



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.00 p.m. – 7.25 p.m.

Gibraltar, Monday, 24th June 2013

The Gibraltar Parliament

5

The Parliament met at 3.00 p.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. A J Canepa GMH OBE *in the Chair*]

10

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

15

Appropriation Bill 2013 For Second Reading Debate continued

Clerk: Second Reading of the Appropriation Act 2013. Budget speeches continue.

20

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, this is my 15th Budget debate in this House and my second one as a Member of the Government.

25

The GSLP/Liberal Government has now been in office for about a year and a half. We were elected on a platform of change. Our pledge was to transform the way in which Gibraltar was governed and to change it for the better. This is what we have started to do.

In just 18 months, a very short period of time, we have given effect to a record number of manifesto commitments. We have therefore moved forward with a programme for Government at a very fast pace. Before I illustrate this point further, I want to expand for a few moments on other matters.

30

The first is that this year marks the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht. The House knows that this was a general peace settlement of the whole of Europe which followed the War of the Spanish Succession. The different treaties that were signed on different dates between the different warring nations are often recognised collectively as the origins of modern diplomacy, which gave birth to the concept of the balance of power.

35

It needs to be said that, outside Gibraltar, this is not a Treaty that is generally associated with Gibraltar because it impacted upon many different parts of Europe and each country or region is more concerned about the implications that it had for them.

The Government took a policy decision that 300 years of the Treaty of Utrecht was a historical event that was worth commemorating, but not necessarily something to celebrate. The House knows well that

40 the provisions of article 10 of the Treaty – the one that deals with Gibraltar – have been used by others as
an excuse to seek to deny or curtail the right to self-determination of the people of Gibraltar. We reject
this analysis, and those who take this view have not significantly been willing to test it in court to see
whether the provisions of a document that was signed 300 years ago can act as a bar to the living wishes
of the Gibraltarians today.

45 The Government will therefore commemorate the event in a number of ways. The first has been the
exhibition on Gibraltar and the Treaty of Utrecht, which has taken place in the lobby of the European
Parliament in Brussels. The opportunity was taken to promote Gibraltar and, at the same time, to promote
our position in Europe; to promote our people and our distinct identity; to promote our history and the
many facets of our economy. The week-long event, from which I returned on Friday, went very well and
50 it coincided with a number of follow-up meetings on various EU issues which affect Gibraltar.

On the actual 300th anniversary date of the Treaty – Saturday, 13th July – the Government is planning
a community event. This will include the setting up of a replica period printing press, which has already
arrived from the United Kingdom. This will be manned by specialist personnel in period costume and it
will run off copies of the Treaty of Utrecht. This activity will last for about 10 days and, for the most part,
55 it will be based in the Gibraltar Museum. A community event outside the Museum has been planned
around the printing press for this Saturday.

Mr Speaker, given the historical significance of the Treaty and its impact outside Gibraltar, a seminar
will take place after the summer, in October, to which different speakers from different parts of Europe
have been invited. The final list of panellists is currently being compiled. A similar event took place and
60 has been taking place throughout the year in the city of Utrecht itself.

In addition to these events, the House will know that there is now a set of stamps which have been
issued by the Government and the Philatelic Bureau to commemorate the Treaty of Utrecht. The
estimated funding for approval for Treaty events, Mr Speaker, can be found at Head 2(19) Treaty of
Utrecht Commemoration.

65 Mr Speaker, I said earlier that, in the time that has elapsed since we were elected, some of the changes
we have made are already manifest in many areas of life in Gibraltar. We have become so used to a new
way of doing things that we take the significance of these changes for granted. We forget what was there
before and the real impact of the transformations that have taken place.

70 We need look no further than this House. The Opposition now complain that they need more notice of
meetings; that they have childcare arrangements to make; that they have trips abroad to organise and
other personal matters of a diary nature to attend to. I understand that, Mr Speaker – I understand it
perfectly – because for nearly 16 years I lived it. It happened to us. This uncertainty affected not only
Members of the Opposition but even Members of the then Government, former Speakers, and the staff of
the House itself.

75 Indeed, my own election to this House in 1999 was a baptism of fire in more ways than one.
Parliament met until two o'clock in the morning during at least two meetings that I can recall – there may
have been more. Several meetings went past 11 o'clock at night and many more into the late evening. I
learnt very early, Mr Speaker, not to make plans when Parliament had been called.

80 This is why I said earlier that it is very easy to take for granted the improvements that the change of
Government has brought about. There is now an element of certainty in knowing that Parliament will
meet around Chief Minister's Questions around the third Thursday of the month. There was nothing
remotely like this before. There are sometimes pressing diary reasons why the House may have to meet
before or after, but there can be no doubt that this is a vast improvement on the system that we inherited.

85 In a very short period of time, Mr Speaker, the Government has revolutionised the way in which the
House does business through the increased frequency of meetings. This has happened, as we always
argued, without the need for a select committee and simply because the new Government had the political
will to make it happen.

I still remember, Mr Speaker, asking Questions in September of one particular year about events
which may have happened in March or April. The present system allows the Government to be
90 questioned in a regular way when issues are relevant. Again, this has never happened before. It is a
reform that cannot be taken for granted.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition needs to take care when they are critical for the sake of being critical
because it shows. They complain that Government does not answer Questions. The Government answers
all the Questions that they ask. They might not like or agree with the answer; that is a different matter.

95 This Government has published more statistical information online, automatically and without being
asked, than any previous Government in the history of Gibraltar. The Government has made provision for
letters to be answered in a reasonable period of time. When they were in office, it was not uncommon for
weeks, months and even years to go by without an answer. It is therefore a nonsense for the Opposition to
criticise the record of transparency and accountability of the present administration.

100 This Government has done more to promote transparency, accountability and democracy in 18 months than they did when they had the chance over nearly 16 years in office. I am not saying they did not do *anything*; I am saying we have carried out more far-reaching reforms in less time.

105 The GSLP / Liberal Government have taken concrete steps in accordance with the policies spelt out in our manifesto. There is more to come: a Freedom of Information Act has now been drafted; a Referendum Act, designed to give statutory backing to any referenda organised in Gibraltar, is also in the pipeline; a Civil Partnerships Act is now entering the final phase of consultation.

The claims made by the Opposition are absurd in the context of what we have done so far and what we have pledged to do in the rest of this term of office.

110 Mr Speaker, returning to Parliament, the increased frequency of meetings has worked very well. There have been 14 meetings of Parliament for Questions since we were elected. The practice in the recent past was for three meetings after the new Constitution made this a minimum; before that, there were two meetings for Questions in a year; and in 2003 there was only one. Therefore, we have already had more meetings in 18 months than would have been the case under them in the full four years of an electoral term.

115 Mr Speaker, the House knows that more meetings is only one aspect to a series of improvements that we have carried out to the workings of this Chamber. *Hansard* is now produced in a few weeks and not over many months. A timetable is now published to provide a rough indication of who will be answering Questions and at what time. Parliament now enjoys a dedicated website which is updated by the staff of the House. Members of the House, the staff and the media have access to Wi-Fi in the Chamber.

