultation, will reach a *final* view.

455 I think, Mr Speaker, what we are saying and I think it is an issue that we have had a ding-dong across the floor of the House in relation to other matters on before is that when we were the party contesting the General Election – much as they were and then the other party – we put our views in our manifesto, or we have put our views in public statements, but when we engage in the process of consultation we think it is prudent, from that point on, to say, 'Well, look, we have said what we have said on the subject, but we are now consulting and we do not want, as Government, to belabour that view.'

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Hon. P R Caruana: Alright, Mr Speaker. Fine, I can accept in greater part that answer and the previous one, but that, he has to acknowledge, is a different answer to the one that the Hon. Mr Cortes made.

465 Nor do I think good governance requires, would he accept, the Government to commit *not* to impose its view. There may be circumstances in which the Government is *entitled*... Indeed, I think the Government, if it has a majority in parliament, is always *entitled* to impose its view. The question is not... Consultation is not surely so that the Government does not impose its view; it is so it does not impose its view without, first, having had the benefit of other's views to see to what extent those may influence the Government's view. But the Government is always free, in a democracy, to do as its manifesto says, or as its policy suggests, if they are not persuaded by the views of consultees in the consultation process. That is the normal process of democratic government.

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I am not challenging the propriety; indeed, I applaud them going out to consultation on this matter. I was just challenging the odd sounding assertion by a Minister of a Government, in *any* democracy that, notwithstanding all of that, the Government does not have a view. That struck me as not sounding right, not being right. It may be that Dr Cortes did not mean it precisely in those ways, but that is what he said and I think it has now been clarified.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

480 I do not think that there is a difference between what Dr Cortes said, taken in good faith on what I said, although perhaps if you were looking at it semantically you could in cross-examination suggest that there was.

But, Mr Speaker, I think that the difference is this: a consultation is not a referendum.

485 If the Government goes out and puts an issue to referendum, it is saying that it will be bound by the views of the plebiscite in respect of that particular question. In the consultation, the Government is asking for those who are interested, either the general public or those who care to write in, or a particular sector, what their views are on a particular issue. There are two ways of doing that and I do not think doing it in one way or another affects the 'good government' sense in which it is done.

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The Government can issue a consultation paper that says, 'The Government believes that this should be done and it should be done for this reason and in this way. What do *you* think?' Or the Government could simply say, 'The Government believes that this is an area that needs tackling. How do you believe it should be tackled?' Now, of course, in the lead-up to that consultation and since it has been done in [*inaudible*] the Government will have said in public statements, as a political party or as a Government, or as an Opposition – if there has been the reversal of roles which there has been in the past six months – what it believes on an issue. It does not mean that it has, as part of the consultation, to re-state that, in my view, and I think that we agree that those issues do not go to good government. What goes through to good government is that, in certain particular areas, one should be prepared to consult. But good government in the loose sense of the word good government and not in the constitutional sense of good Government which has completely different implications, and I think the hon. Gentleman would agree with me that what we are talking about here is how one is *disposed* to govern, rather than whether one is *engaged* in good government in the constitutional sense.

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500 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Well, Mr Speaker, I do not want to labour this point too much, although I think it has interest beyond the question of the Upper Rock and its management future.

In the first place, Mr Speaker, I do not agree with what the hon. Member said in the opening of his statement just there. The Government cannot say things in its manifesto and its public statements which reflect its views, have views and then, when asked in this House what those views are, the Minister stands up
505 and says, 'The Government has no view because that would be wrong, because we have started a consultation' – which was the essence of Dr Cortes's question, which is why I stood up. Otherwise, I was not just going to stand up about the Upper Rock. It was about the nature of the answer, if it had been applied to any other subject matter.

Mr Speaker, and then I do not agree, either, with what the hon. Member said latterly. Would he not accept that *most* consultations by Governments do not take the form of, for example, 'The Government thinks something needs to be done about the Upper Rock. What do you think, o citizen? How do you think, o citizen, it should be done?'

Most governmental consultation processes, particularly those they envisage may culminate in legislation, *set out*, for the purposes of the consultation, what the Government's thinking on the matter is, what the Government's *tentative* proposals are, and asks consultees to comment on those and on any other aspect different, in support, opposing, proposing alterations. They do not send the consultee a blank piece of paper, saying, 'What do you think should happen in the Upper Rock?'

So I do not accept and I do not want to spend all morning – unless *he* does – debating this. I mean, consultation is good. (*Interjections*) Any form of consultation is better than *no* form of consultation...

520 There is no point Dr Cortes shaking his head to people in the Gallery, which, by the way, is in serious breach of parliamentary procedure (*Interjections*) but, Mr Speaker, these are –

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I was not shaking my head at anybody in the Gallery. I was shaking my head and then looked towards the Gallery. If he were to have noted the sequence of events –

525 **Hon. P R Caruana:** So only the word 'at' was wrong?

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: I was not shaking my head at the Gallery, Mr Speaker. I am –

530 **Mr Speaker:** I have to accept that, as long as there was no intention to communicate with anyone in the Gallery. I have to accept that. No, shaking of head must entail looking in that direction and that direction...

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, my head was heading in the direction of my colleague, Mr Linares, and therefore the angle of vision may have crossed. (*Laughter and interjections*)

535 **Mr Speaker:** I think we need not dwell on that much longer!
The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition. Has he finished?

540 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I must say I think I prefer the hon. Gentleman angry, rather than merry, because (*Laughter*) we get through it more quickly when he is angry than when he is funny.

Mr Speaker, of course there is a technical point and I do not think we do need to labour this. This is not the Government's manifesto. It is the political party's manifesto and that political party then becomes the Government and even if the incumbent Government has a manifesto, when it issues a manifesto it is *the party's* manifesto and that is what they are saying.

545 But, look, I agree with him. It is not that the Government simply turns round and says *in vacuo*, 'Oh, something needs to be done about the Upper Rock. What shall we do about it? Ask the public.' The Government is elected to run Gibraltar and to bring those views, which have put it into Government to bear on those matters on which it has expressed those views. Of course, we agree with that; but I think the point is simply this, that, in the process of the consultation although there will be discussions and in those discussions with sectorial interest groups, if you are dealing with three or four and they are meeting with the Minister and the Minister is going to be giving his views, we do not think that the right approach on *every* occasion is to put out there, 'The Government believes that *this* is what has to be done. How do you want to influence that?'
550 Although it may be in some instances that that is the way to proceed with a consultation and we will do that in some particular instances.

555 Look, I think the interesting aspect of this – I do not even want to call it ‘debate’, because it is Question Time – but the interesting aspect of this exchange is that we agree that consultation is a good thing, that we believe that consultation in one form or another, in all its different forms, is the right approach in circumstances where the Government considers that it needs to temper the manner in which it will implement its policies, and that I recognise that, in some instances in Government, he did and in some others, he did not, 560 and in some instances in Government, if we consider it appropriate, we will, and in some instances, when we consider it is not appropriate, we will not.

Clerk: Question –

565 **Hon. P R Caruana:** The hon. Member has an uncanny knack of preventing me from staying sitting down, as I had intended to!

Mr Speaker, let me see if I can convert into a question just a simple proposition that I want to leave lying on the record.

570 Does the hon. Member, whether he agrees with it or not, at least acknowledge that the Opposition does *not* accept the repeated theme emanating from those benches, that is that, somehow, a Government can say of the manifesto that elected it into office, ‘That’s the party. Don’t quote the manifesto at me, because I am now the Government; I am not the party.’ It was a manifesto for government!

575 Nobody in the electorate, would he agree with me, is going to be attracted by the proposition that a political party gets elected to Government on the basis of a manifesto and then asserts repeatedly that it is free not to have the manifesto held against it, because it is the manifesto of the party and not the manifesto of the Government? It is not a line that I have seen used in other democracies.

580 Obviously, he will want to reply to that, and I will not rise again on the question – because all I just want to leave on record... I just did not want my acquiescence on that point to suggest to the hon. Member that we think there is merit in that sort of nuance, of the significance for political purpose. Clearly it does not bind the Government legally but, for political purposes, we do not think such a nuance is viable.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am getting worried that our relationship seems to be becoming almost symbiotic: I need to say something for him to get up... I do not want us to have that sort of relationship.

585 Mr Speaker, of course I accept that the party’s manifesto has now become the Government’s programme for government. I was simply taking the point that the manifesto during an election campaign is not ‘the Government’s’; it is the party’s, even though it is of the party in Government and it becomes the programme for government, once the Government is elected.

590 Of course, Mr Speaker, I have here – because I was taken by the candour with which the hon. Gentleman replied to a question by the now designate CEO of GBC in a radio interview in the run-up to the General Election on 5th December 2011, when he was asked about this issue of manifestos, and he very candidly said:

595 ‘All parties now publish manifestos during their campaigns, which are a programme of what they *hope* to achieve over a four-year period. Almost never is it possible to achieve all of those things, for a variety of reasons: you may run out of time, you may run out of money’

– as he almost did –

600 ‘and there may be technical reasons why things cannot be done. For example, some of the projects that you have mentioned rely on each other: until we have built the new power station, the MOD cannot build its power station, etc. Look, Gerard, I do not hide the fact that there has never been any term of office in which the GSD has managed to do everything that was in its manifesto, and I think that is true of every political party in every democracy around the world.’

605 I am looking forward to proving him wrong! (*Laughter*)

Clerk: Question –

Mr Speaker: No, the Hon. Selwyn Figueras.

610 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, just bringing us back to the question itself specifically, and having

failed to get very far with the definition of ‘amenity value’... but I have had an opportunity to review it on the iPad here with me (*Laughter*) so I may have informed myself appropriately.

615 Perhaps he will be of more assistance to the House in respect of his views articulated in the quote which I think you accepted was attributed correctly to you, in respect of the limited number of visitors, and although we are not there yet, what the Minister considers the ‘limited number of visitors’ to be – I understand that, and I am not pressing for a number or a moment in time which that will become a reality. However, what I would press the Hon. Minister for are his views on the impact it will have on both the amenity value and the commercial value of the Upper Rock Nature Reserve in due course.

620 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, it is clear that there *has to be* a limited number. There is a limited number of people who can fit in this room. It is more clear – it would be easier to find – what that number is in a defined space as this, but it is different in a nature reserve, where the numbers have to be managed in a particular way, too. And the numbers of people who can access an area like this will depend on how they are circulated, on how they visit the different areas and so on.

625 So I think it is has not reached the limited number, it is only an opinion, but if you manage in a different way, you can actually *increase* the numbers, so it is not determined at the moment. The numbers of visitors anywhere have to have physically a limit but, in the case of the Upper Rock, I do not think we are anywhere near that, but if we are able to absorb the present and greater numbers, you have to manage the way the visitors use the area in particular ways, which are not yet determined. That is part of the exercise.

630

Hon. S M Figueras: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

635 The one point, however, I would like to press the Minister on is whether his view that... and whilst we may or may not agree in that respect, his view is that there is a limited number of people that certainly we can fit in this Chamber, and in the Upper Rock Nature Reserve – when we arrive at that point, whether that will mean that there will be limitations imposed upon the local community in respect of its use of the amenity?

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: No, I am convinced that we are not going to reach – convinced, subject to the study going on – we are nowhere near reaching that limit, if we manage the people properly, so I cannot say anything further.

640

I *do not think* we will have to close any gate at any particular time, because I think we are going to manage it in such a way that that is not going to happen. So we are speculating without any facts.

Hon. S M Figueras: But the Minister is not able to provide a commitment that there will be no limitations or restrictions imposed on the local community in respect of the amenity?

645

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: There will be no limitations imposed on the local community.

650

Cruise passenger arrivals Promoting growth

Clerk: Question 346, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port advise this House what plans the Government has to promote the continuation of growth in the number of cruise passenger arrivals?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

660

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Government is currently assessing a number of infrastructural options in respect of increasing the berthing capability for cruise ships in Gibraltar, as well as enabling them to be effectively and safely handled.

665

In the short-term, the Western Arm is in the process of being tidied up, with the demolition of the derelict Ice Box Building and the resurfacing of that area. The Western Arm, as the House will know, is the first and last impression of cruise visitors and the area has been in desperate need of a facelift for as long as anyone can

possibly remember.

As the House will be aware, I attended Miami for two and a half days, during the course of which I personally met with five executives of various cruise line operators. We engaged then in lengthy discussions, canvassing many areas relating to cruise calls, shore excursions, etc.

670

It has become patently clear to this Government, Mr Speaker, that the single most important failure in the past, in order to be able to attract business to Gibraltar has been the absence of structures that ensure follow-up of the items discussed at meetings; but as a result of structural changes that I have implemented in the Gibraltar Tourist Board, there is now, at an official level, continuity of communication with the people who actually make decisions in the field, to make sure that Gibraltar is always in the minds of those executives who design shore excursions, decide the itineraries of their ships. Moreover, I have arranged a series of nine meetings in the UK at the end of June, with cruise operators based in the United Kingdom.

675

Mr Speaker, as I have already alluded to the hon. Gentleman in a previous answer, it is the philosophy of the Government to pursue personal relationships with those persons who decide, and equally as crucial, to impress that my Ministry and the Gibraltar Tourist Board have an open door to all of them to discuss any, and all, ideas.

680

Moreover, Mr Speaker, in my short time in my Ministry, it is my assessment that Gibraltar has, in fact, lost some important opportunities because of this lack of follow-through which I mentioned earlier. The recent return of the French product of Pullmantur, as recently highlighted in the press, is precisely the sort of example to which I am referring. A meeting was scheduled... a technical meeting was held by the Gibraltar Tourist Board, followed by a second meeting with me, that gave rise to the return of the product.

685

Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, since 2009, Gibraltar has only had calls from Norwegian Cruise Lines... and there has been also a substantial reduction in cruise calls from other cruise lines so, clearly, there is a lot of work to do in order to have those products brought back to Gibraltar.

690

Since I drafted the answer and as if this executive had heard the question of the hon. Gentleman, I was very gratified to have received an e-mail from one of the executives that we met in Miami, and I will be making a statement in due course to say that we will be adding two additional calls to Gibraltar this year. It is the Azamara Club Cruises. Essentially, there is one ship, the 700-passenger *Azamara Journey*, scheduled to call once, with a sister ship, the *Azamara Quest*, who will be visiting The Rock four times – three of them within a week, between 29th November and 3rd December. The *Azamara Quest* returns to Gibraltar six times in 2013, and that has been a direct result of my discussions with executives in Miami.

695

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, can I just take this opportunity, in relation to that last point made by the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, to congratulate him, if it is as he has... and there is no reason to doubt it, that these ships will be coming to Gibraltar.

700

But will he not accept for one moment, that it seems, in relation to the tourism issue, we are living almost in parallel universes? Now, in fact, it was reported in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* on 19th April that the visits... I will just quote it. It says:

705

‘Gibraltar received a record number of cruise passengers in the first quarter of the year, according to the latest statistics released by the Gibraltar Government.
The figures represent a slight increase over the same period in 2011, which itself marked a sharp rise over previous first-quarter cruise business.’

710

It goes on to say:

‘... the year in 2011, some 21,529 cruise passengers arrived in Gibraltar. This year, the figure for the same three-month period reached 22,063 passengers.
The start of the year has traditionally been slow for the cruise sector, but that has changed in the last two years.’