120 The most visible hallmark of the transformation that has taken place is the overhaul and refurbishment of this Chamber after many years of decay and deterioration. This Government took a policy decision to prioritise the reform of Parliament and also to prioritise its physical refurbishment. There is a second phase of refurbishment, which is still to come, which is currently being discussed and which hon. Members will have an opportunity to comment upon when the time comes. The Government has already explained this will include provision for disabled access.

125 These physical changes are important as well. They have come with an integrated digital sound recording and camera system which has allowed for the proceedings of this House to be televised. This is a most important effort to take Parliament into people's homes since the decision was taken to broadcast proceedings over the radio many decades ago. It is yet another reflection of the policy of openness and transparency which is at the centre of the way in which the Government operates, and it is a credit to our policies that we are the ones who have made it happen.

130 Mr Speaker, we promised more meetings and we have delivered more meetings; we promised more resources and we have delivered more resources; we promised new technology and we have delivered new technology.

135 Mr Speaker, the Government has, in just 18 months in office, given effect to over 200 manifesto commitments. This Budget will give effect to, or set the ball rolling on some more.

140 It is true that some of these have simply been a case of honouring pledges made to constituents by the previous Administration. However, many more have required administrative action, others have required legislative action, and most of them have required the provision of funding to ensure that they get underway.

145 Tenders have been issued for housing projects in the Aerial Farm site, in the Europort site and the Coach Park site. The first two have already closed and awards are about to be made very soon. This housing stems from the manifesto commitment to rehouse everyone on the waiting list on 9th December 2011.

The process is underway for the provision of a national theatre on the site of the old Queens Cinema. The small boats marina is already at an advanced stage of preparation. New schools have been announced. Sandy Bay will be saved from the elements. Our beaches are looking better than ever.

150 Mr Speaker, it has taken some time for the Government to give effect to a number of its more substantial manifesto commitments, both in terms of works and in terms of funding. In a sense, it has taken longer than we would have liked. I know that many of us are impatient and cannot wait for the implementation of policies to make their way from the manifesto to the Cabinet, to the Administration and to the physical work on the ground. The reality is that people can now see that this is happening and that the Government is moving, and we are doing this because we want to make Gibraltar a better place.

155 However, Mr Speaker, we are not infallible. We will get some things right but there will be other things that we could have done better. Neither do we claim to know it all. This is why we try to widen the circle of consultation and information that we put into the public domain. However, even after the detailed consultation, there will still people who will agree with a particular project and with its location, and there will be others who will disagree. We live in a democracy, after all.

160 Before moving on, I now take the opportunity to thank the Clerk and the staff of the Parliament for their enthusiasm in pushing through the Government's reform agenda and for their invaluable assistance in making the reforms that we have implemented such a success. (*Applause*)

165 Mr Speaker, one of the consultees that is now heard in relation to Government projects is the Development and Planning Commission (DPC). This was not the case under the previous Administration. The Government took the policy decision to place its projects before the Commission for guidance and advice only at this stage. The full plans and applications relating to Government projects are already placed online on the Government website. This allows the general public to be kept fully informed and up to date on such developments. It is also a prelude to the commitment of the Government to place the entire planning process online. The work to make this a reality will continue during the current financial year.

170 The Government has already said that the presentation of its projects to the DPC will be given statutory effect in the new Town Planning Act, which is currently at an advanced stage of preparation. However, it is important to emphasise that, even with the existing system, the Commission has been able to make its views known to the Government and the Government has listened and acted on those views. The two most significant examples of this are the decision not to proceed with an additional floor to Moorish Castle and Laguna estates, and also the decision not to proceed with the scale of the reclamation of Marina Bay, which was linked to the *Sunborn* project. It is therefore important to stress that even though Government projects are submitted for guidance and advice, the Government has often acted on the recommendations that have been made. The system has therefore worked very well.

180 The reality is that it has been a huge challenge to organise a public administration in such a way that every corner of the Government machinery is aware that their own projects should now go to the DPC, simply because the system was not used to proceeding in this way. The Chief Secretary has written to all Government Departments, Agencies, Authorities and Companies to officially inform them that the policy of the new Government is that its projects should go before the DPC unless there are serious issues of public safety, urgency or national security at stake.

185 Mr Speaker, the resources of the Town Planning and Building Control Department have been increased. This has come about through the supply of additional clerical support staff and the recruitment of two assistant Town Planners. The latter are both Gibraltarian graduates. Outside the DPC, the two Town Planners are now consulted about Government projects at a much earlier stage when their opinions can be expressed and considered sooner. They have been involved, for example, in the team that was established to consider and evaluate the Rosia Bay expressions of interest and in other proposals made to the Government when these are still at an embryonic stage of concept design. It will be recalled that the Department and its professional staff was totally sidelined by the previous administration.

190 Mr Speaker, the Opposition continue to be critical of the planning policy of the Government, even though their own policy remains, first, to revert to the closed and opaque planning process that existed in the past, and secondly that their Government projects would not go to the DPC at all. I am afraid this gives no credibility to anything that they may have to say on the subject.

200 There have been 20 meetings of the DPC since this Government took office; and all of them, except the first purely organisational one, have taken place in public. The feedback that the Government has had on these meetings from applicants, objectors, the media and others is very positive indeed. It is difficult to envisage that all this used to happen in secret, behind closed doors in a boardroom in Europort, less than two years ago.

205 It has proved very useful for the Commission to have architects and project managers present in its meetings when considering an application. This means that any query or issue can be cleared up on the spot. Indeed, at the last DPC meeting there was another incident which again drove home the value of having meetings in public. An application was being considered for the replacement of slate roof tiles with non-original tiles of a similar kind. The Commission was not clear how the new tiles would look from photographs or designs. The issue was resolved by sending the applicant home for a tile while the meeting continued. When the applicant returned with the tile, it was considered and approved. The fact that the meeting was public allowed this to be resolved in about an hour.

210 Mr Speaker, the Members opposite often urge the Government to be even more transparent and even more accountable. Their arguments simply do not wash when placed against a background of the way in which they conducted themselves in office. These reforms, or other reforms to Parliament and to the planning process, could have been carried out by the hon. Members when they were in Government. They had 16 years in which to do this. All they want to do now is turn the clock back. They have no legitimacy to criticise what we have done.

215 Mr Speaker, there have been over 880 applications considered by the DPC in public since this Government took office. It is significant to note that 92 of them have been submitted by the Government itself. The Building Control Division processed a record number of applications for building control approval during the course of 2012, taking this to a total of 383. This also reflects a record number of approval notices issued last year, which totalled 368, and a record in the number of certificates of fitness issued, which totalled 177.

The Town Planning and Building Control Department is at Head 12 in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, with Parliament being asked to approve an estimated expenditure of £1,074,000 for this financial year.