715

Then it ends – I will not read the whole article – but it says:

‘The figure is largely in line with market trends in recent years and, in any event, could rise before the end of the year.’

720

Will he not accept that he has inherited a bonanza?

Hon. N F Costa: Well, Mr Speaker, to answer the question of the hon. Gentleman, whereas there may be passengers coming into Gibraltar, ships have got bigger, so the fact that there are more passengers coming in

725 is as a result and by virtue of the size of the ships. But, unfortunately, there has been a significant loss of calls by ships, and I can give him some statistics: Costa Cruises called nine times in 2009 and only two in 2011; Louis Cruises called 28 times in 2009, but only once in 2011; NCL called five times in 2009, and no times at all in 2011.

So, as the hon. Gentleman can see, that it is by virtue of the size of the ships that people are coming in, but the number of calls have, as I have just shown him, dramatically reduced.

730 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, as I understand it – maybe he can confirm this – the position of Director of Maritime Affairs is now vacant. Is that correct?

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr Speaker.

735 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And is there any intention of filling that post?

Hon. N F Costa: No, Mr Speaker.

740

**Royal Caribbean cruise liner
Commencement of calls at Gibraltar**

745 **Clerk:** Question 347, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port advise the House when Royal Caribbean confirmed that its cruise liner, the *Serenade of the Seas*, would commence calls at Gibraltar?

750 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, Royal Caribbean booked the berth for the recent call of *Serenade of the Seas*, which called at Gibraltar on 2nd May, just over a year ago, on 9th March 2011.

755

**Gibraltar Bus Company Limited
Appointment of general manager**

760 **Clerk:** Question 348, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port inform this House whether a general manager has been appointed to the Gibraltar Bus Company Limited?

765 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, the job has been advertised internally. The closing date was last Friday, 11th May 2012. There were three applicants. All three applicants are Gibraltarian.

770 A board will be constituted to interview these three applicants and make their recommendations to the board of directors of the Gibraltar Bus Company.

I can add that, since drafting the answer, the board will be held next Tuesday.

775 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does the Government have any idea as to what the terms of engagement will be at this stage?

Hon. N F Costa: In particular...?

Hon. D J Bossino: In particular, income. Does the Government have in relation to that or...?

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Hon. N F Costa: Yes, no, no, I would not like the hon. Gentleman to quote me, but I believe the salary was £40,000. I can check it, but I am quite sure it was £40,000 per annum, with a probationary period of six months.

I can get back to him on the exact amount.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, presumably it would have been advertised internally on that basis?

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, of course, Mr Speaker.

790

**Gibraltar Bus Company Limited
Details of independent inquiry**

795

Clerk: Question 349, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port provide full details of the independent inquiry into the case surrounding the Gibraltar Bus Company and Mr Sardeña, to include who will be leading it; how it will be conducted; when it will commence; what its terms of reference will be; and when it is expected to complete?

800

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Yes, Mr Speaker, as my press statement of 4th April made clear, any inquiry will be conducted at the end of the case, and any related appeals. At the expiry of such timeframe, consideration will be given to all the matters that the hon. Member mentions in his question.

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**Mr Albert Poggio's terms of engagement
Gibraltar Office, London**

Clerk: Question 350, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port provide details of the terms of engagement of Mr Albert Poggio, including details of his role and position within the Gibraltar Office in London?

820

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Yes, Mr Speaker, Mr Poggio was appointed as a political consultant, by virtue of an agreement dated 25th March 2011 between the Government of Gibraltar and Mr Poggio. The appointment is for a term of two years. He is directly accountable to the Chief Minister, directly and through the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister's Private Secretaries.

825

He has the use of an office in Gibraltar House in London for the provision of the service and shall also be provided with such secretarial and logistical support for the provision of the service as the Director of Gibraltar House may consider reasonable to provide for that purpose. He is to keep the Director of Gibraltar House briefed in all matters relating to the provision of the service.

830

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister confirm that that, therefore, is the arrangement as we left it, when we were on that side of the House?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, as I understand it, that is the arrangement that we inherited.

835 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am grateful for that confirmation, Mr Speaker, and the reason why I ask it is because the press is quoting Mr Poggio as saying something quite different.

In fact – you cannot believe what all the papers say all of the time, but certainly the – (*Interjection and laughter*)

840 Well, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will be surprised to learn that I am actually about to quote the *Panorama*, in its edition of (*Interjection*) 28th February of this year quotes Mr Poggio, saying that – and this is the title of the article:

‘Poggio says he is “back in full control” at the London Office’.

845 The first paragraph says:

‘Albert Poggio told *Panorama* yesterday’

– i.e. 27th February –

850

‘that he is now “back in full control” at the Gibraltar Government Office in London. He said he was very pleased to work for the new Government.’

855 Now that, Mr Speaker, clearly suggests that there has been a change of circumstances in Mr Poggio’s employment and that is why I asked the question.

It goes on, in its penultimate paragraph, where it says:

860 ‘In recent weeks it was being said in unofficial sources in Gibraltar that Mr Poggio had reverted to being the Government’s representative in London –

– *reverted* –

‘and this was reinforced by his use of the title “United Kingdom Representative, HM Government of Gibraltar.’

865 Maybe if I can just add a bit of humour to the supplementary, Mr Speaker, the *Panorama* – another edition, and I must say I do not have the exact date – apparently, Mr Poggio was described as the ‘High Commissioner’ of Gibraltar by the *Herald Express* in the Devon area, and it adds:

870 ‘His Excellency Albert Poggio will be taken on a tour of the recently re-opened Torre Abbey, before speaking at Brixham Yacht Club’s annual St George’s Day dinner.’

There is an editor’s note which interestingly says:

875 ‘Of course, Mr Poggio is not Gibraltar’s High Commissioner and it is to be wondered why he should be so addressed. Why did they think in Devon that such is his status?

More so, how come he was addressed as “His Excellency”, a title not accorded even to the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, and reserved for the Governor?

Does it mean that someone somewhere thinks “His Excellency Albert Poggio” is above the Chief Minister?’

880 **Mr Speaker:** I am not even sure that is an appropriate question! (*Laughter*) But if the Chief Minister wants to answer it –

Hon. D J Bossino: That was still part of the *Panorama* quote! (*Laughter and interjections*)

885 **Mr Speaker:** Well, I know, I mean I think – (*Laughter and interjections*)

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, it was such an opportunity that I had to rise –

890 **Mr Speaker:** I will just point out that, no matter where it appeared first, it is *not* an appropriate question, but –

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, just to clarify, I was quoting the *Panorama* –

Mr Speaker: It doesn't matter!

895

Hon. D J Bossino: It was not a question, but maybe I can quote a question –

Mr Speaker: No, no, the question was put on the terms, and then the Hon. Minister for Tourism explained at length the terms; then the supplementary was about what appeared in the *Panorama*, which is not an appropriate question.

900

However, I will not deprive the Chief Minister of (*Laughter*) the pleasure – I think he would want to say something on that. (*Laughter*)

905

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, only because the hon. Gentleman, I think, did the House the kindness of explaining why he felt it was appropriate to put the question in that context, and read the quote to show us what it was that had caused him to draft it.

Mr Speaker, put it this way: Gibraltarians have always been known for punching above their weight internationally, so it must be, I think, a good thing that there are Gibraltarians around the world being referred to as 'His Excellency' – nomenclature which has been traditionally, in respect of Gibraltar been reserved for people who were sent over from London to reign over us.

910

So I think that he is injecting an element of humour to reflect this, because there are people who believe that those who are in offices of other nations, in London or in other capitals, are all ambassadors, and all ambassadors are referred to as 'Your Excellency', in the way that they are referred to.

915

So I suppose we should thank whoever thought that one of our representatives in London is an ambassador and should be referred to as 'His Excellency', for affording us, as a people, that pleasure. I do not think Mr Poggio himself has ever tried to accord for himself (*Laughter*) the epitaph of 'His Excellency' or of 'High Commissioner'.

920

But, Mr Speaker, it is true that, in terms of how to present himself, the Government has agreed that he should represent himself as 'UK representative', for political purposes and for the purposes of doing the political work that he does, without that affecting his job description or the terms of engagement – if I may call them that, although it is a consultancy agreement which we inherited from the previous administration.

925

The hon. Gentleman has made a reference to things said in the *Panorama* from unofficial sources, which I am not going to deign with a reply, but I will say that, in respect of the quote of the 'full control', which is a quote attributed to Mr Poggio, the only thing I can say is that maybe Mr Poggio was referring to – it does not go on to say what he is in full control of – full control of the political lobbying aspect which is what his contract provides for.

I think, across the floor of the House, if there is any measure of agreement, it is that Mr Poggio does an excellent job of the political representation of Gibraltar in London.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Just to clarify the points, Mr Poggio does say that he is 'in full control' at the Gibraltar Office in London – that is what he is attributed as saying. The Chief Minister has clarified the position, and I am satisfied.

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In fact, in other past reports in the *Gibraltar Chronicle*, he is described also as the Head of the Gibraltar Office in London. As I understand – maybe I can ask this by way of supplementary – is that so? Mr Canessa is the Director of the London Office?

940

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, indeed it is Mr Canessa who is the Head of the London Office – the administrative Head of the London Office, and who enjoys the full confidence of this Government, as he enjoyed the full confidence of our predecessors.

I think 'full control', as I am reading it, and as I read it – despite what I might call the rather unfortunate photograph on the front page of the *Panorama* which I think included that article – is full control of the *political* aspects of Gibraltar's representation in the United Kingdom, and not of the office, which continues under the full administrative control of Mr Canessa who, as I say, enjoys our full support and our full confidence – as Mr Poggio does in respect of *his* role.

945

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, the answer has cleared the issue for me. I do not have the benefit of the

photograph on the front page of the *Panorama*, because I have an internet version of the article.

Hon. N F Costa: I can pass a copy to you! (*Interjections and laughter*)

950

Mr Speaker: Was the request for a photograph a supplementary? (*Interjections and laughter*)

955

**GibiBikes scheme
Rental details for past three months**

Clerk: Question 351, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port provide this House with details of usage of the GibiBikes for the last three months, broken down by number of rentals, location of rentals, length of rentals and fault reports?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

965

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Yes, Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 352 of 2012.

970

**GibiBikes scheme
Rollout to rest of Gibraltar**

Clerk: Question 352.

975

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port advise whether the Government is committed to completing the roll-out of the GibiBikes scheme to the rest of Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port.

980

Minister for Tourism, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the schedule which I now hand to him.

ANSWER TO QUESTION NO 352

ANSWER TO QUESTION NO 351

Month	Number of rentals	Total time (hrs)
January 2012	1785	398
February 2012	2305	333
March 2012	3176	583

Average length of rentals: **11 minutes**
Present members in the scheme: **419 members**

985

In respect of the fault reporting, although there is an option on the touch screen of each individual bike station for a client to report a particular problem, this function of the service has not come online. Therefore, we do not have any statistics available.

The majority of clients communicate with GibiBikes through e-mail.

990

Given the current situation, with five stations down, damaged locks, sparsity of bikes at peak hours, the fault reports and complaints tend to merge into the same correspondence. Stations out of action and other

problems are as follows:

Stations out of action are City Hall; Orange Bastion; Europort has to be restarted manually several times during the day; Frontier 1 and Frontier 2 stations.

995 At the Frontier, from a potential 45 locks available to our clients at present, there are only 12.

Bike availability: from a maximum of 130, 18 are locked, 31 have their anti-tilt tags broken and there are no spares to repair them; 12 require spares to make them roadworthy; 22 are held in reserve, but these may have problems with their anti-tilt mechanisms, which leaves a total of 47 bikes available to our client-base of 419.

1000 Mr Speaker, given that my Ministry, in conjunction with the Gibraltar Bus Company Limited, is in detailed discussion with this private operator in respect of the detailed breakdown that I have just mentioned on the stations and the other problems relating to the stations, it is not appropriate, at this stage, to comment any further, save that – I can say this, because I have communicated this to the director of my bike station – I am nothing short of appalled that these stations, having started operation, I believe on 27th November of last year, should be experiencing such widespread problems already.

1005 The Government is, therefore, closely examining all the available options in relation to GibiBikes. This includes the roll-out of the scheme to the rest of Gibraltar. No policy decision has yet been taken as a result of these commercial discussions.

1010 The Government is further concerned that, as the capital cost of the project to date comes to just over £324,000, there are also serious issues relating to the reliability of the equipment, which the Government has already taken up with the supplier. The recurring operating expenses are also a matter for concern.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, thank you.

I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for Transport for his answer to the question.

1015 You mentioned that there is a discussion of all the available options at the moment, including the roll-out of the system to the other stations, which certainly, on GibiBikes website, are listed as stations that are available and have not been because they were subject to that roll-out phase.

Is it not correct, perhaps... and I do understand, I will declare that I am a user, and perhaps that is why they are in such a terrible state! (*Laughter*)

1020 **A Member:** Exactly!

Hon. S M Figueras: Yes, before someone else makes the link! (*Laughter*) I am a user, and I am aware that there are many faults, of which I have reported a number and I am quite surprised to hear that the system for reporting is not actually online and that the time I spent reporting them is actually time wasted!

1025 But conscious as I am of the difficulties that are being experienced in respect of the reliability or otherwise of the equipment in place, would the Minister not agree that, despite those difficulties and subject to the contractual arrangements with the supplier, details of which I am not aware, it would no doubt be of benefit to the community to continue with the roll-out of this system?

1030 Is it not the case, also – and I apologise for the length of the preamble – would the Minister agree that continuing to roll out the system, as had been the previous administration's policy, would be of more benefit to the community... rather, would help to develop the use of the system more, by making it more widely available and as user-friendly as it had originally been intended to be?

1035 **Hon. N F Costa:** Mr Speaker, I very much respect that, when Mr Holliday was photographed riding the bike, he did intend the system to be user-friendly.

1040 However, unfortunately, as I have just explained to this House, the system has widespread problems. I have listed some of the most important ones. The fact that installations which were rolled out on 27th November of only last year should be experiencing such widespread problems of bikes deteriorating, oxidation, clamps having to be replaced, locks not being able to be released, software crashdowns, at a cost of already £328,000, the Government, before expending any *additional* taxpayers' money, has to carefully consider whether or not it must do so, given the cost incurred and the widespread problems that are being experienced.

1045 Look, in a way, it is my view that the previous Minister may have put the cart before the horse, given that there are also safety concerns, of there being no safety lanes for bike users. I for one think that the more that people use the bus, or bikes the better, and that people should change their minds and walk to work is indeed

preferable. That, I am sure the hon. Member will agree with me, has to be juxtaposed with the costs to the taxpayer and the problems being incurred. If we can do it at a reasonable cost and being sure that we will not have another systematic failure of the system by rolling out the programme, we will take it into account, but at this point, given the problems experienced, we will have to take the problems strictly under advisement.

1050

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, just a couple more questions on the issue.

I am just going to bring the issue down to its fundamentals. Is the Government of the view that the concept of a GibiBikes urban bike rental scheme is positive for the community and it is therefore committed to rolling out as a matter of priority a comprehensive system, subject to the difficulties that they are having and those difficulties being dealt with or changed, however the Government choose to deal with it? Is it committed to a useful, reliable urban bike rental scheme for Gibraltar?