225 I would like to thank the staff of the Department for their support in implementation of the Government's manifesto commitments. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend and Colleague, Dr Cortes, and all the other members of the Commission who have helped to make the new system work.

230 Mr Speaker, I will now touch briefly on some land issues. I have discovered in the year that being in charge of lands is like supervising the construction of a giant jigsaw puzzle where the pieces do not always fit. It is inevitable that, in a country of our size, something that happens in one part of Gibraltar has a knock-on effect on many others, or indeed that plans for development are held back pending something else happening first somewhere else.

235 The root cause of the problem is simple: there is too much demand for the land that is available. There is demand for offices, for stores, for workshops, for plots, for yards; in short, for almost every conceivable land use. The largest plots available to the Government have already been earmarked for housing. This is the number-one priority.

240 Mr Speaker in relation to MOD lands, the I&DF shows that a total of £10.6 million has been received from the sale by tender of former MOD properties. This is shown in the forecast outturn of Head 102. It is not the final amount, because some sales have been agreed but not completed.

The House will know that, under the Lands Deal of July 2011, the Government is expected to raise £66 million from the sale of these and other properties in order to finance the reprovisioning of the Ministry of Defence elsewhere.

245 The sale of MOD properties has drawn into sharp focus the difficulty encountered by a number of prospective purchasers in obtaining mortgages. This continues to be a matter of concern to the Government. The Government is aware that one such person who wanted to buy in Buena Vista went to see nine different lending institutions. These were both banks and building societies. Two of them have not yet got back to him; two told him they did not offer mortgages; three said their quota was already full up; one said they did not offer mortgages for Buena Vista; and one offered a 50% loan to value only for private customers with £150,000 invested with them beforehand. It is interesting to note that two of the lending institutions informed him that their quotas had been full since December 2012.

250 Mr Speaker, in this context, we appear to have lending institutions that do not want to lend. The Government takes a very serious view of this, given the number of MOD and other properties that remain to be put on the market. There have been a number of instances where the sale of properties have been delayed or where they have fallen through altogether. This is something that needs to be addressed.

255 The Government, Mr Speaker, has so far put out 46 ex-MOD residential units to tender. This comprised 13 units at St Christopher's Court, three in Cheshire House, 13 at Buena Vista, eight at Carter House, and 12 units in Currey and Pelham Houses. The properties were allocated to the highest bidders in all cases. The two large properties in Europa Point – Freemantle House and Napier House – went out to tender, but no bids were received. These are now being held back pending the development of the stadium and studio projects in Europa Point.

260 Mr Speaker, the Government has completed all of the major demolition works needed to allow for construction work to commence in relation to the reprovisioning element of the Lands Deal. We have further refined the MOD requirements for the reprovisioning of certain facilities, and this has allowed us to release a tender for the appointment of designers for the design of all such relocations. In addition, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to some of the properties returned from the MOD to get them into a condition where they could be put out to tender in the first place. This includes, in the main, connection of GOG utilities and meters as well as other essential work to provide to the worst properties in order to bring these up to a reasonable standard.

270 Mr Speaker, the long-term aim of the Government is to renew the Upper Town. One way to do this is to identify empty properties that we own and put them out to tender for redevelopment. The House knows that the Government is in discussions with the successful tenderer for Police Barracks in order to determine how to best take this forward.

275 Mr Speaker, various properties in the Upper Town have also been put out to tender over the last 12 months. There has been a good level of interest in these properties. The tenders for the units in Road to the Lines, Ansaldo's Passage, Richardson's Passage and Chicardo's Passage have raised nearly £¼ million in revenue in total and will also result in the return of the Government flats. The new owners will now redevelop these properties and give new life to the area. This fits in with the project to improve access to a part of the Upper Town through the outdoor escalator in Engineer Lane. It fits in with the policies for urban renewal and it also fits in with the recently announced plans for a first school, a middle school and sports facility on the site of the old St Bernard's. The Government is presently engaged in identifying other suitable properties that can be put out to tender in order to continue with this project.

280 I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to thank the management and staff at Land Property Services Ltd and the Lands Office in No. 6 Convent Place for their assistance over the year.

285 I move on now, Mr Speaker, to my responsibilities for civil aviation. I want to start by saying that the
Government welcomes the position taken by the UK in relation to the inclusion of Gibraltar Airport in the
new civil aviation measures. This was expressed at the new Aviation Policy Consultative Conference held
at the Department of Transport in London last month. The forum included the UK Government, the
290 Governments of the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. The Minister of State for Transport,
Simon Burns MP, declared that the continuation of Gibraltar exclusion clauses in future EU aviation
legislation was a red-line issue for the UK. This is in line with public statements that have been made
already, most recently by the Secretary of State for Transport, Stephen Hammond MP, in a written
statement to Parliament last week.

295 The Government took up EU aviation issues with the respective Director General during our visit to
Brussels in March. I was able to follow up some of these issues during a further visit to Brussels last
week.

The Aviation Conference gave the opportunity for the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies
to be briefed on current UK thinking on a number of aviation-related issues and also allowed the concerns
of those territories to be raised directly with the UK Government.

300 Mr Speaker, in the three years since European Aviation Security Regulations became directly
applicable to Gibraltar Airport – in particular, since a move of departures from the old terminal to the new
one – an enormous amount of work has been undertaken to ensure that the requirements of European
regulations are now being met. The improvement in standards achieved at the Airport has been
consistently commented on in post-inspection reports. The move to the new terminal entailed a complete
305 revision of the security procedures and necessitated the aviation security programme to be redrafted. The
success of the move, and of subsequent operations, speaks highly of the dedication of the Borders and
Coastguard Agency Officers in implementing the revised programme.

The decision last year to employ a dedicated Training Officer for the BCA and a Quality Control
Officer for Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd has been fully vindicated. These officers have been fundamental in
ensuring that the new procedures required by the new premises were understood by all staff prior to them
310 operating in the new terminal. In addition, since the move, they have reviewed the procedures employed
and have suggested a number of amendments that have been incorporated into working practices.

315 However, the move to the new terminal has brought with it increased demands on the security staff
through the introduction of new dedicated facilities for staff search, cargo and general aviation. In
addition, the terminal offers an increased number of screening lines to search passengers. To facilitate the
use of these, the Government has recognised the need to employ additional staff and has recently started
training a total of 14 new Borders Agency officers. These officers, the majority of whom are Gibraltarian,
have undergone initial training and are now undertaking on-the-job training. They will become
operational in time to meet the bulk of the summer schedule.

320 The recruitment of new personnel will also allow the Agency to create an assistant Training Officer
position to help teach the annual Immigration and Security Syllabuses. Similarly, the Agency will
increase the number of Duty Managers to help them better provide 24-hour coverage for the operations
they oversee in Gibraltar.