1055

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, I believe I have already answered the question.

1060

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has said that, in his view, it is a good idea. I have asked him whether it is the Government's policy to pursue an urban bike rental scheme as a matter of priority.

Hon. N F Costa: And before I sat down, I said we will have to take a policy decision, given the problems being experienced.

1065

Hon. S M Figueras: Yes, indeed, Mr Speaker, but taking a policy decision on the basis of the problems being experienced is a different matter altogether to saying, in a vacuum, 'We consider an urban bike rental scheme to be of benefit for the community and therefore, if we can find a *suitable system*, then we are certainly going to pursue it because we consider it as a matter of priority.'

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Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr Speaker, in a fairy-tale land, with no problems, no cost considerations or Health and Safety concerns, yes – in the vacuum.

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Hon. S M Figueras: I am grateful for that, because I think it is actually very important and certainly it was the previous administration's policy to roll out this urban bike rental scheme, because there is no doubt that usage, despite all the difficulties, according to the figures that the Minister has provided to us, is actually on the up. Certainly it is not hard – it does not take long, walking around – to see that they are actually being used, so whatever limited bikes are available, they are certainly in use. That is a very good marker, certainly, for the importance of it, because of course, the present Government is all about costs. The present Government is all about consultation and ensuring that the cost of the initiative is worth it in the long-run.

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I ask the Minister how important, or how highly does he rank the beneficial impact of such an urban bike schemes on the alleviation of a certain amount of traffic on our roads; the fact that it is promoting cycling in the community; the fact that it is promoting a healthy activity; and that, in due course – even bearing in mind the realities of cycling in Gibraltar – it may cause a paradigm shift to come about and the bicycle *may* eventually become a genuine alternative means of transport in Gibraltar?

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Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, it would appear that the hon. Gentleman either has not heard my reply or refuses to accept the reality of the current problems being experienced by the GibiBikes stations.

Look, we have paid to these gentlemen in the UK £324,000 – right? That money could have been used in doctors, teachers, nurses, care workers and other people who are desperately needed by this society.

1090

Now, is a bikes urban scheme a good idea? I have already answered: the answer is yes. In an ideal world, in Walt Disney, where there are no cost implications, where there are no safety concerns, yes, it is a good idea. I have said that in my original answer, in my second supplementary answer and in my third supplementary answer.

1095

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, unfortunately, the Minister seems to be expressing the view which is worryingly becoming the trend and that is the short-termist approach of this Government. There seems to be no long-term vision – certainly in respect of this matter – because he refers to £324,000 and he refers to the fact that with that £324,000 you can hire more doctors, more nurses, more teachers, and fund other projects in the community which are just as valuable.

1100

But what is concerning, Mr Speaker, is that there seems to be no long-term vision about the long-term beneficial impact, which I suspect the Minister for the Environment would agree with me – certainly at least in part – is the positive impact of such a scheme and such a paradigm shift towards using the bicycle in respect of the environment, in respect of traffic, and in respect of a number of other issues.

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So Mr Speaker, I ask him again: how highly... and perhaps I will wait until he is paying attention, because I would like to afford him the opportunity of answering the question.

It is okay, I am waiting.

1110

Mr Speaker: I think the question has been asked.

Hon. S M Figueras: I just need to repeat the question, because I suspect, Mr Speaker – with your indulgence – that he has not quite grasped the concept of the question itself, and it is really very simple.

How highly does he rank the importance of bringing about a paradigm shift in respect of cycling as an alternative means of transport, in the list of priorities which he is now considering in respect of the bike scheme?

1115

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, a paradigm shift, in changing the psychological minds of the people to walk or use the bus or cycle to work is extremely important to this Government because, as the hon. Member will know, we have already issued a tender to be able to be advised on how we achieve exactly that.

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The hon. Member cannot tell me that as a result of this bike scheme, that in itself would transform into this paradigm shift that he is talking about. He cannot tell me that and he cannot also accuse this Government of short-termism because we are consulting with the industry or with the general public at large. That one thing does not follow from the other, and we are not obsessed with costs. However, costs are an important consideration and must be factored into any policy decision that the Government makes.

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I have already told him that I do think that the bike urban scheme is a good idea, but that is speaking in a vacuum. Government has to consider not just whether something is a good idea or not, but the costs. It also considers other implications as well: the system, etc.

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So he does not need to repeat the question or accuse me of not being able to grasp the question. I have already told him that, whereas it may have been a good idea for Minister Holliday at the time to be photographed using a bike for electoral purposes – because let us remember that this was rolled out on 27th November 2011, with an election on 8th December 2011 – in other words a few weeks before, and I am not sure whether Minister Holliday at the time used bikes to come to work or he walked to work or not – but the point I am trying to make is that he *did* put the cart before the horse, because he cannot tell me that it is not dangerous, in some areas of Gibraltar, to use bikes.

1135

But, of course, this programme was rushed through for electoral purpose, without consideration for anything – cost, safety or anything else. If *that* is not short-termism, if *that* is not political opportunity, nothing else is!

1140

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I commend the Hon. Minister for taking all of 10 minutes of resistance to referring to the rolling out of the GibiBikes scheme as *only* an electoral gimmick.

However, it continues to concern me that this approach to come out in this House and say that cycling in Gibraltar is dangerous, and as simple as that, without referring to –

1145

Hon. N F Costa: On a point of order, I never said dangerous; I said it raises safety issues – *quite different*.

Hon. S M Figueras: I think, Mr Speaker, *Hansard* will show that he did, in fact, say that cycling in Gibraltar is dangerous – on that point of order.

1150

Hon. N F Costa: *Potentially*.

Hon. S M Figueras: Well, so, when I talk about the paradigm shift, Mr Speaker, I am *not* saying – and I have never said, certainly not in this House – that the introduction of an urban bike rental scheme would bring about this shift. The shift will only be brought about through consistent campaigns of awareness, implication and facilitating and incentivising the use of the bicycle as an alternative means of transport. That is the point I was making.

1155

I am grateful to the Minister for his *[inaudible]*.

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, I do not know if there was a question there.

1160 However, let me tell him this: that if they were so concerned, if they were so obsessed, if it was so important to have this paradigm shift in the psychological maturity of Gibraltar, for people not to get in their cars, perhaps the Trafalgar Interchange may have made use and ability for people to be able to cross and have not created a system whereby it only caters for cars.

1165 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr Speaker, regardless of the terms in which he alluded to it, the Hon. Minister alluded to the issue of safety – let us put it in those terms.

Can he say whether he is aware... since it was launched as a ‘pre-Election gimmick’ in November, can he say whether there have been any reported traffic accidents involving users of GibiBikes?

1170 **Hon. N F Costa:** Mr Speaker, I have not asked.

1175 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Well, if he has not asked whether there have been any traffic accidents involving the users of GibiBikes in nearly six months, then either it is not as dangerous as he thinks, *or* he cannot be so concerned about the safety implications of the GibiBikes scheme. Does he accept from me that were he to genuinely consider safety to be a consideration in the...?

By the way, I should have prefixed my question by saying that I entirely support him in his view to get the contractor to comply with whatever contractual standard is required and it is certainly unacceptable to this side of the House, as I hope and I am gratified to see it is unacceptable on that side of the House, that a contractor should think that they can sell us a product which is then not operating to the promised or contracted standard specification.

1180 But, that aside, I am questioning him only on his allusion to safety, that if he is not aware whether there has been any accidents – and I certainly have not read of any in the newspaper, but that does not mean that there have not been any – if he *were* concerned about safety as an issue in formulation of the Government’s thinking – should he not by now have interested himself about what the record on safety is in relation to users of GibiBikes?

1185 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker –

1190 **Hon. P R Caruana:** The question was addressed to the Hon. Minister – but the Hon. Chief Minister can answer if he thinks the Hon. Minister will not be able to.

1195 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Mr Speaker, assuming that the hon. Gentleman has asked the question because he thinks his Shadow Minister (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*) for the Environment and Transport (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*) was not able to appreciate that nuance either and he felt that he had to get up and ask that question –

Mr Speaker: Order.

We had an issue before. The Government is entitled to choose who answers which questions – (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*)

1200 **Hon. Chief Minister:** He did it for 16 years!

1205 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr Speaker, with respect to you, I have not questioned their entitlement; I have made a political comment about what might be a proper interpretation of the fact that he chooses to answer it. It does not raise issues of entitlement.

Hon. Chief Minister: In which case, the political comment is thrown straight back at him, because of his decision to ask the question in relation to a (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*) member of his Shadow Cabinet and, of course, Mr Speaker, the point is live as to what used to happen here for 16 years!

1210 **Several Members:** Hear, hear! (*Applause*)

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, anyway.

Hon. P R Caruana: Of course, of course it is Mr. Speaker but he used to criticize it! (*Laughter*)

1215 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr. Speaker, I have got up to answer this question because I think it is important... I think it is important to link what the hon. Gentleman has now addressed to the hon. – my colleague, Mr. Costa, who I am perfectly happy to allow to answer the part of his question which he may wish to answer.

1220 I am comfortable that he will be able to discharge his function in answering very well indeed to the premise of the Hon. Mr. Figueras's statement about the paradigm shift, but Mr. Speaker; what evidence did the hon. Members opposite, when they made the investment in these schemes, the GibiBike scheme, have, that it would lead to a paradigm shift in the way that people move around (*Interjection*) Gibraltar? What evidence Mr. Speaker is there even today, in the premise of the Hon. Mr. Figueras's question that it's actually working in a way that affects the way that people transport themselves around Gibraltar, because the figures that we have provided them show the number of trips there are on these bikes, but that does not tell you whether these are people who might have been walking to work before and the bikes are actually creating more traffic. This doesn't tell you whether those people were on the buses before, because if these people are the sort of people who are genuinely and rightly concerned about the way that they transport themselves around Gibraltar and they don't want to use their cars, it is also possible to assume, Mr. Speaker, that these people would have been the ones previously already walking to work or catching the bus.

1225 What statistic did they seek at the time that they were in Government before making this investment? Because, Mr. Speaker, if we are not genuinely concerned with safety because we have not asked for the statistic from the police about the number of accidents involving bikes, then what concern did they have for the paradigm shift if they did not have the mechanisms in place before they made the investment to assess how many people, not would use the bikes; how many people would go from the *car to the bike*? How many people would go from the motorbike to the bike?

1230 And so, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Gentleman's point about not having sought the statistic, when seen in the context of the other hon. Gentleman's earlier points, I think evidences the fact that either we are both as concerned about safety and the paradigm shift or neither of us are concerned about either safety or the paradigm shift; although I do recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman, when he started his supplementaries on this was deprecatory of himself in a way that he need not be because, having seen the photograph in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* when this was launched, I am sure that was more responsible for the (*Laughter*) damage done to the bike than he could ever do to it by simply riding it!

1245 **Hon. N F Costa:** Mr. Speaker, to answer the (*Interjection*) question –

Mr Speaker: The question has been answered by the Hon. the Chief Minister –

Hon. N F Costa: Well, not the part about safety –

1250 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that what the Hon. the Chief Minister has just said is even a persuasive attempt to conflate two completely unrelated issues – presumably, for the purposes of trying to muddy the waters.

1255 The debate about the alleged paradigm shift – has it happened or not and what was the evidence, in advance, for the fact that it would or would not happen? – upon which I might express a view, but will not, so as not to further muddy the waters, is wholly irrelevant to the question that I have asked, which is: given that the hon. Member has gratuitously alluded to the question of safety, I asked him what evidence he had, and what steps he had taken to establish, whether there was any justifiable basis for his raising, in this House, concerns about safety.

1260 Would he now please answer that?

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I was about to say before, at the *very first* meeting of the Gibraltar Bus Company Limited, where we discussed the GibiBike scheme, the very first thing I did ask for was for the technicians and the responsible people to come back to me as to where we could have safety bike lanes all over Gibraltar.

1265 So you can see, Mr. Speaker, it is not that we have asked for the statistics of accidents, my very first

instruction, in relation to GibiBikes, was to see whether, in Gibraltar's narrow roads, we could have safety lanes.

1270 **Hon. P R Caruana:** So he raises it in this House on the basis that he asked a question to which he has not had an answer, Mr. Speaker. That is all that I was trying to establish.

Can I, therefore, say to the hon. Member; if he is concerned about the safety of grown workers using bikes on Gibraltar's – according to him – inappropriate streets for cycling, what is the Government's policy to prevent our *own children* from riding their bicycles on the same narrow, inappropriate, and presumably even more dangerous, streets?

1275

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think the policy of successive Governments, at least since 1982, has been that the Royal Gibraltar Police carry out something called the cycling proficiency test – which I am very pleased to say I passed at the first attempt (*Laughter*) at Sacred Heart Middle School and I am sure that many of us also here will have done so – and I hope, and we all hope, that that, and whatever other tuition young children are given in how careful they need to be when interfacing with the traffic, when they are riding the bikes, has not resulted, to date, in any serious accidents.

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I am sure that we all agree that it never will but, Mr. Speaker, that is not to say, *that is not to say* that Gibraltar's roads were *safe enough* for the introduction, not of another young Gibraltarian enjoying his youth and teens on his bicycle, but 300 or 400 – I don't know how many – bikes, all to be taken at once in the morning across our streets and back in the evening, when people were going back to work. That was our concern.

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Now, Mr. Speaker, I do hope that it's not just *our* concern. I do hope – now, look, we call it an electoral gimmick; they say it is the beginning of a paradigm shift in the way that people transport themselves across Gibraltar – but I do hope that we agree on that and, in the longer term, if schemes like this are going to prosper what we should be doing is making this one *part* of the project and not *all* of it, and that we should be looking at making cycling on our roads more attractive and safer, etc, etc.

1290

Hon. P R Caruana: Mr. Speaker, does the hon. Member accept that, just as I have accepted, getting the contractor to comply and all of that are perfectly legitimate things for the hon. Members to require; that it is completely... to say that one of the things that is in the melting pot about the future of this scheme, amongst others, are considerations of safety.

1295

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member – I don't want to get into a debate with him about whether the paradigms have been shifted or not: I think it's far too esoteric a subject for so early in the morning. But, look, paradigms or not, shifts or not, there are 419, presumably adult, members of this community who, in the full knowledge of the length and width of our roads (*Interjection*) and their appropriateness or inappropriateness for cycling, have become members of the scheme and who presumably use it.

1300

That, coupled to the fact that there is no evidence of accident – I think the Hon. Chief Minister has just acknowledged – should lead the hon. Members to the conclusion that, whatever might be the other criteria by which they might want to make a decision about the future of this scheme, and it is entirely a matter for them and policy, safety would be a bogus one, because the idea that you stop 419 members using a scheme on safety grounds, whilst not replicating the same prohibition – or rather, protective attitude – to all the other citizens of the community who are using our roads would lack a degree of logical application of concern for safety.

1305

The final point I would ask you to acknowledge would be relevant, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that all uses of the road are dangerous, whether you are in a car, whether you are a pedestrian. Look, perhaps that one of the most dangerous things people do on our roads is ride motorcycles. It is part of the risks of living. Nobody said, 'Well, we're going to ban motorcycles, or the Government is going to form a view on an activity on the basis of the safety issues about it.'

1310

Would the hon. Member acknowledge that, except in some capital cities in which on *some streets*, not all of their streets even, on some of their streets they may have cycle lanes and even cycle pavements, lanes on cycle pavements, in almost every city, capital and non-capital, where this scheme exists, they are used on roads without cycle lanes, on many occasions in many circumstances, and that that is not regarded as being a valid reason for discontinuing a scheme that is thought, *if it is thought*, by the Government to be valuable in other respects and for other reasons.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr. Speaker, I fear this is the sort of debate where we concentrate on *disagreement* because we are in Parliament whilst, if we were sitting around the table having a coffee, we'd be mates agreeing on much of what we're saying.

1325 The hon. Gentleman prefaces his question by saying 'Doesn't he agree that it is bogus for them to say that safety is a consideration?' Of course, I cannot agree that what we have been talking about is bogus (*Interjection*) but, Mr. Speaker, look, a Prime Minister – not a Chief Minister – a Prime Minister has said on this subject – which the hon. Gentleman will know, he is quite enamoured of that: 'one takes one's life in one's hands when one gets on one's bike', in particular in London, to go from where he used to live down to Downing Street, or wherever his offices happened to be, probably at Portcullis House at the time, when Security allowed him to go to work on his bike. So we are not saying... this is not a nanny-state approach to the whole thing, where we are saying you can only have GibiBikes if we can put a third wheel on them and you're in cotton wool.

1330
1335 But that is not to say that safety is a bogus concern. Safety is, of course, a concern if you are going to further roll out the scheme and if you are going to try and encourage more people to use this mechanism. If you are going to use it for that paradigm shift and, Mr. Speaker, of course he is right, and we agree, one of the concerns that needs to be put in the mix – it is not the only concern, it's *one* of the concerns that needs to be put in the mix.

1340 The hon. Gentleman said that one of the most dangerous things that people do on our roads is drive mopeds and we are not looking to 'illegalize' that. I will agree with him to this extent; I think one of the most dangerous things that people do on our roads now is walk because of the way that people ride their mopeds and how that can affect people who are perfectly legitimately walking about their business.

1345 This is not a nanny-state approach to the GibiBikes, which we are not prepared to take in relation to other matters. It is that this is a factor, as the hon. Gentleman has said in answer to the first question, in respect of further roll-out, because Gibraltar is not London, and Gibraltar is not Oxford, but in London and in Oxford there are many accidents involving cyclists, not necessarily involving the public bike scheme: sometimes – in fact, I think even more often – I venture to say, because the schemes have not been around for very long, involving peoples' private cycle bikes that they have been using for many generations. Would that we never see the sort of accidents that have been seen in cities like that.

1350 But Gibraltar is *small* and injecting 419 bikes, or perhaps going even further and injecting another 400 bikes, *could* create a number of issues. *One* of those issues is the safety concern that we, as a Government, believe, as a matter of policy, has to be one of the things in the mix, in the equation, when determining further roll out.

1355 But I want to acknowledge, before I sit down, the hon. Gentleman's positive attitude in respect of the failings of the scheme, and how the Government, whether it is contracted by one political colour and then followed up by a Government of another political colour, is entitled to have got the product that the taxpayer has paid for. I acknowledge his support in that and, whilst I am here – I know there is another question on the Order Paper – it is opposite now, his support also, in respect of the other matter which has been ventilated in public, which is the tunnel under the runway and the claim in that respect, where he has publicly already made the same sort of statement as is made in respect of the contract in respect of these bikes.

1360

SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND YOUTH

1365

City Fire Brigade Installation of smoke extractor system

Clerk: Question 353, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

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Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister with the responsibility for the Fire Brigade tell us if the new smoke extractor system has been installed at the City Fire Brigade?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

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Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Fire

Officer has already identified the most suitable exhaust system and is in the process of purchasing it, with a view to installing it as soon as possible.

1380 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister elaborate on what ‘as soon as possible’ means; within the next few days, few weeks, few months?

Hon. S E Linares: I am hoping that it will be in the next few weeks, but it cannot be guaranteed. But, yes, in the next few weeks.

1385

**City Fire Brigade
Start of audit and site of new fire station**

1390 **Clerk:** Question 354, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister with the responsibility for the Fire Brigade tell us if the City Fire Brigade’s audit has started and where the new fire station will be sited?

1395 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr. Speaker, the Government has already decided who will conduct the City Fire Brigade’s audit.

1400 Sir Ken Knight, who is the UK Government’s Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England since 2007, has been appointed to conduct the audit, and will begin sometime after the Olympic Games in London, since he forms part of the COBRA Committee.

As to the second part of her question, Government is not in a position to state where the new fire station will be located.

1405 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, does the Minister have a cost for the audit yet?

Hon. S E Linares: Not exactly, because it depends on how long the audit will take and, therefore... It is on a cost basis. It is whatever it costs to fly people over and the time they take – that is the cost. So we won’t know until they actually do the audit.

1410 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, has the Minister not obtained a quote for this-

Hon. S E Linares: Sorry?

1415 **Hon. S M Figueras:** – has the relevant Department not obtained a quote of the expected cost for the audit?

Hon. S E Linares: No, because I think what the offer was from the very beginning is a very, very, very good offer.

1420 That means that Sir Ken Knight will not be charging normal charges for his duties. He will just come over on a cost basis, not as a professional, but on what it costs to do the audit, so therefore there is no implication of... as if he was doing it for the UK. So I think it is a very good deal. He is a very professional man and, therefore, we should be grateful at the fact that he is doing the audit in the way he has actually agreed with us.

1425 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, will the audit be tabled in Parliament?

1430 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that sort of audit is the sort of document that we would table in Parliament but I think it’s not something that we would pretend not to share with Members opposite. Rather, even if we don’t go through formal tabling, I think it is the sort of document that they should have access to, whether or not we decide it should be published.

My inclination, as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition will know, is that reports of that sort should be published. Unless there is a good reason why it should not be published, it will be, but even if it should not be published, it should certainly, in my view, be shared with Members opposite.

1435 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm if, once the audit has been conducted, then he will be in a position to tell us where the new fire station will be sited?

Hon. S E Linares: Well, they do go hand in hand because, depending on the outcome of the audit...
1440 The thing is that the audit should identify our needs – our future needs – and therefore that will help out for us to formulate and to prepare for the new fire station: so, yes.

1445 **Civil Contingencies and Departmental Press Officer**
Current status of post

Clerk: Question 355, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

1450 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Civil Contingencies tell us if the post for Civil Contingencies and Departmental Press Officer has been filled, how many people applied, and if this is a newly created post?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

1455 **Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr. Speaker, the post for Civil Contingencies and Departmental Press Officer has *not* been filled.

A total of six applications were received and interviews were carried out on 10th May 2012. The post *is* newly created.

1460 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, is this newly created post part of the restructure of the Civil Contingencies administrative structure, and if so, how has it been restructured?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr. Speaker, this post comes about as a result of, I believe, a long-standing request, or a long-standing proposal, by the previous Government's, and the current Government's, consultant on this
1465 issue, Mr. Edmonds, who I understand has long been suggesting that there was a need to have in place the ability, as part of the civil contingency issues, to communicate nationally and internationally in the event of a civil contingency. The new Government's own view is that this was an area that needed bolstering – so it is a combination of both of those factors.

1470 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, was this job advertised with the ETB?

Hon. S E Linares: The job must be advertised through the ETB. It is a legal requirement.

1475 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, is this the position where retired Lt. Colonel Stuart Green is being considered for and he is, or was, the MoD's Press Officer?

Hon. S E Linares: Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to say exactly the names of the six applicants. I don't think it is right, in Parliament, to say who the six applicants were at this stage.

1480 The answer has been that it has not been filled, so I think it should not be the Minister who states who is the person who is going to get it...

Hon. P R Caruana: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is aware that the *Gibraltar Chronicle* has commented publicly on one candidate but not the others so it is a rather peculiar state of affairs, I am sure he would agree.

1485 Mr. Speaker I just, if the hon. Member will allow me, just like to take up the Hon. the Chief Minister on something that he has said. As he knows, the Civil Contingency Committee is a creation of my administration

and, indeed, he may also be aware that it is one of those issues that we needed, to struggle with the United Kingdom and its representatives in Gibraltar, to obtain *local* governmental control over. It was one of the activities – emergency response – that they, in our view mistakenly, held the view belonged to the Convent, even though they did nothing about it, of course.

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Mr. Speaker, our experience, will the hon. Member agree to give some consideration to? It was done . . . the media aspect of civil contingencies was done by the Government's Media Officer, just as other aspects of the Civil Contingency Committee was done by people who had another full-time job, so the Government's Technical Department personnel, the Government's Health Department's personnel, the Government's Environmental Department's personnel – these guys all have full-time jobs, *and*, in the context of the civil contingency, adopt that expertise and deliver it through the Civil Contingency Committee in the context of its work.

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Would he consider two things; first of all, that there would not appear to be any particularly logical basis for ring-fencing the *media* function of the various civil contingency functions for needing *exclusive* resource; and, secondly, would he consider that if it is true that the successful candidate here is going to dedicate himself to civil contingency media work, and this is not a side door or even a back door to be moved, then, to a more meaningful media job in the Government, that there really is *insufficient media work* for such a person to do as a civil contingency media –

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I don't say this in any way other than just to share with the hon. Member my experience of this – with the best will in the world – that I am delighted they remain committed to the Civil Contingency Committee and I am delighted that it is their policy to increase its resources and to further develop its expertise and resources. But, frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would urge you to consider whether employing a dedicated media officer who, necessarily, will have practically nothing to do for much of the time, is not the first place to start in increasing its resources. Will he put my mind at rest that this will not result in some... order of time that he will, no doubt, ensure were decent, if it happens at all, for this successful candidate, whoever it might be, to move to other media pastures? In other words, this is not a side or back door to a Government media job or to a post for a Civil Contingency media job. Will he also consider that the successful applicant – if they do decide to proceed with this appointment – should be somebody who, as we always used to do when we employed non-Gibraltarians, were completely committed to working on this issue exclusively for the Government of Gibraltar and represent nobody else.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr. Speaker, I understand that not all the six applicants are foreign. (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*)

There are some local applicants –

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Hon. P R Caruana: It depends whether you treat British people as 'foreign'.

Hon. Chief Minister: Indeed, but there may be some there who are not British.

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Mr. Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will know that, in the time that he created the Civil Contingencies Committee, he was never criticized by the Opposition for having done so. The idea that in a *civil* – and that very word gives part of the game away – in a *civil* contingency, *automatically* issues of internal security should be engaged is one which makes absolutely no sense and, unless there are *clear* internal security issues engaged, then all matters in Gibraltar are managed by the Gibraltar Government, which is what the General Election results in. People choose a government in a General Election to run everything that is given to us under the constitution and that includes every civil contingency. If there are aspects of the civil contingency which have internal security connotations, in the same way that there are aspects of daily life which involve the Royal Gibraltar Police which do not come under the control of the elected Government, of course I accept that and I support the fact that a Committee was created for that purpose under the Gibraltar Government, under the new Constitution. So, Mr. Speaker, that he can take from me.

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Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will see from the *title* of the post that it is a 'Civil Contingencies *and* Departmental Press Officer' because I hope he agrees with me that we all wish that the person charged with civil contingencies' issues should not have a lot of work to do, other than training when that is necessary.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that if there is to be an increase in the civil contingencies compliment, then it needs to be in respect of being ready to deal with a contingency when it occurs, which will not be often. Therefore, we take the view, as well, that whoever is employed needs to be doing a meaningful job in respect of the rest of their time. Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, the job has a dual sense; I think he may know that,

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1545 since 9th December, there has been a restructuring of the office – what was called the Office of the Chief Minister. We take the view that the Office of the Chief Minister is the incumbent and that it is the Civil Service that provides the service to the Chief Minister... There has been an element of restructuring of the Media Office – of the back of the Media Office – in other words behind Clive Golt, and there may be a need to bolster that service on a day to day basis, not necessarily at No. 6 Convent Place but elsewhere in the wider Government.

So, those issues, which the hon. Gentleman has brought to my attention, I do consider and I am grateful for him having highlighted them.

1550 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr Speaker, in the past, hon. Members, when they were in Opposition, were critical of the Government when we appointed retired persons in receipt of a pension to publicly funded posts, which they took the view should be available to persons in a different stage of their economic life-cycle. It is not a view that, by the way, I entirely share. I think it is 'horses for courses'. It depends on the expertise involved, it depends on the availability of the expertise.

1555 I never shared the then Opposition – now Government's – view that it was *intrinsically* wrong to engage retired people, or people who were retiring from a post and to claw their expertise back, but certainly we used to take the view that it was subject to the over-riding principle that there was something that prevented somebody from being appointed who wanted a job and who was still engaged in that stage of the working life.

1560 Can I just ask the hon. Member to clarify for me – I am grateful to him for pointing out the reference to the Departmental Press Officer – could he point out whether this is a *sequitur* or a *non sequitur*: in other words, 'vacancy for Civil Contingencies and Departmental Press Officer', does that mean Press Officer for the Department in which Civil Contingencies lives, so that he is the Press Officer for the Department in its Civil Contingency and non-Civil Contingency functions, or is this 'departmental' in the plural sense, vacancy for Civil Contingencies *and* Press officer for all the Government Departments?

1565 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr. Speaker, I think there are two questions there and I'll take them in turn. The first, Mr. Speaker, is that he is right. We do not believe that people who are retired and who have a pension and who are therefore economically self-sufficient at that stage should be taking jobs away from

1570 people who are unemployed or who are looking to, in a younger stage in life, improve their lot. I agree with that position now, as much as I am in Government as I did when we were in Opposition making the point, but there are some instances where, and I think it is a question of degree between us, where if you are looking for *specific* sorts of expertise, there may not exist in younger people that expertise,

1575 But, Mr. Speaker, if you do, therefore, find yourself having to take somebody on who is retired, I do not think one should fall into one of two traps that the hon. Gentleman fell into, which I hope I and my Government will avoid. The first is appointing and the hon. Gentleman knows, and it is an issue of dispute between us that, in some instances, we believe people were appointed like *this*: they were told that they had the job because, politically, the hon. Gentleman took the decision that they should have it. We do not believe that should be the case and, certainly, what we do not, and will not do, is say that people cannot *apply* for a job to a board that then makes a recommendation.

1580 Mr. Speaker, if somebody were to be appointed who is a retired person, because that person has the necessary expertise and that expertise may not be available from others then, in *my* view, what must also be done is that we must find somebody who can be appointed with them, alongside them, to distil that expertise so that, at the end of what I hope would be a relatively short period of contracting – that example – there is a younger, hopefully always in our lexicon, Gibraltarian, person or Gibraltar-resident person who will have distilled that expertise and that can then take the job for the longer period. That is the first point and, Mr. Speaker, I told him, in relation to the second point, that there had been a restructuring of what is behind Clive Golt as the Chief Press Officer.

1590 Mr. Golt is the Press Officer to the *Government*, not just to the Office of the Chief Minister. But it is clear, and I think he will agree with me that it is clearly the case that the Office of the Chief Minister is the one that produces the *most* interaction with the press when there is not just a civil contingency but, for example, a Royal visit cancelled as a result of something happening on the ground –

1595 **Hon. P R Caruana:** ... [*Inaudible*] the case before Dr Cortes was elected into Government. I don't think that is the case any more! (*Laughter*)

Hon. Chief Minister: – but there are, in the Departments, also things going on which need to be communicated to the electorate, to the public and to the wider world.