325 Finally, Mr Speaker, during the year, the Director of Civil Aviation arranged for a Memorandum of
Understanding to be signed between the RGP and the UK Air Accident Branch, which effectively sets out
the division of responsibilities between the two organisations for investigating air accidents in Gibraltar.

Effective bird management throughout Gibraltar, and especially at the Airport by the Airfield Bird
Management Team, saw only three bird strikes and one near miss reported during 2012. None of the bird
strikes resulted in significant damage to the aircraft and all were found fit to fly following inspection by
330 an aircraft engineer.

Finally, Mr Speaker, improved procedures and ground markings have been introduced at the exit on
the civil apron to prevent runway incursions by aircraft inadvertently entering the runway after passing
the published holding points prior to having received permission to do so from ATC.

335 Mr Speaker, I move on now to the new air terminal. Departures were transferred on 26th September
2012 and all operations have been handled successfully in the new terminal ever since. This has only been
possible thanks to the efforts of all the persons concerned, who have done and continue to do a
considerable amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

340 The terminal continues to be operated and maintained by a combination of SLAs and in-house staff.
The budgeted cost for SLAs is £3 million for the financial year 2013-14. This includes all the different
electrical, mechanical and IT systems and the ground-handling and cleaning contracts. Work continues to
bring operating costs down to a minimum, including the installation of extra lighting controls and the
constant monitoring of all heating, ventilation and cooling systems to ensure that savings are made on
power consumption.

There has, Mr Speaker, also been a considerable amount of work done by the air terminal IT staff and
the Government's IT Department with a view to configuring the various IT systems to meet operational

345 requirements. This has included purchasing extra equipment and spares to the value of £56,000 that were not included in the original contract.

The Government continues to actively try and attract business opportunities to the terminal. In this connection, three companies have expressed an interest in occupying the seven remaining retail units in departures and Government is now considering these applications.

350 Mr Speaker, the next phase involves completing the migration of all services and entities out of the old terminal to allow for its demolition and building covered walkways, both landside and airside, which the hon. Member to my right is dealing with, to offer some cover from the elements for airport users.

355 Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity to thank the Director of Civil Aviation and the Air Terminal Director and all the management and staff of the different agencies and companies involved in aviation matters.

I now finally turn to Gibtelecom. Hon. Members are no doubt aware of the theft of around £690,000 committed over the last nine years. This is the subject of a criminal investigation by the RGP. In addition, the company's Chief Executive has commissioned an in-depth forensic audit by the external auditor which, once completed, will be considered by the board. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to go into more detail or comment further at this time, and I trust the hon. Members opposite will understand this. However, I can pass on the company's assurance that, while Gibtelecom as an entity has suffered a loss, none of the business customers, suppliers or partners have been disadvantaged as a result of the theft.

360 Setting this aside, it has been business as usual with the company keeping pace with demanding emerging technologies together with competitive pressures. Not only has the company retained its position as the leading communications provider in Gibraltar, but it is making great strides in growing its new overseas business as a global carrier as well as substantial data centre operations in Gibraltar.

370 Overall business turnover increased year on year. Steady growth in the mobile, internet and business enterprise services has given the company a solid foundation on which to develop and continue to invest in infrastructure for the future. Over the last decade, the company has invested some 25% of its revenue in technology and infrastructure. The roll-out of the company's next generation network is now well underway with the deployment of VD SL2 technology and the installation of active street cabinets around Gibraltar. To blend in with the surroundings, Gibtelecom have been working with Government planners to smarten up these cabinets, widening their use to additionally provide tourist and heritage information in places.

375 Mr Speaker, as I reported in my speech last year, the company's substantial project to replace and upgrade its existing computerised system for network records, customer services and billing is on course to be completed in the second half of this year. The European / India Gateway submarine cable activated last year continues to provide Gibtelecom with route diversification and facilitates enhanced direct connectivity worldwide. Gibtelecom's agreement with Vodaphone (South Africa), part of the Vodaphone Group, that we reported on last year has now been completed with other important international deals with communications companies headquartered in Australia, London, Monaco, Singapore and the USA. The partnership with Monaco Telecom is providing Gibtelecom with communications capacity to access the European markets from Monaco to France, thereby helping to further establish Gibraltar as a truly international communications hub.

385 Mr Speaker, in order to better place the company to meet the challenges of developing technology ahead and growing customer expectations, Gibtelecom continues to invest in infrastructure and in people. It is only by taking this holistic approach that the company will be able to satisfy the needs of its various stakeholders and maintain its commitment to provide a reliable and important service to the local community and for Gibraltar's economy as a whole.

390 Mr Speaker, in conclusion now, there is no doubt that Gibraltar has changed much in 18 months and that it has changed for the better.

The Opposition will continue to criticise everything that we have done. They will be critical even if they used to do the same in office. They will be critical even if what is there now is manifestly better than what was there before. This is what everyone expects from them – an obsessive nit-picking criticism of everything that we do. They should remember we were elected to implement our manifesto and not to implement theirs.

400 The Government are confident, Mr Speaker, that the electorate value the efforts that the Government is making in the delivery of our manifesto and we will continue undeterred to give effect to the Government manifesto that put us in office.

I thank you too, Mr Speaker, for your guidance over the last year.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

405 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Paul Balban.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I stand here today with a larger portfolio to that which I had last year. Although it gives me great pride to have been entrusted to carry forward greater ministerial and political responsibility, at the same time it deeply saddens me and my ministerial colleagues, as I am sure that it saddens all who knew the late Hon. Charles Bruzon. It really should have been him to stand before you today to give an account of the improvements that were either achieved or commenced by him as Minister for Housing. Yet I stand here with great shoes to fill today, delivering a Budget speech as Minister for Housing in conjunction with my other responsibilities for Traffic and Technical Services amidst a contest for his very seat.

Becoming Minister for Housing has changed my outlook on the many issues which affect the core of our population and can have a profound effect on the physical and mental health of individuals as well as the very social fabric that makes up our society at large.

Clearly, leading a social ministry is a totally different challenge to that which I have got used to within Technical Services and Traffic. Here, the truly human factor comes into play, and as Minister for Housing I have become increasingly aware of the complexity surrounding housing issues. These can vary from cases concerning housing applications to those issues which affect existing tenants. Very rarely would we find that two cases are identical, and each person who shares their problem with the Ministry genuinely believes that their particular case is the most deserving. This is totally understandable.

My target is to try to hold interviews on a weekly basis, and here I appreciate the wide breadth of the problems being encountered by many within our community. It comes across very clearly during interviews that most of the problems faced relate to applicants and existing tenants who have suffered as a direct result of the failure to construct homes in a timely manner in the past in order to be able to provide these homes to those who need them now.

Whether through the construction of Government rental accommodation or low-cost homes for purchase, or any other type of accommodation, it is impossible to break the backlog of the housing problem that we are faced with unless there is a clear political will to do so. There are many ways that one can face the acute shortage of homes. Some of these I have already just mentioned, but allowing the present housing stock to deteriorate through lack of maintenance is clearly not the best way to achieve this.