1600 Therefore, what we are looking at doing here is to keeping some of the Press Office expertise, functions and resource available to the Chief Minister and No. 6 Convent Place, where the Deputy Chief Minister also happens now to be, and making available to the other Departments a co-ordinator for *their* PR purposes and their – I should not say PR – their communications purposes. So that is how we think that this could work.

Clerk: Question 356 –

1605 **Mr. Speaker:** Before we move to another topic, would this be a convenient moment for a short comfort break?

The House will recess, say, for 10 minutes maximum.

1610 *The House adjourned at 11.20 a.m. and resumed its sitting at 11.35 a.m.*

**Gibraltar Sports Authority Board
Details of meetings since Question 246 of 2012**

1615

Clerk: Answers to Questions continue.
Question 356, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1620 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Sports and Leisure provide details of dates when the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority Board have met since his answer to Question No. 246 of 2012?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

1625 **Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr. Speaker, the Gibraltar Sports Authority Board met on 4th April 2012. The next meeting is scheduled for 23rd May 2012.

1630 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and at that meeting did the Hon. Minister, as Chairman of the Board, have occasion to raise and discuss with them what he said in the March meeting that he had no problem with, and that was to consider whether these meetings might perhaps be held in public, or publish the minutes of said Board meetings?

1635 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, we did have a discussion on that issue and the Board was of the view that it should not be a public meeting, but that there could be elements of the deliberations of the Board that could become public. It could well become public because, through the website – the new website that the Sports and Leisure Authority are currently constructing...

1640 The website will have lots of information to do with the Board: they will have an independent website. It is nothing to do, really, with the question but I thought that, because all the other questions that the Shadow Minister is posing to me – which I am happy to answer – will be answered through the website. So this is one of the issues that will be highlighted in the website. Will be in the website.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and any inclination of dates by when this website might be operational?

1645 **Hon. S E Linares:** Unfortunately, I have not got dates but I can say that the Chief Executive has already identified somebody who is working with the staff there in order to build up the website, so should I say ‘imminent’, ‘soon’, ‘a couple of weeks’, ‘months’, hopefully? So it is coming soon.

1650 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Okay. I think, perhaps, that one might know the answer but, just for the sake of the record, will the Sports Authority then make it public once the website is fully operational and guide people as to how to tap in and access and so on?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, I hope so.

1655 Websites usually have a lot of links and lots of information on them and I am hoping that by the Sports and Leisure Authority themselves controlling the website, that all the information appertaining to sports and leisure and what is to do with the Bayside Complex will be in the website, so that *they* will decide what is in the website.

As a Minister, I will not have any input as to the information. I could have input by putting a foreword or some press releases but the control will be from the Sports and Leisure Authority.

1660

**Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council
Details of meetings since Question 243 of 2012**

1665 **Clerk:** Question 357, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Sports and Leisure provide details of dates when the Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council and / or any of its sub-committees has met since his answer to Question No. 243 of 2012?

1670

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

1675 **Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council has met on the following dates: Sub-committee meeting on 15th February 2012, carried on 16th February 2012; full Council meeting on 24th February 2012; Sub-committee again meeting on 28th March 2012; and the full Council meeting was on 9th May 2012.

1680 **Hon. E J Reyes:** And, likewise, Mr. Speaker, last time the Hon. Minister did say that he would even dare to propose himself, the public attendance at meetings and publication of minutes, and so on. Do we have any further updates on that issue?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, and I did actually propose it .

1685 The Council thought that we should not have public meetings, as such, for the simple reason that these are people that are selected by the sporting fraternities associations onto the Board, and that they were quite satisfied that information was filtering down. But as I have just answered to the previous Question, I asked them whether it would be feasible – because *I* wanted it to be more open and transparent – whether information can be put through the Sports and Leisure Authorities website. They acceded to that: they said that they had no problem with that, and that probably even minutes will be published on the Sports and Leisure Authority website.

1690 So I am quite happy that they feel comfortable at how we can have all these meetings more open, more transparent, so that the public can know exactly what has happened during these meetings – at least what in the general terms, rather than in the specifics of what everybody said in the meeting.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1695 I would record my gratitude to the Hon. Minister for having followed that one up and, likewise, I think I can accept his word that as soon as possible this will be up and running, and I concur with him; I don't think we have ever questioned, on either side of the House, the transparency of the meetings, but rather that people get the correct information because some information is disseminated in an after-meeting coffee or drink and then it becomes second- or third-hand information and sometimes people get a bit upset because they have not quite heard the full deliberations that have been carried out at the Advisory Council level.

1700 So, yes, he can count on my full support just to ensure that all sporting associations, whether they, for that particular year, hold a seat on the Advisory Council or not, so that they are as acquainted with deliberations and recommendations as much as possible.

Thank you.

1705 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr. Speaker; just to add that I thank the Shadow Minister for acknowledging that.

When I said about open and transparency I did not intend to mean open and transparency in a political sense, in any way. I think it is meant for the fraternity of sports, and I concur with him that there are, sometimes, many issues that come up and there is a lot of quarrels, fights, controversies with things that people said or not said.

1710

By doing this, I think it will avoid all these sometimes misrepresentations of what people say, or did not say, in meetings and all that.

So thank you.

1715

GFA application to join UEFA
Details of improvements required to existing football facilities

1720

Clerk: Question 358, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Minister for Sports and Leisure provide details of improvements which may be required to the existing football facilities in order to ensure that the Gibraltar Football Association meets its requirements in respect of the pending application for membership of the European Governing Body of the sport?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

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Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of options which are currently being examined by the Government and the Gibraltar Football Association, in conjunction with the requirements of UEFA, and in accordance with the advice that UEFA is providing. A reply to this Question will be provided once a decision on these options is taken.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes Mr. Speaker, I ask this Question because I know that we have quite good, high level of sporting facilities but yet membership of a particular governing body – and I can think of a sport other than football – sometimes have peculiar circumstances that require them to throw in additional things. And there is a fair amount of talk already happening amongst other sporting associations, feeling that the new sort of impetus and a more realistic pending application from the Football Association might mean that other sports would end up, perhaps, losing out on current existing facilities.

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It may be too early a stage for the Minister to be able to commit himself but can I at least get form him some acknowledgement that other sports would not lose out despite whatever additional facilities we may have to provide for the football fraternity.

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Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr. Speaker, he can get that assurance and I can assure the sporting fraternity that that will be the case, that they will not lose out in any of their facilities.

We are looking at *additional* facilities and therefore the operative word is 'additional'; that means that it will not affect what is there currently, and we are hoping that it would be even *better* for other sports, so it is a question of a balancing act, as to how far we go with one without affecting others and, for sure, this Government will try its best not to affect any other sporting facilities in whatever way that the hon. Member might think that we are taking away from one sport and giving to the other. That will not be the case.

1750

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

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I look forward to the hon. Member, even sometimes without waiting, perhaps, to even have to be prompted by me at a particular Question Time, if he does become aware of some developments that would be mutually beneficial to the whole sporting fraternity in Gibraltar, perhaps he can keep me posted through simple correspondence or e-mail so that we may both, together, work as partners in achieving this rightful application that I believe should carry unanimous support from this House in respect of the Football Association's application?

1760

Hon. S E Linares: Sure, I will do.

**Heritage Action Committee
Number of meetings met since Question 240 of 2012**

1765 **Clerk:** Question 359, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Heritage say how many times the Heritage Action Committee has met since his answer to Question No. 240 of 2012.

1770 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr. Speaker, as stated in supplementary answer to Question No. 240 of 2012 the Government agreed to meet the Committee once every three months. Therefore, fulfilling this commitment, the next meeting is scheduled for 31st May 2012.

1775 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, my copy of *Hansard* of what was answered in Supplementary to Question No. 240 was that the Minister said that the Heritage Action Committee were now given the opportunity of meeting bi-monthly. Is that the option, bi-monthly or quarterly?

1780 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr. Speaker, what happened was that, in the Heritage Action Committee itself, I put that I wanted it to be bi-monthly. They actually said that it was not necessary and a three month period was enough. I actually offered to say, 'Well, if after two or three meetings we need to have bi-monthly meetings, we will have it.'

1785 Basically, we will have it as many times as the Heritage Action Committee wants to have the meetings. I am not the one to state... They are the ones to say, we, usually, when the meeting is finished, we say 'Well, can we now identify another date?' Sometimes, people say 'Can we meet within two months?' So be it. As long as my diary is available, I will be there to meet them as often as they want.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

1790 So, in a nutshell, what we are saying is there should be a quarterly meeting but, depending on personal diaries and, in fact, depending perhaps on pending matters that sometimes need to be followed up, the frequency could even be greater than that. So we are establishing that, if anything, there's going to be an increase in meetings over a 12 month period rather than a decrease.

1795 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, sir.

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

1800 **Tree plantings since 1st January 2012
Details of costs, suppliers and tender processes**

Clerk: Question 381, the Hon. S M Figueras.

1805 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for the Environment provide this House with details of trees planted in Gibraltar since 1st January 2012, including details of costs, suppliers and tender processes relevant to their procurement?

1810 **Mr. Speaker:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and Environment (Hon. Dr J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the number of additional trees planted since 1st January 2012 is 103. This does not include any trees that may have been replaced by service providers if they have perished.

1815 I am handing over a list of trees that have been planted.

Answer to Question 381 of 2012

TREES PLANTED SINCE JANUARY 2012

2 ceiba insignis - Waterport flower bed
4 metrosideros - opposite Gasa between palms
1 tamarisk gallica – Entrance to Commonwealth Parade car park
1 metrosideros – planter outside Victoria Stadium, opposite Sundial
4 metrosideros - flower bed adjacent to public toilets opposite sundial
1 ficus benamina - small flower bed adjacent Ocean Village
6 metrosideros - Corral Road
18 cupressus sempervirens stricta - Centre reservation Waterport
4 quercus robur - lower Red Sands Estate
4 ficus nitida - Varyl Begg Estate
10 quercus ilex - gun embrasures Waterport
4 lagunaria trees - Laguna Estate
2 salix babylonica - Edinburgh Estate
3 robinia pseudoacacia - Edinburgh Estate
1 crataegus monogyna – triangular island opposite evacuation roundabout
11 tipuanas – Rosia Road opposite Jumpers
4 cupressus macrocarpa - Planters below steps outside St Bernard's Hospital
1 populus simonii – Saluting Battery
22 cupressus leylandi – Glacis Estate

Total 103 trees

The cost of supplying and planting the trees was £12888.20, Gibrat-Flora and Greenarc were the suppliers and carried out the planting. Quotes were sought for specific trees in specific areas.

1820 **Mr Speaker:** Whilst awaiting a Supplementary may I compliment whoever was responsible for the improved plants in the lobby of this building. Is it the Minister's Department?

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: I would assume it is so but I can assure you I have not been personally involved.

1825 **Mr Speaker:** Well, you can accept Departmental responsibility and therefore I compliment you.

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Thank you.

1830

**Proposed Commonwealth Park
Geotechnical surveys**

1835 **Clerk:** Question 382, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for the Environment confirm whether any geotechnical surveys have been conducted in the area of the proposed Commonwealth Park?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

1840 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, to date no geotechnical surveys have been conducted in the area of Commonwealth Parade car park. The design of the Commonwealth Park project is underway and any necessary geotechnical investigations will be undertaken at the appropriate time, as the design progresses.

1845 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister can just clarify for me, whether these geotechnical surveys are required before the design process to establish whether or not the project itself is viable, as planned or at all? Or whether they just form part of the project when it commences and there is absolute certainty that it will, indeed, commence.

1850 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, the design is now being tightened up and, depending on where the different items that are going to go in the park are located, the project will have to...

The technical survey will depend: if you are going to put a lake in one area, you need to take on a different kind of survey than if you have to put it in another – so this is part of the process and as and when a necessity for any particular type of survey is identified now that the design is going actually to be laid out, then the necessary investigations will be carried out.

1860 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, my line of enquiries is actually focused more on the provision of the two floors, or rather on the provision of approximately 700 or so parking spaces, which is also approximately double the current number of car parking spaces in the Commonwealth car park, and I am intrigued whether the Minister can shed any light on whether the Government has a better idea, in respect of its ability to provide these 700 or so parkings underneath the Commonwealth Park, as they did in the manifesto?

1865 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, we are considering alternative locations to that car park (*Laughter*) and, once the decision on that is taken, then we will be able to see whether, in fact, it is going to go under there and what surveys will then be required.

1870 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, it seems rather defeatist – in the absence of any suggestion to the contrary – that the Government has proceeded to consider alternative locations, without actually establishing whether it is appropriate, possible, feasible, for economic or other reasons, to locate the car park underneath the Commonwealth Park, as illustrated so very clearly in their colourful manifesto, and I would ask the Minister whether he has actually given any thought, or sought advice, in respect of locating the parking spaces beneath the Commonwealth Park?

1875 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Minister but also the Chief Minister have sought advice, both technical and financial, about where to put these car parking spaces, both before the Election and after, and I know that the hon. Gentleman likes to refer to our manifesto as ‘colourful’, which I will interpret as *brilliant*, but the manifesto is very clear about what happens in respect of those car parking spaces; in other words, they will be underground or, if that cannot be the case, they will be provided elsewhere.

1880 So, Mr. Speaker, if ‘cannot’ can mean that it is also economically more viable to provide that *number* of parking spaces – I am not trying to wriggle out of the number of parking spaces – then I am sure they will want to agree with us that that is a much better use of taxpayers’ money. So, as I have had cause to say to him in previous sessions of the House, Mr. Speaker, and as my hon. colleague, the Minister for the Environment, has had cause to say to him in previous sessions of the House, he need not fear, he will soon be able to walk along the highways and byways of a lush garden in the centre of our city to be known as Commonwealth Park and he will be able to park his seven hundred cars as a resident of Gibraltar for nothing in the parking provided either underground, or elsewhere, at the same time as the park is provided.

1890 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, I refer only to the colourful manifesto – and my interpretation is certainly different to that of the Hon. the Chief Minister – because it is very clear in what it says. It says that it will provide the Commonwealth car park... they will create an underground car parking facility, subject to a geotechnical survey.

My question is, therefore: the original question, indeed, sought to elicit from the Government whether that

1895 geotechnical survey was, indeed, carried out and whether it was as a result of that survey that the Government had taken the decision to look at alternatives. Have any geotechnical surveys been conducted to assess the feasibility of locating the underground parking where it was originally intended to be so?

1900 **Hon. Chief Minister:** It is just that assessing the feasibility – in other words, working out what it will cost – does not just depend on a geotechnical survey and, for that reason, it may not be necessary to get to the stage where a geotechnical survey is undertaken, if the Government is presented with a financially more viable – i.e. cheaper – option which is just, if not more attractive, for the parking, free of charge for residents, of 700 vehicles.

1905 I am sure what the hon. Gentleman is *not* saying is that we *have* to do the geotechnical survey at a cost to the taxpayer, if the Government has been presented with a *better* option to produce the 700 car parking spaces, on the terms provided for in the paragraph of the manifesto.

1910 **Hon. S M Figueras:** No, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that they *have* to carry out the geotechnical survey. I am merely alluding to the fact that the manifesto set out, really rather quite clearly, that the location of the underground car parking was a decision that they would make, subject to a geotechnical survey. That things have changed since, and that I accept entirely.

1915 However, these financially cheaper or more attractive options that the Hon. the Chief Minister refers to as having been suggested – or I am interpreting as having been suggested or proposed to Government – is the Hon. the Chief Minister in a position to articulate, perhaps, some of the details of any of the proposals?

1920 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am, but I will not, because we will make a statement when we have got to the end of that negotiating process that we are undertaking with those who have made the proposal to us. It will become very clear, if we can go down that road, why that is a more viable option, and it will become very clear, if we cannot go down that road, because we will be telling him that we are undertaking a geotechnical survey in order to provide the car parking underground.

1925 So I think, in the fullness of time, all of this detail will emerge but, at the moment, we are not in a position to say, other than a proposal has been made – that is what we are going with. But, rest assured, he will be able to park his 700 cars and he will be able to walk along Commonwealth Park before the Election!

1930 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could just help the hon. Member a little bit further away from a commitment to his own manifesto commitment. I know that there are qualifications in it but the qualifications were much less highlighted than the colour photographs, of which there were many!

1935 Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that the introduction of urban green areas and urban parks is not just an amenity – without getting bogged down in what that word exactly means – but both, not just as an amenity but also for urban environmental reasons, it is something that is very worthwhile and very welcome. We had projects to do it in several places, too.

1940 I just wonder whether, if the hon. Members are reconsidering, or considering, in the light of what they claim now to know and not to have known before, despite my telling them in the Election campaign – and being not fooled by them – that they would find precisely this... but, if they are reconsidering their location of the car park, I wonder whether they would be willing to reconsider the location?

1945 I know they are keen to sort of re-brand everything and make sure that everything looks made by the GSLP and not made by the GSD – but I wonder whether they would reconsider even relocating the *park*, on the grounds that, whilst the natural environmental issues would be the same in the proposed location or in the one that *we* had proposed, in terms of the urban aesthetic environment, in terms of its contribution to the number of places that it can be seen from and the frequency with which pedestrians traverse that area, would not the hon. Members be willing to consider that where *we* were going to put it is actually a location for a green park that would add considerably to the aesthetic value, in terms of it being visible from Line Wall Road, from a wide opening, the whole of the Boulevard, the whole of the Palm Tree Boulevard. People – it is a transit area – walk through that area to get from town to all the main new housing estates in the development, there, as opposed to putting it in the Commonwealth Car Park where, really, you can only see it if you are standing immediately above it over the wall and looking down or, if you are driving along Queensway, or if you *go* to it, all of which have some merit...

I am not saying they have no merit but, in terms of ticking as many boxes as possible, of all the *doubtless* benefits that an urban park would bring, if the hon. Members are reconsidering the location of the car parking

aspects of that project, would they, with an open mind, be willing to reconsider the location of the park element, too, I dare ask.

1950

Hon. Chief Minister: What a strange session of Parliament, Mr. Speaker (*Laughter*)

Hon. P R Caruana: Sorry?

1955

Hon. Chief Minister: What a strange session of Parliament, where we are working together to make the urban environment (*Interjection by Hon. P R Caruana*) better!

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will know – from his much more considerable than my experience as Chief Minister of Gibraltar – that Gibraltar is a bit of a jigsaw puzzle, and that moving one thing from one place to another involves other changes to contractual obligations that Government or others may have already acquired so, in preparing the manifesto when Opposition is not privy to all the contracts that the Government may or may not have entered into – some of them may have been publicly announced, but all the details of them may not have been publicly announced – so we knew that, in Commonwealth Park, there was no commitment from the Government to any developer for any building to be done...

1960

Okay, so the jigsaw puzzle that is Gibraltar, when one produces a manifesto from Opposition, is seen in a different light to the jigsaw puzzle that is Gibraltar when one produces a Government manifesto from Government – and we won't get into all the other issues that that might have alluded to. Now, it is not that we did not know something then which we should have known, it is that from Opposition we believed that was the best place for a park, for other reasons. They dove-tailed to something that he had announced, and which is also in our manifesto, which is that there should be an element of a park in the mid-town project, as it had been announced by the hon. Gentleman before there was a display of what their vision for that was in their manifesto: I mean, people will know that parties are running manifestos, preparation of manifestos, at the same time.

1965

Our manifesto says also –

1975

'Naval Ground Park: we will also consider the best ways to increase the green areas to be provided in the city centre in the area of the intended mid-town project. Our preference will also be for a green area to be maintained in the area nearest to the leisure centre with an underground car park to be free for local residents.'

1980

So, Mr. Speaker, I agree with him that having a green area in front of that Boulevard actually would be a very positive thing, and there is also manifesto view for the GSLP now, and the Liberals now, in Government, that that should be part of what is developed for our city in the wider mid-town project.

If he will just agree with me that if we deliver the mid-town project park part of it, and we deliver the Commonwealth Park part of it, then the leisure centre becomes the connecting part of two green urban parts of our city, almost which you could see through to from one side to another. I think, actually, you can, because of the configuration of the leisure centre, and that will make it seem an *even larger* green area and we would have even more urban value. So I agree with him that the area of what was Naval Ground Number One, as part of the mid-town project – however that may evolve – should be maintained for green because it is central and it is more visible, both from Queensway and from Line Wall Road.

1985

I hope that he agrees with me that there is great value, nonetheless, in also pursuing a different *sort* of green area park, not just green area, but park, at Commonwealth Park and that if, in the context of Gibraltar's continued social and economic development, which we cannot give up simply because we should have more parks, it is possible to ensure that we do have these two very attractive green areas, then our city will be a much better place as a result.

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1995

Hon. P R Caruana: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in large measure that is correct. Certainly, having two parks is better than having one.

I think, notwithstanding the apparent influence the Minister for the Environment has in his Government, nevertheless we need to keep Gibraltar's wide range of public interest and needs in mind, and it is not just a question of *gorging* ourselves on parks and satisfying, in great measure, our instinct as citizens to have as much green area as possible. One virtue of having a park in Commonwealth Parade is that it will discourage for all time any future Government from viewing that as a potential site for a building in proximity to the City wall. That is one virtue of building a park there.

2000

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, in terms of balancing, we do need to be careful that we do not allocate all

2005 of Gibraltar's open spaces to the same laudable green park agenda. For example, that site is used for the fair and it is one of the few sites that would be available to the Government in the context of a civil contingency. It would be one of the few sites available to the Government as a large open space for doing whatever needs doing. I don't profess now to have anything specifically in mind, but one could imagine that it is better for a community to have usable large open spaces near towns than not have large usable open spaces because we have given them all up to some other use.

2010 The only other large open space in Gibraltar that I think would fit this characteristic is the coach parks. It is not that we are eliminating the only one: there would still be the coach park. Whether the coach park is an appropriate venue for the fair is something for him to negotiate with the nearby residents – but, anyway, that is a matter for him. So that would be a virtue in *not* giving that particular site over to a park or perhaps not giving it *all* over to a site. One option may be to replicate a park the size of the one in the mid-town side, symmetrically the same size on the south of the leisure centre, leaving the rest of it available for something else or a playground.

2015 I am trying to address this in as non-partisan fashion as possible to ensure that the best urban use and the best balance of urban uses is decided, in accordance with a rational consideration of all factors, and does not become victim simply to a partisan manifesto... dominance battle.

2020

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for that.

2025 I am not going to assume that he is slowly and artfully luring me into a situation – that, we will provide as fabulous a park as we have proposed for Commonwealth Park somewhere else, only to see him or his successor in the estates just before the next General Election, saying that we failed. I am not going to assume *that*. I am going to assume that this is a *genuine* urban planning discussion that we're having about these issues and, let me just say to him that we are alive to that and that it is not a question of simply putting the parks first, it is a question of trying to get the right balance here.

2030 The MoD agreements that were done before 2011, when we were elected, also give rise to certain potential areas coming back around Naval Ground, in particular Rooke. He knows that our approach to GBC is not that GBC should go in there and, without prejudging this, I think he will agree with me that the current footprint of the buildings at Rooke is probably not the best modern use of that space, so that creates another potential issue there. And there are entities being moved just close to Rooke – I'm thinking of the Scouts and the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club – which will make available an area which is large in that zone, although there may, or may not, be already certain developments earmarked which may or may not go ahead, as he has heard me suggest before, in that area.

2035

I believe that Gibraltar's economic well-being is what is going to allow us to continue as we have always, I think, agreed across the floor of the House, to talk about our self-determination etc . . . That is fundamentally important to our existence as a people, much more so than whether, after 300 years of urban development, we can also have a park in the centre of our city. So we are alive to all of these issues, in particular where do you put a fair? Where do you put coaches etc? That is the jigsaw puzzle that we are now ourselves dealing with.

2040

He should rest assured that the plan for Commonwealth Park and the plan to continue to use part of mid-town for a park does not, in our view, compromise any of those very legitimate issues which he has raised for reasons, that, as we make the announcements, if those proposals which have been put to us do prosper, will become evident.

2045

Achieving a carbon neutral Gibraltar Measures and timescale proposed

2050

Clerk: Question 383, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2055 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, in the light of the Government's stated ambition, as set out in its 2011 Election manifesto, to deliver a carbon neutral Gibraltar, and despite its acknowledgement that it may not be able to deliver that in four years, can the Minister for the Environment provide details to the House of Gibraltar's current carbon footprint, the measures it considers necessary, and how long it considers it would take to achieve this objective?

2060 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): Mr. Speaker, it is the aim of this Government to achieve carbon neutrality although we are fully aware of the difficulties in doing so due to our current dependence on fossil fuels, both for our energy and transport needs, and also the current state of the renewable technology market. Nevertheless, the Government will remain fully committed to this ideal.

2065 At present, Gibraltar does not have the necessary reliable data to determine its carbon footprint. Work will be undertaken to try and obtain this data and establish this figure. Once that has been determined, Government will work to reduce that footprint, implementing the necessary measures which would include, but are not necessarily limited to; the introduction of clean renewable energy sources, the reduction of energy in transport by the creation of a sustainable traffic and management plan, a reduction in energy demand via the use of low-energy lighting, energy efficient building design, and the creation of greater awareness among the general public as to the need to reduce their own energy consumption via more informative feedback.

2070 Government is already actively working on these initiatives, such as by setting example in Government buildings and has engaged with both the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to take these principles forward. However, as very little work has been done on this in the past it is too soon to determine how long it will take to achieve carbon neutrality. Clearly, it is a long-term ambition. The actual timescales involved will depend upon a number of factors, including how successfully we are able to integrate a mix of renewable energy technologies, in number into our grid and how quickly the international market for renewable technologies and low emission vehicles develop. As these technologies become more advanced, Gibraltar will be better able to meet its goal. We would re-iterate, however, that this is not a pipe-dream but a very real ambition which is at the heart of this Government's environmental policy and ethos.

2075 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. the Minister for referring to it being a 'pipe-dream' and I would ask him-

2080 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** *Not* being a pipe-dream.

Hon. S M Figueras: – Yes, yes, indeed – but making reference to the fact of the 'pipe-dream' because of the exchange – yes indeed.

2085 Will the Minister agree that, along with the future jokes strategy, climate change is one of the signature additions to the manifesto of the GSLP at the last election and that it should certainly be prioritised, and (*Interjection*) does he consider that creating 700 parking spaces, where once there were 350, is consistent with that approach and its central environmental objective?

2090 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is assuming many things: firstly, that providing 700 parking spaces . . . necessarily means a net increase but, in any case, those 700 parking spaces *could*, in the fullness of time, be dedicated to hybrid or electric cars so it is something that one thing does not negate the other.

2095 **Hon. S M Figueras:** The manifesto refers to – sorry, Mr. Speaker – this ambition of carbon neutrality as a central environmental objective.

2100 On that basis, it is a matter of the utmost priority, surely, for the Government to identify that carbon footprint. I understand and take note of the comments that the Hon. Minister has made in that regard, in that it is a complex and complicated exercise, but I would press the Minister for an indication of how long, because I understand that the policy is not that you can achieve neutrality within four years – and I fully understand it, and certainly concur with that view – but establishing the carbon footprint is, and must be, the central priority if the objective is one of the central objectives of the Government.

2105 When is the Minister expecting we will see any development, or us getting anywhere nearer identifying the carbon footprint for Gibraltar?

2110 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** No, Mr. Speaker, he is incorrect.

Establishing the carbon footprint is *not* the priority. The priority is reducing the carbon footprint *no matter what it is*, and therefore Governments' policy will aim at the reduction while we try to establish it. We will be

2115 able to measure the reduction, and *that* is a priority regardless of the carbon footprint.

Hon. S M Figueras: But, certainly Mr. Speaker, in order to measure the reduction in that footprint you must surely establish a starting point; unless, of course, I am mistaken, in which case I am happy to bow to his expertise on the matter.

2120 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** When you replace a bulb which is highly demanding in energy with one that is less, you can measure the difference and hence measure *that* reduction without knowing how much the whole building is using. That is what I mean by that.

2125 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Yes, granted then, I accept that.
However, there are other situations in which carbon footprint may be increasing which you have thus far been unable to measure and that is simply the point I am making.

I would also ask that the Hon. Minister referred to the fact that the Government is already setting an example in respect of its own activities, and I would ask the Minister for some details on what those examples may be?

2130 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Yes, indeed. In fact a question later on refers to, I think, solar lighting so I will leave that till that.

2135 Government Departments are being encouraged to take all sorts of measures, including double sided printing and photocopying, in fact the Health Authority is doing that and is already showing savings. By making electronic equipment go on standby after half an hour instead of two hours, by automatically shutting down computers overnight, there is a whole list of items. If he were to have given me notice I would have produced the information but we are already taking firm steps and, as I said before, engaging with the private sector with very good response, encouraging them to follow suit.

2140 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, just one further point to raise. The Hon. Minister referred in his answer to the original question to the fact that certain technologies are not advanced enough yet.

2145 However, Mr. Speaker, there are many cities around the world who are leveraging this technology to great effect, particularly, you know, the use of hybrid vehicles and other alternative energy vehicles on Government fleets and encouraging and incentivizing the use by the general public of those vehicles. How advanced does this technology have to be before steps are taken to adopt or incentivize it?

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Mr. Speaker, three words; watch this space.

2150 **A Member:** Oh!

Hon. S M Figueras: Three words, Mr. Speaker – not helpful at all! (*Laughter*)

A Member: That's four!

2155

**Renewable energy strategies
EU funding sought since 9th December 2011**

2160 **Clerk:** Question 384, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2165 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for the Environment provide details to this House of any EU funding sought since 9th December 2011 in respect of renewable energy strategies, as referred to in its manifesto.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): Mr. Speaker, during my recent visit

2170 to the UK I discussed the subject with officials at the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). We are awaiting further information from them, but the matter is being looked into.

Hon. S M Figueras: So it is safe to say there are no complete answers to such requests?

2175 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** At the moment we are awaiting advice and information from this Department. We have not actually progressed on this, other than seek the necessary information so that we can do, hopefully, in the future.