This Government very soon, within its first year of office, started its hunt for old and dilapidated properties which had lain rotting for years, forgotten and unused and a clear target for potential squatters. Many of these have been identified and repaired and returned to the housing stock by using small construction companies that have offered excellent value for money. Just last week, I tasked my staff to physically inspect another large number of buildings, mainly within the Upper Town area, to see whether these could be turned around as housing stock or otherwise offered out for tender.

We will continue with our policy of placing out to tender properties which were left to deteriorate to a deplorable state of disrepair by the former Administration. Many years of neglect, especially within the forgotten estates, and lack of a solid maintenance programme have led to an ever-increasing number of complaints regarding the effects of water ingress and its results, which inevitably mean damp and humidity. Mr Speaker, this should never have been the case. The effects of damp on the health of families, especially the young, have been well documented within the numerous reports we receive on a monthly basis from medical practitioners.

Mr Speaker, not enough homes were built in the 16 years that the GSD were in office. The simple problem that we have is that we do not have enough flats to go round. Yes, the Members opposite did build houses, but there were hardly enough to be able to see real progress within housing lists, and in any case were built too late in their tenure.

We have given a firm and unequivocal commitment to house all applicants that were on the waiting list and pre-list as of 9th December 2011. Furthermore, our commitments far exceed this in also assuring that no-one will need to be on the housing list for longer than three years in the future. Clearly, these targets are aimed towards the end of our first term of office when we complete the first phase of our housing projects.

I am pleased to announce that we have already issued tenders for the co-ownership schemes and flats for the elderly and are already in a position to award these tenders so that construction can commence shortly. This Government, while in Opposition, conducted extensive research as to what local people wanted and preferred by way of housing, and now, as Government, we have put the results of this research to fruition.

We have analysed the mistakes and pitfalls of the past – the limited access for emergency vehicles into the garage of Mid Harbour Estate, for instance: the very vastness of the garage itself, that holds in the region of 500 vehicles parked within, making the garage impossible to secure; a leaking podium causing damage to a number of vehicles; the poor foresight in choosing an inadequate surface for the garage floor, which only met the minimum requirements and renders it extremely slippery, especially during the rains and which has led to numerous accidents; the artistic concept of the wave-style roofs, which although may tie in nicely with the wave concept of the estate, are very difficult to maintain and prevent

470 seagulls roosting on them – they collect water, due to their flawed design, and are causing problems of water penetration. Mr Speaker, I could go on and on, but instead I wish to say that it was our intention to attempt to take all these factors on board when we briefed the tendering companies at the onset, and although it would be foolish to think that we will get everything right, we will most certainly mitigate, as far as humanly possible, to achieve a product that we may all be proud of.

475 Mr Speaker, I have the privilege of being involved and seeing the conceptual plans for the range of properties in the pipeline and I believe that Gibraltar will not be disappointed. Unlike the previous Administration, we are a Government which is very much in touch with its people and I can guarantee you, Mr Speaker, that we will produce the necessary policies in order to achieve the goals which we have set ourselves. I am confident and sincerely believe that we will deliver our commitment of affordable homes. We will very shortly be making an announcement, informing the general public of prices and the criteria applicable in order to qualify for such properties.

480 Mr Speaker, there is a large demand for flats, especially for the elderly, in the style of Albert Risso and Bishop Canilla House. To this end, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is almost ready to award the tender for the construction of these flats. The concept designs for the much-anticipated around 120 flats for the elderly within both the Europort Avenue and the Coach Park sites have ensured, through liaison with both the Ministry for Social Services and the Occupational Therapy Department within the Health Authority, that the layout of these flats will be modern in design, one bedroom in nature, and totally wheelchair accessible. These flats will boast spacious rooms to ensure that wheelchairs may navigate the whole flat with ease. Flats will have accessible bathrooms, with all the facilities to make daily life as simple and user friendly as possible. Once again, we have learned from the construction mistakes discovered, which have been costly to correct, and have listened to the views expressed by our experts, in fields such as occupational therapy, who work in conjunction with the Ministry for the adaptation of these flats.

490 Mr Speaker, I hold regular meetings with each of the established tenants' associations. These meetings are inherent with our style of government, which welcomes feedback in our endeavours. Praise is always welcome, but positive criticism is also invaluable. These meetings are very productive as they reinforce our contact with tenants. Many estates share common grievances such as anti-social behaviour, cleanliness of the estates, together with dog fouling. In these issues we liaise with the Royal Gibraltar Police to try to increase their presence in the area.

495 Mr Speaker, few of us are unaware of the historical number of complaints regularly received regarding the non-reply to telephone calls made to the Reporting Office. I was deeply concerned at this situation, as I am of the opinion that the Housing Reporting Office is an important and essential interface between the general public and the Ministry itself.

500 After thorough research and analysing how best to effect a meaningful improvement to this essential department, I am happy to say that we have managed to address this matter and we now boast a more customer-friendly approach to our clients. We have new members of staff, which in effect has created a mini call centre dedicated to providing an efficient service to the housing tenants. In effect, this has already led to a decrease in the number of persons who attend the counter on a daily basis, many of whom did so as they could not reach the Reporting Office by telephone. We will very shortly be announcing a new dedicated e-mail address to assist persons wishing to submit reports by this method, bringing the Ministry's reporting office in line with today's modern communication methods.

505 Mr Speaker, as promised, the Government has already given effect to its commitment of providing *El Turno* another pre-election commitment which has been fulfilled. We hope to be expanding this service to other Government estates in the near future. Barring some early teething problems, which were to be expected, and thanks to the dedicated team that supervises this service, these have now almost been ironed out. *El Turno* has now been established within Moorish Castle, Laguna Estate, Glacis Estate, Varyl Begg Estate, Mid Harbours, Edinburgh Estate and Alameda Estate.

510 Mr Speaker, following on from the previous mention of anti-social behaviour within estates, there have been a multitude of complaints directly related to tobacco concealments within estates, especially Glacis and Laguna Estates. As already announced, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is committed to targeting these practices in order to curtail this very anti-social behaviour which is causing much distress to the residents of these areas and further afield. Apart from revoking tobacco licences from within the said estates, and as part of the refurbishment programme currently being undertaken within the estates – which I will comment on shortly – we will be placing CCTV cameras in strategic locations within these. These cameras will have a live feed direct to the Royal Gibraltar Police, and in this way we may be able to help reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour which is plaguing some of our estates.

515 We have received numerous complaints from Mid Harbours Estate, which are very similar to those expressed by tenants of Glacis and Laguna. Here, the underground parking is being used for illicit activities, especially tobacco concealment and other forms of anti-social behaviour. We will also be placing CCTV cameras within this area and looking to the provision of barriers to control the entry and

530 exit to the garage in an attempt to put a stop to these practices. We already work closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police, who have increased their patrols in the area.