2180 **Solar powered lighting
Opportunities identified by the Government**

Clerk: Question 385, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2185 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Have any opportunities for the use of solar powered lighting been identified by the Government and, if so, can the Minister for the Environment provide details of same?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2190 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, a pilot project has been identified which will involve installation of solar powered street lighting in the area of the Frontier loop.

Work is ongoing to identify the most appropriate type of solar fitting, bearing in mind both performance and aesthetic considerations. If successful, Government will then consider employing this technology elsewhere in Gibraltar.

2195

Hon. S M Figueras: I'm sorry. I'm not sure whether you mentioned it, but is there a timeline for the application of this pilot project?

2200 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Very soon. It is actually happening virtually as we speak so, hopefully... the items have to be acquired and installed, but it is very soon.

Hon. S M Figueras: Is the Minister able to provide the House with any information in respect of the saving it is expected to make?

2205 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Right, I would have needed notice...

I would need to know what is the consumption on the lighting on the Frontier loop, and as the solar lamps will consume zero, then that would be the saving. That information can be made available, if he requests it privately.

2210

**Alameda Botanical Gardens
Details of Government management arrangements with Wildlife (Gibraltar) Limited**

2215 **Clerk:** Question 386, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2220 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for the Environment provide details of the arrangements currently in place between the Government and Wildlife (Gibraltar) Limited in respect of the maintenance and management of the Alameda Botanical Gardens, specifically in relation to costs, term of agreement, and whether the Government plans to make any changes to this arrangement and, if so, what changes and when?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2225 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, Wildlife (Gibraltar) Limited holds an agreement since August 1991 for the running and maintenance of the Alameda Gardens.

2230 This agreement was re-negotiated with effect from 1st April 2006 and will expire on 30th March 2016. It consists of costs relating to personal emoluments, which are at scales agreed by the Government at the time, and increase each year in line with the pay review agreement of various other Government contractors, plus a budget set by Government relating to administration, the carrying out of maintenance and refurbishment, beautification and improvement works, as well as developing the Alameda as a botanic garden of value to the community and of International standing.

2235 These additional costs were set in the new contract at £64,500, £50,000 for water, and £50,000 for minor works. Additionally, specific projects agreed by Government had been funded from time to time under the Improvement and Development Fund.

2235 The total costs last financial year, 2011-12, were £760,950. The Government is not considering any changes in the short-term to the arrangement.

2240 **Barbary Macaque Management Plan
Past and future costs**

Clerk: Question 387, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2245 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for the Environment confirm the cost to Government of the management of the macaques over the last three years, whether the re-costing of the Barbary Macaque Management Plan has been carried out and, if so, how much the Plan is due to cost over and above the current expenditure?

2250 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2255 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, the cost for the last three years has been as follows: 2009-10, total expenditure £207,170; 2010-11, total expenditure £195,949; 2011-12, total expenditure £208,135.

2255 The Management Plan is being reviewed and a re-costing exercise will be carried out shortly.

2260 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, I asked the question because the last time this matter was raised in this House, the Plan was being reviewed, re-costed and updated. Some time has now passed since then and I was wondering whether, perhaps, the Minister could provide details of why the delay?

2260 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Certainly, I am happy to do so.

2265 Mr. Speaker, during my trip to the UK I held meetings with the Born Free Foundation and the International Primate Protection League. who are supporting our work and have agreed to become involved in developing the Management Plan.

2270 As I did mention as well, last time I think it was, Prof. Agustin Fuentes, who is a worldwide expert on macaques and their management will be coming. We now have a date: this is the end of next week. He is already looking at the proposals that were on the table and has given preliminary advice so I hope that, after next weeks' meeting, we will be able to formulate the Barbary Macaque Management Plan, cost it, and then we will be able to answer that question at a future meeting.

2275 **Complaints about ape behaviour
Streamlining the process**

Clerk: Question 388, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for the Environment confirm whether it has been able

2280 to streamline the process by which the public can file complaints and/or lodge their concern about ape behaviour including, but not limited to; threatening behaviour, ape loitering, defecation on motor vehicles and other personal property, as well as the general nervousness the presence of large numbers of wild apes in residential areas around Gibraltar are causing?

2285 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): Mr. Speaker, not yet.

2290 Calls continue to be received variously via the Police, the Department of the Environment and directly by the contractors. However, we are working on preparing a designated telephone line and e-mail address at which any environmentally related matter, including problems with the Barbary macaques, can be reported.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of growing concern for the community and it is only for that reason that I press the Minister to provide us with some more concrete information in respect of when this will happen, and an assurance from him that the reports that are being made today – of which I am certainly being made aware of personally, too – are being followed up and are being dealt with.

2295 But I think what is perhaps the most important issue that I would seek to elicit from the Minister in this Question is at what point is the community going to have the one point of contact so that they know that all relevant authorities will be receiving the information and, importantly, acting upon it?

2300 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, we have already improved the way in which action is taken on other environmental matters, such as litter accumulation and so on. We are in the process of setting up the litter committee and we have identified one particular officer who will be dealing with this in the future.

I think that the single contact point for environmentally related matters, including the Barbary macaques, will probably be available within *weeks*, and certainly not more than a *couple of months* maximum.

2305 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr. Speaker, I understand the predicament, and I understand that this is, again, another issue that perhaps cannot be resolved overnight. I understand that. But how difficult can it possibly be for the Minister and his Department to issue a statement saying: in respect of any incidents, the number to call is *this* or the e-mail to get in touch is this one? I mean, I really don't see the complexity.

2310 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what complexities may have been encountered by my predecessors over the last 16 years –

2315 **Hon. S M Figueras:** No, they are being influenced by you with the Barbary Management Plan, which is taking forever... (*Interjection*)

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: I thought you were talking about the telephone lines, (*Interjection*) not the Management Plan. That was the last question, Mr. Speaker – (*Interjection*)

2320 **Mr. Speaker:** Order. The Minister is answering the question.

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: The telephone line is imminent. It require people to be available to do it. It does not take a long time. It's going to happen very soon.

2325

**St. Bernard's Hospital
Ape bite incidents recorded over the last five months**

2330 **Clerk:** Question 389, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for the Environment confirm the number of ape bite incidents recorded over the last five months at St. Bernard's Hospital?

2335 **Clerk:** Twelve months?

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Mr. Speaker, was that 12 months. That is what my question says I can-

Hon. S M Figueras: I've got five months in –

2340 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** I can provide a breakdown.

Hon. S M Figueras: The original question was 12, actually, yes. I've just read the question-

2345 **Mr. Speaker:** Well, the original question was twelve-

Hon. S M Figueras: Yes.

2350 **Mr. Speaker:** – and I took the view that the ministerial responsibility dates back only five months, so suggested to-

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: I have the data from May 2011 to April 2012. Let me just answer what I've got.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

2355 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, the number of ape bites recorded over the last 12 months at St. Bernard's Hospital was 105, and I can break it down starting in May 2011 and taking each month in sequence; and the number of bites in May 2011 was ten, then in sequence, six, seventeen, twenty five, twenty, twelve, four, zero, and then January this year one, February one, March five and April this year four – making a total of 105.

2360

Hon. P R Caruana: Mr. Speaker can I rise on a point of order to which we attach considerable importance.

2365 I think – I beg the House's pardon, I was reading a document and not fully paying attention – but I thought I heard an exchange involving the Chair which suggested that the hon. Members of the House who now sit on the Government benches have ministerial responsibility *only* back to the date of their election into office.

I do not think that that can be right and I just do not want my silence... we can address it in a different matter, we do not have to address it today –

2370 **Mr. Speaker:** No, I appreciate that.

Hon. P R Caruana: – but I do not think that that can be right and I would not want my silence to be seen as somehow acquiescence in it. The hon. Members are not in this House exclusively with their political colours. They are the political face of a continuous, *uninterrupted* entity called the Government of Gibraltar, regardless of the political colour of the Government that occupies those posts.

2375

If what I thought I heard... if I have misheard, please correct me but –

Mr. Speaker: No, the hon. Member heard correctly.

2380 **Hon. P R Caruana:** If what I thought I'd heard were correct, then an Opposition could never ask in Parliament for information about the public affairs of Gibraltar that preceded their date in office, and there are Standing Orders saying that Members are accountable in this House for the 'public affairs of Gibraltar', not for the public affairs of Gibraltar for which they have political responsibility. So, certainly, I may ask them... I might ask them: 'Will the hon. Members tell me how much the Government collected in Income Tax in the year 2006'. They cannot say 'No' and not give you that information 'because I was not in office at that time'.

2385

They may not have *political* responsibility for the answer – in other words, they may not be politically criticisable for the answer – but they are still accountable in this House for the public affairs of Gibraltar, regardless of the dates that those public affairs relate to. That had always been my view of the matter.

2390 **Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I think the point is well taken; perhaps I took too narrow a view and just looked at 12 months – no, five months. I think the point is well taken: where there is information of a factual question, seeking information of a factual nature, as is this case, then there is no reason why the Minister cannot obtain and provide that information. If the question is aimed at policy issues, then... the point is well taken. *(Interjection)*

2395 **Mr. Speaker:** I'm probably going to be told otherwise now.

There was a brief conference with the Clerk.

2400 **Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I am informed that the discussion was held between the Clerk and the Hon. Mr. Figueras on this point and Mr. Figueras did put correctly the point made by the Leader of the Opposition, so the point is well taken now. It was well taken by the hon. Member and I regret my lapse on that.

2405 **Moroccan Red Crescent
What medical equipment donated**

Clerk: Question 390, the Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond.

2410 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health explain which equipment worth £75,000 was donated to the Red Crescent for use in Morocco?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2415 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, the information requested is contained in the attached schedule, so I must correct the hon. Member. It may have been a typographical error, in that the equipment was worth £750,000 and not £75,000.

Answer to Question No. 390 of 2012

Donation Equipment List:

Qt	Description	Manufacturer	Model	Serial No.
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 300i	CNC 4944350
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 100	CNC 1514008
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 100	CNC 4219724
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 100	CNC 4215833
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 200i	CNC 4221150
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 200i	CNC 1512449
1	ECG Machine	Hewlett Packard	Pagewriter 200i	CNC 4213070
1	Neonatal Incubator	Air Shields Vickers	141 MK2	140-3637
1	Foot & Hand Puva	Dixwell	Tecimex	9201001P
1	Oxygen Concentrators	Drager	Permax	SRSF-0130
1	Oxygen Concentrators	Drager	Permax	SRSF-0392
1	Oxygen Concentrators	Drager	Permax	SRSA-0204
1	Ultrasound Machine	Siemens	Sonoline Elegra	GEE 2554
1	Ultrasound Machine	Siemens	Sonoline Versa Pro	ANE 1100
1	Benchtop Sterilizer	Eschmann	Little Sister 3	LSK-4E 1278
1	Benchtop Sterilizer	Eschmann	Little Sister 3	LSH-1090-08
1	Benchtop Sterilizer	Eschmann	Vac 200	LSVC-9D-1011
1	External Cardiac Pacemaker	Medical Production	446	3720489
1	External Cardiac Pacemaker	Biotronik	EDP 30	14100514
1	Analyzer	Lifetech	Urolab Janus	000160001
1	Patient Monitors	S&W	Athena Diascope	11007365
1	Patient Monitors	S&W	Athena Diascope	12064021
1	Patient Monitors	S&W	Athena Diascope	10987532
1	Patient Monitors	S&W	Athena Diascope	10987549
1	Patient Monitors	S&W	Athena Diascope	10998663
1	Central Monitor	S&W	Athena 9050/PDU/CDU	10986288
1	Recorder	S&W	Athena 9741	1098256
1	Wax Bath	Enraf Nonius	3448	02031
1	ENT Workstation	Downs		08-02-010
1	Cassette Reader (Old Mammo)	Agfa	CR250	5156-100-2417
1	ID Tablet	Agfa		4265
1	Monitor	Barco		1889010258
1	PC	Dell		6596
1	Vital Signs Monitor	Critikon	8100	8101-145342
1	Vital Signs Monitor	Critikon	1846 SX	8272-H-1780
1	Syringe Pump	Graseby	MS2000	71/119/001
1	Electrosurgical Unit	Eschmann	TD311	3528
1	24 Hr ECG Ambulatory Recorder	Reynolds Medical		169536

Cont'd/.....

Continued Answer to Question No. 390 of 2012

1	ECG Event Recorder	Reynolds Medical	Tracker 2	19538D
1	Defibrillator	Hewlett Packard	Codemaster XL	3601A44376
1	Electrosurgical Unit	Downs	Diadon 450 PZ	085
1	Light Source	Downs	Light Source 150	086
1	Fetal Monitor	Oxford	Sonicaid Meridian 800	1768D
1	Ophthalmology Equipment	Surgical Design	Ocusystem	2835
1	Ophthalmology Equipment	Surgical Design	Ocutine	452
1	Mobile Lead Screen			
1	Mammography Suite	Philips	Mammo Diagnost	6883
2	Old St. Bernard's X-Ray Suite	Philips	Diagnost 76	
1	Telemetric Programmer	Teletronics	Optima-MP	0006411
1	Telemetric Programmer	Teletronics	5603	A0125583
1	Analyzer	Lifetech	Urolab Janus	000160001
1	Ophthalmology Equipment	Surgical Design	Ocusystem	2835
1	Ophthalmology Equipment	Surgical Design	Ocutine	452
1	X-Ray Processor	Agfa	Curix 60	9462/106/2816
1	Vacuum Pump	Eschmann	V12-S	2636
12	Patient Beds (Hydraulic)	Huntleigh Nesbit Evans	20050	
2	Labour Beds (Hydraulic)	Nesbit Evans	Birthright	
1	Egerton Patient Bed (Electric)	Egerton	Tilt Torn	E17131
3	Patient Transfer Trolley	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Patient Stretchers	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Transport Incubator Transporter	N/A	35-IT	N/A
8	X-Ray Viewers (Single)	Rad Tec	Single Film Viewer	
3	X-Ray Viewers (Double)	Rad Tec	Two Film Viewer	
2	X-Ray Viewers (Triple)	Rad Tec	Three Film Viewer	
2	X-Ray Viewers (Quads)	Rad Tec	Four Film Viewer	
1	Image Intensifier HRC 0857	Siemens	Siremobil 2000	1294
2	PCR Card Readers	Philips	AC 500	3665411/3665413

2420 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister is, of course, aware that the whole process of identifying the equipment, making administrative arrangements for it to be donated to Morocco and the Customs clearances was conducted by his predecessor, Mrs Del Agua.

2425 The only requirement remaining was for the Director of the Red Crescent to arrange the transportation of this equipment. An acknowledgement that this was a GSD initiative would have been welcomed. However Mr. Speaker, can the Minister advise if the equipment is fit for purpose and how many years of usage it has left in it.

2430 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, as I recall I acknowledged the fact that the process had been started by the previous administration during the course of an interview. Whether that was edited out by the media I do not know, but I am happy to acknowledge the fact that the process had started before. It needed a little bit of tweaking, in the sense that I had to sign the authority which I think may have been signed already by my predecessor, that is not an issue at all.

2435 As to the expected life, I am informed that it is a good number of years, particularly in the less delicate equipment, there were beds and so on that were donated, and I can say that the Moroccan communities have expressed to us gratitude for our contribution and there may be further contributions in the future.