Mr Speaker, it is evident that we are a Government committed to our people and to preserving Government housing stock for the future by investing in an unprecedented and unforeseen refurbishment programme for Government estates. Already, scaffolding has been erected, signalling the commencement of this massive investment to our current housing stock. Although we will respect the commitment of the previous Administration to sell to sitting tenants or their children or grandchildren who so wish, as a Government we cannot see the logic behind the decision to sell the Government's entire housing stock had the demand been there, yet on the other hand embark on building more rental housing stock at the same time. If this is not an incoherent policy, then I do not know what is.

540 Mr Speaker, in order to achieve our goals, the Government will work relentlessly. To date, we have commenced external refurbishment of the major estates as well as individual blocks of flats such as Sandpits House. In the meantime, we will continue with the external refurbishment of Alameda Estate and are now approaching the completion of the external refurbishment of Bado's Building. We are tackling the historical backlog of external works which, between April and November 2011, the former Administration did absolutely nothing about; this lack of action being the major cause of the majority of the rain ingress problems affecting many families locally within Government housing estates.

545 The Department will continue to prioritise and organise all bath-to-shower conversions for pensioners and we will also deal with all the Gibraltar Health Authority OT conversions, as we did the moment we came into Government, thereby eliminating the backlog we inherited. This included the replacing of the shower screens at Albert Risso House required by the OT Department, and original design faults put right by this Administration.

550 Mr Speaker, we will take the opportunity to include, as part of the different projects, the provision of new pitch roofs, new double-glazed windows, shutters, and where possible the installation of lifts and the building of access for persons with mobility issues.

555 We will also be considering the environment and use of energy-efficient devices such as solar panels; LED lighting; improved communal lighting; double glazing to reduce the amount of energy required to cool or warm a house; the installation of external thermal insulation; and so on. Hence, our new and existing buildings will become energy efficient.

560 Mr Speaker, apart from these projects and other major works, Government will continue to tackle day-to-day minor maintenance by the Housing Works Agency for all internal defects and the Gibraltar General Construction Company Ltd will tackle all external works. The latter has proved extremely successful since its inception approximately six months ago, and whose responsibility includes the co-ordination and supervision of works carried out by contractors.

565 The waiting time for the cleaning and/or refurbishment of empty flats has been substantially reduced for the benefit of those on the waiting lists. As a result, keys are being handed to tenants in record time.

As promised, we have further successfully reintroduced the allocation of flats on a self-repair basis. This system, which was originally introduced by the previous Administration and later, for no apparent reason, was discontinued, even though it appeared to work successfully following the demise of Buildings and Works and inception of the Housing Works Agency.

570 All of the above is in line with the Government's manifesto commitments to ensure that all Government tenants live in adequately maintained properties for the tenants' enjoyment and for them to safely raise their families in comfort and safety .

575 Mr Speaker, in order to deliver all that has been officially stated by this Government, we will be investing considerable capital amounts for the next three years on works. It is our intention to continue with this level of investment until all the Government estates and individual blocks of flats are brought to the necessary standard. By investing such large amounts of funding, Government is showing its clear determination and dedication to refurbish Government housing stock. We are also glad to confirm that the window replacement contract at Chilton Court which we stated during the last Budget speech, was completed by its target date.

580 Again, as mentioned by my late colleague in last year's Budget speech, a great concern of this Government was the amount of time it was taking to internally refurbish the empty flats available for reallocation. By procuring the repairs by the Gibraltar General Construction Company Ltd, which is working in conjunction with the Housing Works Agency, it has been possible to speed this up substantially. The Agency regularly carries out customer satisfaction surveys by interviewing individual tenants who have had internal works executed within their flats. The Agency takes note of their concerns, but more importantly adjusts as required to improve its overall service, reviewing its funding as necessary.

585 The present Government, in respect of housing, will have delivered, within its first term in office, much more than the previous Administration did within its 15 years in government.

590 Finally, Mr Speaker, by way of a summary, I would like to remind you that it has been this Administration which historically managed to break the back of the housing problem with its vision of

creating that land bank which we still reap benefits from today. This made it possible to be able to build vast quantities of truly affordable homes, which saw an inherited waiting list of over 2,100 applicants in 1988 plummet to near on 400 applicants by the Elections in 1996.

595 When we took office in 2011, after seeing the GSD in government for a consecutive period of almost 16 years, we have once again had to pick up the tab, so to speak, of a waiting list of around 1,600 applicants. It is our intention to once again reverse the trend of escalating housing waiting lists, and we are confident of success.

600 Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to my responsibilities as Minister for Traffic. As part of this Government's preliminary assessment of parking facilities in Gibraltar, car parks are constantly being monitored in order to allow their maximum usage and hence benefit users at alternative times of the year. This initiative was seen at the Coach Park over the Christmas period and within school car parks during the summer period during school breaks. This successful initiative will be repeated once again this year.

605 Additionally, Government has made various areas available to enable beachgoers to find parking nearer to the beaches. These parking amenities have been provided for beach users at both Eastern Beach and Catalan Bay. The Catalan Bay car park has been made wider than in previous years, resulting in approximately 100 more parking spaces being available. The car park is now open to the public and can accommodate approximately 300 parking spaces. At Eastern Beach, extra parking facilities have been provided by making available part of the reclamation site, which is available via the gate at the south end of the beach.

610 In 2013, Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd has increased its car-parking facilities. Glacis Estate has been converted into a pilot residential parking scheme zone, much to the delight of the local residents. In order to park in the estate, you now need to have a resident's parking permit, thus preventing other non-residents from using the already limited parking facilities. As part of this scheme, we have also introduced limited visitor parking facilities within the estate. This is something that was lacking within the north district parking scheme, namely Laguna Estate. Residents complained of relatives not being able to visit nor tend to their ailing relatives. Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is closely monitoring this pilot scheme as part of its Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, which I shall mention later.

620 This year, we will see the opening of Arengos Palace, Engineer Lane and the Governor's Parade car park. In fact, Arengo's Palace has already been opened. These were GSD projects which this Government chose to proceed with as they were well underway at the time this Government took office.

625 Certain much welcome modifications have been carried out to the Engineer's Lane car park by way of installing an escalator which will make the historical inaccessibility of the Upper Town a thing of the past. This has been applauded by the residents of the area. Furthermore, a green roof has been fitted, which will help make an environmental difference – the first of its kind, I believe, in Gibraltar.

630 We have also opened a new small car park at the old Readymix site off Devil's Tower Road. This facility offers a further 35 parking spaces on a free basis, subject to a maximum 30-minute period during the day and no restrictions at night, to allow the residents make use of these.

635 Shortly, we shall also be opening the new car park on the site of the old Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club, which will offer a total of 187 parking spaces. This will be offset by the temporary closure of our car park at the Reclamation Road site during the months of August and September while the annual fair is accommodated on this site.

640 Mr Speaker, as part of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, Government is assessing and reviewing blue badge parking bay proposals and hopes to carry out meaningful changes to the issuing of blue badges. Additionally, consideration is also being given to carrying out modifications to the rules for their usage. Moreover, Government, in an effort to support our citizens with mobility problems, has already increased the size of several parking bays to allow better access to individuals with specific needs. Notwithstanding, Government is also considering the possibility of carrying out changes to the medical eligibility criteria to reduce the misuse of these permits.

645 Furthermore, in an attempt to improve on the current criteria for the granting of frontier passes to those persons who have a medical condition, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has assigned this task to members of the Blue Badge Committee, which is the medical advisory panel. Government is confident that these pertinent changes will improve the system for all of its users.

650 Mr Speaker, Government's initiative for the introduction of legislation to ban *quita multa*-type helmets has been a tremendous success and has had positive feedback across all sectors of the community. Now users of motorcycles and mopeds in Gibraltar all wear appropriate protective head gear. This will go a long way to make users safer and reduce the risk of critical injury.

655 However, Government's commitment to further reduce motorcycle accidents will see the introduction of a rear footrest campaign shortly. This campaign will see the toughening of existing legislation to ensure that pillion passengers sit in an appropriate seat and place both feet on adequate and secure footrests, separate from any rider's foot rest. Furthermore, young pillion passengers will only be able to ride on motor cycles if they can sit astride on the seat and are able to position both feet on the foot rests.

Moreover, in an effort to continue to prevent serious injuries and accidents caused by inexperienced drivers, Government has taken the lead and will be introducing new legislation that will see persons born on or before 1st September 1997 who wish to ride a moped or a motorcycle unaccompanied on the road, having to undertake a preliminary motorcycle training course known as motorcycle compulsory basic training (CBT). This training scheme is now in place and will be delivered in house by qualified driving and vehicle examiners from the Vehicle Licensing Department. The CBT will review aspects of riding both on and off the road. This legislation will also see the validity period of a learner's licence increased to 15 months from the date of completion of the CBT itself.

Mr Speaker, the new photocard driving licences are now well established and have been a success. The demand for the issuing of the new photocard driving licence has increased by 70%.

Furthermore, due to the fact that an agreement for the card format of the photocard driving licence was accomplished between the United Kingdom and Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, not only has the EU Directive deadline of 19th January 2013 been met, but also, as a result, this has greatly assisted and accelerated negotiations which are long overdue between the Government and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to supply our professional lorry and bus drivers with tacograph cards. Negotiations for these cards are almost complete and drivers are expected to be able to apply for driver cards in the near future. The issuing of these cards will allow our drivers, driving throughout Europe, to legally and accurately record their activities, retain their own records and produce them on demand to transport authorities throughout Europe. Government is confident that this will put an end to the unfair competition being faced by our transport undertakings locally with respect to drivers from across the border.

Mr Speaker, the use of information and communication technologies as a tool to achieve a better service to the public has led to the installation of counter-top terminals at the DVLD's counters. These machines assist those clients wishing to proceed to process credit and debit card payments.

Furthermore, the multiple-choice user-friendly touch-screen terminals for the computerised theory test are already in place. This approach to learning is helping candidates to gain a better knowledge and understanding of driving theory and results show a better response on the actual practical tests. This new system allows for three theoretical tests to take place simultaneously and allows the Department to increase productivity, which is an integral part of Government's strategy to provide a better service to the customer. Provisions have also been made to allow the computerised theory test to be undertaken in most languages. Reviews are currently being conducted into the use of information technology and other web-based telecommunication technologies to improve and/or enhance further the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery of the Department.

Mr Speaker, the introduction of training to assist applicants wishing to undertake the new Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) for bus and lorry theory tests is already showing positive signs towards helping to reduce unemployment by training our resident workforce. This scheme has been so successful that Government has decided to extend it to include those applicants wishing to undertake not only the theoretical side but the practical side of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence test too. This will ensure that all applicants who complete the training will end up with a complete Driver CPC qualification, allowing them to drive throughout Europe.

Directive 2003/59 EC requires that all bus and lorry drivers must complete 35 hours of periodic training every five years on an ongoing basis to keep driving professionally. This periodic training is delivered via courses that drivers attend over the five-year period. This ensures that their CPC remains valid. The Directive states that all drivers of passenger-carrying vehicles who have obtained their licence prior to 7th September 2008 will need to complete 35 hours of training and have their driving qualification endorsed on their licence by 9th September 2013. This endorsement will be valid until 9th September 2018. Drivers of goods vehicles who have obtained their licence prior to 10th September 2009 need to complete 35 hours of training and have their driver qualification endorsed on the licence by 9th September 2014.

Government, in an effort to ensure that Directive deadlines are met, has acquired the services of a professional and approved CPC instructor to carry out the initial courses. Once a driver's training and qualifications have been brought up to date, it is the Government's objective to train our own officers and deliver these courses in house.

Mr Speaker, looking ahead to 2013 and beyond, I am very satisfied that all the outstanding and relevant European legislation has now been transposed and the Department is working on the administrative and practical procedures for the implementation of this legislation. Parallel to this, the Department is also working on the introduction of some outstanding local legislation.

Finally, the appointment of an innovative Traffic Commission has been a vast success. This Commission has been meeting on a monthly basis for the past 16 months and I am satisfied to state that at present there is no backlog in applications.

Mr Speaker, finally, if I may turn my attention to the Technical Services Department. During the past financial year, the Technical Services Department has been involved with a number of projects covering a

715 variety of areas such as coastal protection works and rock-fall protection, as well as works in relation to their defined responsibilities, such as highways maintenance and works to the main sewer, among others.

On the coastal works side, the main project which Technical Services has been responsible for delivering over the past year is the beach protection and regeneration works at Sandy Bay. Following an extensive technical assessment process, work started on site and is currently progressing well with the northern groin already nearing completion and a start having been made to the southern groin. The beach will have the first phase of regeneration completed in a few days from now to allow the general public to enjoy the area during the summer. Works will continue throughout the summer and, when completed, Sandy Bay will see a major transformation with a wide stable beach, something that has not been the case for a number of years now. In so doing, we will be honouring another of our manifesto commitments.

720
725 Mr Speaker, it is very fair to say that this small but popular beach of yesteryear has been neglected, despite complaints and pleas from both beach users in the summer, but most importantly the residents of Both Worlds, who have seen the beach disappear in front of their very eyes. It has been this Government which has had to put a stop to this decay in only its second summer in office in order to restore this beach to its former glory on a permanent basis, so that people may once again enjoy these coastal facilities.

730 Mr Speaker, the Department also successfully completed an area of reclaimed land adjacent to Western Beach for use as a beach car park, thus adding a much-needed facility to this popular beach.

For the incoming year, Technical Services will continue to develop various other manifesto commitments involving coastal works projects, such as the improvement works at Camp Bay and Rosia Bay.