**Public access defibrillators
Position, cost and how they will work**

2440 **Clerk:** Question 391, the Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health explain where the nine public access defibrillators will be placed in Gibraltar, how they will work, and how much they will cost?

2445 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): Mr. Speaker, yes.

2450 On average there are, by way of background, there are 20 cases of sudden cardiac arrest per year in Gibraltar. Over 90% of these can result in death. The chances of such arrest survival go up to 70% of surviving such a cardiac arrest – rather, go up to 70% if an automated external defibrillator is used within five minutes.

2455 Public access defibrillators are safe, effective and anyone can use them. The PADS, as they are called, programme aims to strategically place nine of these in nine public locations in Gibraltar in order to reduce the risk of death from sudden cardiac arrest in public places: these are the Air Terminal; the Coach Terminal; the Cruise Terminal; the Piazza; the ICC; the Tercentenary Sports Hall; Europa Point; St Michael's Cave; and Catalan Bay.

2460 These locations were chosen after extensive analysis of previous cardiac arrest records and take into account pedestrian footfall and distance from medical services. Defibrillator programmes have been well established and successful in both the UK and the United States and is backed by the British Heart Foundation. The model of defibrillator – Zoll – has been chosen for its extensive extended shelf life. Each PAD has a seven year warranty and the minimal maintenance – that is, battery checks and replacements – which will be carried out by the GHA Ambulance Service.

2465 The latest in defibrillation technology means that training is no longer a requirement for the lay person. Once switched on, the PAD will guide the user in simple and clear audio commands, and even coach the user on how to give cardio-pulmonary resuscitation without any prior experience. For information, the cost per unit is £1,295.

Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond: I am grateful for that, Mr. Speaker.
Can the Minister explain how the defibrillators will be protected against vandalism?

2470 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, they come in their own enclosed area, which you can obviously open. Vandalism is something that we can never guarantee will not happen but, clearly, if we don't have a defibrillator, it might not be vandalised, but we don't have it, whether it is vandalised or not. Therefore, this is a problem.

2475 Sadly, there is vandalism in Gibraltar. We hope that even at least a percentage of the vandals will realise that vandalising this could have terrible effects but, clearly, we have to hope that this does not happen. It is a possibility. I would like to think that it will not happen that much but, nevertheless, we think that it is worth having them, even though there might be a threat of vandalism.

2480 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, so what you are saying is perhaps public awareness on the importance of these units could, potentially, reduce vandalism.

Could the Minister outline the GHA's community awareness campaign for the safe use of the defibrillators and obviously to impress on the public: please do not vandalise these very vital pieces of equipment.

2485 **Hon. Dr. J.E. Cortes:** Of course, absolutely, thank you.

It is intended to have a public awareness campaign once these arrive and once these are set up. Obviously, that's the time to do it, and that will clearly happen.

2490

**UK advice services and training
Details of exploratory talks**

2495 **Clerk:** Question 392, the Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health explain, as per the Government's press release 158 of 7th March, after the Minister's visit to the UK, which advice services and what training the GHA is exploring for the UK to provide?

2500 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2505 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, during my visit to the South-West London Health Trust, to Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust and a number of other locations, advice was obtained on administrative issues, such as the organisation of open board meetings and the development of community-based medicine.

2510 Areas where training is a possibility include stroke care and health care administration, including the running of appointment systems. Possible services include several areas of specialist care, including spinal treatment, where there is a centre of excellence in Salisbury District Hospital, where the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre is located.

Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister now turning to UK experts to advise on how GHA services are to be run?

2515 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister will turn to whichever experts the Minister feels will contribute to developing the healthcare that Gibraltar needs and deserves.

2520 **Medical vacancy adverts
Reason for ten month appointments**

Clerk: Question 393, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

2525 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health explain why the vacancy adverts for that of a nurse practitioner, a health visitor level one nurse, a junior occupational health therapist, and that of physiotherapists senior II, state the contracts are only for a ten month period?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2530 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, the contracts were for a ten month period because that was the period for which the employees are required.

2535 **School of Health Studies
Student Nurse bursary concerns**

Clerk: Question 394, the Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond.

2540 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health tell us if he has met with the student nurses from the School of Health Studies and if their bursary concerns have been addressed?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2545 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have met with

the student nurses and, yes, the bursaries have been increased to match the similar student bursaries in the UK. It has now been increased from £450 to £650.

2550 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, will this new £650 a month salary be backdated to 1st February of this year, in line with the start of the new payment scale for all trainee workers under the Future Jobs Strategy?

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

2555

**Emergency ambulances and patient transfer vehicles
Number arrived or on order**

2560 **Clerk:** Question 395, the Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health tell us how many new emergency ambulances have arrived for use by the GHA, and whether any patients transfer vehicles have been ordered?

2565

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2570 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, first on the new emergency ambulances, the three ambulance vehicles were ordered in October and were delivered to the coachbuilders for conversion to ambulances in January 2012. We have been informed by the coachbuilder that the first vehicle should be ready in the week commencing 21st May – which I think is next week – and the other two by the end of May. We should expect all three in Gibraltar by mid June this year.

2575 Regarding the patient transfer vehicles, apart from the three emergency ambulances, there are, in fact, a further five vehicles in their ambulance fleet; two long distance emergency ambulances and three transport ambulance vehicles. The Government is replacing all these vehicles and has already started the process of tendering and selection of ambulances.

2580 We need to abide by EU timeframes and, because of our very specific requirements, our ambulances cannot be purchased ‘off the shelf’, even to the extent of having a dual system of emergency lights from blue to amber when ambulances have to cross the frontier. The specifications for the patient transport ambulances have been produced by a team from the ambulance service who, clearly, are the individuals that know best. These have been passed on to Procurement, in order that they can advertise the tender and I believe, Mr. Speaker, they have been advertised over the last few days or will be very, very imminently.

We are hopeful that these vehicles will be in service near the end of the year. (*Applause*)

2585 **Hon. Mrs I M. Ellul-Hammond:** Yes, we welcome the purchase of new patient transfer vehicles, Mr. Speaker. I believe the tender process is in today’s *Chronicle*, in fact, and it refers to five ‘economic operators’. Could the Minister please explain further what or who these five economic operators are?

2590 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** No, Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the advert. This was prepared by the Procurement Department and it is an expertise that they have.

I believe the wording... because this has to be an EU tender which will be advertised in the appropriate journal, the wording must, I assume, be set.

2595 I would need notice of that because it is not my area. I would be happy to supply that information privately but it is not an area that I would have expertise on.

IVF treatment

2600

Health clinics and health service providers expressing interest

Clerk: Question 396, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

2605

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health tell us how many health clinics or health service providers expressed interest and who will be providing the GHA with a full range of IVF treatments?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2610

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): Mr. Speaker, six health clinics have expressed an interest in the service.

A selection panel has been appointed to assess the submissions. It is the intention of the panel to shortlist providers and schedule presentations for the relevant clinicians. A recommendation report will be provided for approval before the contract is awarded.

2615

Once the tender process is complete, the successful tenderer will be announced in the media.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister say if these proposals are all from the United Kingdom, or from Spain or from other places within Europe?

2620

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Mr. Speaker, I as Minister am not directly involved in the selection process.

I am not a clinician and, therefore, it would not be appropriate but I believe there are... *I believe*, and this is just what I think I have gathered, that there are expressions of interest from Spain and from the United Kingdom. There are no facilities in Gibraltar that can provide this service, but I do not have the specific details: I have not been involved in the actual process.

2625

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, are there conditions a couple needs to fulfil in order to qualify for GHA-funded IVF treatment and, if so, what are these conditions?

2630

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Again, Mr. Speaker, this is... I would need notice. There are conditions: I think I mentioned them in another question previously.

There is a protocol that has been developed, based largely on the NHS protocol but, as that was not specifically asked, but again, once... It is just being tweaked at the moment, and that will be public knowledge because, obviously, couples will need to know what the protocols are.

2635

**Sexual health advisory service
Precursor to offering IVF treatment**

2640

Clerk: Question 397, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health tell us if the GHA will be providing a sexual health advisory service as a precursor to offering IVF treatment for GHA patients, or at least in tandem with the IVF service?

2645

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes): No, Mr. Speaker, sexual health services are separate.

2650

All potential IVF patients will be assessed by GHA gynaecologists following referral from their GPs.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister not aware that unprotected sex can lead to the contracting of sexually transmitted diseases that cause infertility later in a person's sexual life – thus

2655 requiring, potentially, IVF treatment to enable a pregnancy – for example, chlamydia, which remains silent in the body and causes infertility.

Does not the Minister agree that it makes sense to establish a sexual health advisory clinic alongside an IVF treatment programme?

2660 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, what I said was that they are separate, not that they are not justified or, indeed, desirable.

It is a separate exercise that we have to look at because a sexual health advisory service would not just be for couples considering IVF. Therefore, what I said was that it is separate, it is something that we *are* looking at as a separate exercise.

2665 Obviously, any advice that the gynaecologists provide to couples considering this treatment would involve reference to sexual health but that is not what the hon. Member is referring to, which is a separate sexual health advisory service which will have to follow a procedure and a process of its own, which we will be looking at.

2670 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Thank you for that.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm that you will be seriously considering the introduction of a *separate* sexual health advisory service for 16-year olds and older?

2675 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot allow the hon. Member, regardless of my long friendship with her, to dictate Government policy in this way.

I cannot go into specifics about age of 16 and so on. What I can say is that we *will* be looking at the possibility of providing a sexual health advisory service because it is something which I think is important for members of the community, regardless of their age, but I cannot hold myself to specific details in this exchange: you will forgive me for that.

2680

Primary Care Centre One month advance appointments and group system

2685 **Clerk:** Question 398, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

2690 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister for Health explain the new one month advance appointment system and the group system at the Primary Care Centre which will both be in place by 1st August 2012.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and the Environment.

2695 **Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr. J E Cortes):** Mr. Speaker, the new appointment system is simple and straightforward, although by the time I have finished reading this, it might not appear so! That is my addition, I'm afraid. However the implications and benefits may take a little longer to appreciate.

2700 The new appointment system changes from releasing clinics for advanced and pre-booked appointments for the entire next three months, as we currently do, to opening advanced appointments for the entirety of one month only. For example, every first working day of the month, the Primary Care Centre will release appointments for the following month. The on-the-day appointment slots available every day remain the same, therefore patients can still come in the morning or, preferably, ring the appointment telephone line and have the same chance of getting an on-the-day appointment for the doctor of their choice, as at present. However, the advance appointments are opened a month at a time and can only be booked from one month to the next.

2705 The advantages of this change are; first, patients can try to make an appointment for the month to see their GP and if none are available for that month they will only have to wait until the following month is released to see their own GP, as opposed to waiting three months if all the appointments were full.

Secondly, it should be an end to patients complaining that they cannot book an appointment to see their own GP until three months' time or that their GP is fully booked for three months – a common complaint –

2710 also an end to pre-booked appointments saturation towards the end of the quarter, which currently occurs with GPs with a larger number of regular patients. People book now for the end of three months' time and then, in three months, there are no appointments. Then, also, to patients pre-booking appointments 'just in case they need it', to ensure seeing their own GP... This often results in unnecessary consultations or no-shows and, finally, the 'did not attend' figures are expected to reduce as patients are more likely to remember an appointment if it is the following month, rather than three months later.

2715 On the GP group system, the procedure for patients requesting an appointment in respect of the GP group system is as follows: firstly, every patient is to be given an appointment with a GP that the patient is registered with; then, if there is no availability with this GP, the patient will be given an appointment with another GP in the same group. If a patient wishes to change to another GP group then, following the consultation, they would be requested to complete a 'Change of group' slip, obtained from the main counter and submit this to the clerk in the area of their choice. If there are no appointments available with that particular group, the patient will be offered an appointment with one of the other groups, dependant on availability.

2725 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, again, the Minister has only had to 'launch' a GSD initiative with already everything in place for the new GP Group Practice Scheme...

Can the Minister explain, though, if it would be possible for an individual to change doctors or groups after 1st August, or is this before 1st August, when the initiative starts?

2730 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, they can change groups whenever: this is current.

I would like to say that this initiative – in line with Government policy – was actually... this particular initiative was actually developed by the clinicians and the administrators within the Primary Care Centre and supported by the Government, but it was prepared by the professionals.

2735 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, how will the GHA ensure that the number of patients entitled in Gibraltar are equally distributed among the three GP groups, in order for one group not to be overloaded with patients?

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Mr. Speaker, with some difficulty because we are giving the patients choice.

2740 We are aware that there may be certain doctors who may, for whatever reason, be more popular than others and that could skew the distribution. We have to monitor how this goes and maybe we have to perhaps increase the size of one group or the other, but we certainly, at this stage, believe in giving the patient the freedom to select what GP they see, which I think is quite an important personal choice that people make.

2745 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, with reference to the advanced appointments, any policy that successfully reduces the number of missed appointments is most welcome but can you confirm, as from 1st August, all the appointment slots for September will be made available and could, potentially, be filled up in that day if enough people make the appointments, or will the telephone lines again open on 2nd August and again on the 3rd and so fill up for the 2nd and 3rd September of the next month, if you understand what I am

2750 –

Hon. Dr. J E Cortes: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the daily appointment slots which are currently reserved for daily appointments will be protected. I believe – and I am using recollection on whether we published this – that, transitionally, we may be reserving some advanced appointments in two week chunks until people get used to the system. The problem is that whereas, before, you could get the three months clogged up, now you could only get one month clogged up and there is always a chance, in a months' time, to get another appointment.

2755 I must say that the whole question of the appointments and the demand on the Primary Care Centre is currently being studied with a view to, perhaps, making some adjustments – but that is something for the future.

2760

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain that if someone needs a repeat prescription and is unable to secure an appointment within a month and that individual has run out of the medication and has no appointment slip; what would that patient do?

2765 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, that can be addressed by the Prescriptions Advisory Service where Mr. Guillem and his team work and he will deal with facilitating that if there is any person in that predicament.

2770 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr. Speaker, so the patient will not need an appointment in order to get a repeat prescription if he or she has run out of medication?

2775 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, it depends. We are reviewing the process for repeat prescriptions: it does depend on whether it is an emergency, if the repeat prescription is necessary in a weeks' time and there is an appointment tomorrow... But anybody who has absolutely got his or her back against a wall will have an avenue for that repeat prescription to be filled.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister be considering setting up a separate repeat prescription service which does not require taking up an appointment with a GP, as is the case in the United Kingdom?

2780 **Hon. Dr. J E Cortes:** Mr. Speaker, I probably do not have to... Well, I won't say I do not have to answer it, but this not an obvious corollary of the original question. We are looking at the repeat prescription service very seriously in order to make it more streamlined and more patient friendly, but I think that would have had to be the subject of a separate question to the one strictly on appointments.

2785 **Clerk:** Question 399 –

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr. Speaker we would like to adjourn.
I have the honour to move that the House do now adjourn until three o'clock.

2790 **Mr. Speaker:** Is that convenient to all the hon. Members? Adjournment until three o'clock this afternoon?

It was agreed.

Mr. Speaker: This House will adjourn until 3.00 p.m. this afternoon.

2795 *The House adjourned at 1.00 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 3.00 p.m.*