735 Mr Speaker, I will now turn to cliff stabilisation and rock-fall protection projects. Following the award of a tender, the Department started work on site towards the end of the year to clear the rock-fall protection bund at Williams Way. The area had suffered a major rock fall and landslide a few years ago, and even though the bund did its job at the time, it required clearance in order to fully restore the retention capacity of this protection measure should a further rock fall or landslide occur. These works will be completed during this financial year, along with other areas affected by rock falls, as part of the Government's ongoing cliff stabilisation and rock-fall protection programme.

740 Mr Speaker, the highways maintenance programme has continued over the past year with ongoing repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls. Resurfacing works have been carried out during the past year to sections of Glacis Road, Rosia Road and the Sundial roundabout, as well as other areas. Major resurfacing of Flat Bastion Road, Europa Road and Cumberland Road has also been completed.

745 The Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the public highway, both for its own in-house works and for all other utility companies and contractors. It does so in a manner that balances the need to undertake works against allowing vehicles to circulate on our roads with the minimum of obstruction. Road closures are avoided during peak times wherever possible, and after-hours and weekend work is the default condition imposed on contractors in order to minimise inconvenience to the public.

750 As indicated last year, a comprehensive major resurfacing programme has been prepared by the Department, aimed at tackling the underinvestment in road maintenance over the years. This programme will be assessed and an initial funding provision is being made in anticipation of making a start at the appropriate time.

755 Mr Speaker, moving on to sewers, during the past year, work has begun on providing flood-prevention measures along the southern end of Fish Market Road and at Wellington Front. The works to Fish Market Road have now been successfully completed. The first phase of the Wellington Front project has also been completed and the second and final phase is currently undergoing a tender process with completion anticipated during this financial year. Once this is finished, it will mean that habitual flooding in both of these areas during periods of concentrated heavy rainfall will be a thing of the past.

760 The state of Gibraltar's main sewer and stormwater drainage networks continues to be a matter of great concern for the Government, arising from a lack of sufficient investment and neglect in the past. To this end, funding in this year is being provided to initiate the sewers rehabilitation programme with a view to addressing the condition of the network in the short to medium term. Work has already started in desilting a large section of main sewer along Line Wall Road and the project will progressively be extended to other areas.

765 Funding is once again being provided for the purchase of equipment so that the operational ability of the Sewer Infrastructure Section to inspect and maintain the sewerage system can be expanded even further.

770 This is also the case for the garage and workshop, where funding for new equipment has also been provided. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse-collection vehicles. The situation with the garage and workshop is also under review given the previous Administration's hurried signing of a collective agreement a few weeks before the General Election, which placed them in a Government-owned company as an interim measure that would allow them to receive a 12% pay increase.

775

Mr Speaker, over the past year, the Department has been tasked with delivering several other projects. The demolition of the ex-Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club premises was completed and conversion of the site into a new car park is currently underway. This will be completed within the next few weeks and will provide an alternative for the car park situated on Reclamation Road which shall be used for this year's fair.

The Department will also shortly be proceeding with the demolition of the old air terminal complex, thus releasing much needed space for other uses.

Work continues at pace on the new Commonwealth Park project. Even though this is under the remit of the Ministry of the Environment, it is being driven by Technical Services and is another example of inter-ministerial co-operation. The project is on programme for completion next spring, and when finished will be an oasis in the centre of our city for the enjoyment of all.

Mr Speaker, this brings me to a major manifesto commitment under my Ministry, working in conjunction with the Ministries for Public Transport and the Environment in the form of the delivery of a new Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan for Gibraltar.

Work on this project started during the past year, led by Technical Services who were instrumental in its development. The data-collection stage was initiated early in the year and then progressed to the public service stage, which has only just been completed. As was widely publicised, a variety of surveys have been conducted, ranging from interviews at car parks, on buses and at the roadside, right up to the individual households throughout all of Gibraltar. The results have been extremely positive, with a total of over 12,000 questionnaires having been completed. The project is now moving on to the data-input and analysis stage, from which a traffic and transport model for Gibraltar, as existing today, will be derived from and from where potential options for change to help bring about improvements will be assessed.

Mr Speaker, as can be seen, Technical Services Department will, this coming year, continue to deliver on their defined responsibilities, maintaining public infrastructure, and will continue supporting and providing technical input across the board throughout all relevant Government Ministries and Departments in all manner of projects, large and small, in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

Inroads have been made in filling the high number of vacancies that were being carried by the Department when we came into office. There are still a few vacancies left to fill within the Department and the commitment is there to do so as soon as possible, so as to allow the Department to meet its obligations.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my staff in all of my Ministries and related Departments, and to express my sincere gratitude to the people who make up the Ministry for Traffic, Housing and Technical Services, who take their work very seriously – I have seen first-hand their dedication and professionalism, which rarely gets mentioned and is, importantly, appreciated – without whose help it would have been impossible to have achieved so much in the past year.

I would also like to thank all those persons from other Ministries who have come together to form that truly inter-ministerial team, especially those involved in the traffic plan surveys, and I would also like to express my thanks to all parliamentary staff who are always at hand to assist.

I would also like to thank the members of the public and staff that make up committees and associations like the Traffic Commission, and the Housing Allocation Committee, which are instrumental in providing me with their advice.

Mr Speaker, finally, a special thank you to my personal staff within the Ministry who have worked endless hours to ensure that I may carry out my function and duties as Minister in a diligent and effective manner. *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes.

Minister for Health and the Environment (Hon. Dr J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the importance that this Government gives to the environment is immense, which makes my job as Environment Minister particularly easy and satisfying, and totally supported by my colleagues.

Mr Speaker, this is important in many ways. The environment is not a passing fad, any more than the economy is, and a sound environment is as important as a sound economy. Gibraltar is privileged in that it is making big strides in both. Environmental Governance is a requirement now of international law, and as we increasingly take our place in the family of nations, we have to be increasingly conscious of our duties and responsibilities in this context. Failure to do so will seriously tarnish Gibraltar's name, and moreover, bring substantial fines.

Mr Speaker, the reputation of Gibraltar is something of which every Gibraltarian is justifiably proud. We all take great satisfaction when we do well internationally, be it the UEFA acceptance or the success of a Gibraltar team, say, at an international dance championship. Every Gibraltarian, I say, Mr Speaker, with the exception, it seems, of the Members opposite. *(Laughter)* They have characterised their first 18

months in Opposition by attacking Government initiatives, even when they have known them to be good for Gibraltar, and even when they have known that their statements could be bad for Gibraltar. And if they have done so without realising, Mr Speaker, then even, and very worryingly, worse.

Their spinning of issues to do with fishing, their obfuscation following the Thinking Green Conference, even though they attended and enjoyed it at the time, their unjustified insinuations in respect of a highly significant visit to Washington, their failure to grasp the international significance of the visits of Vice-President Al Gore and Juan Verde to Gibraltar, have all worried me greatly and have made me question the political acuity of the Members opposite, whose performance in these respects has been much more 'rookiesque' than that of this converted gardener.

Mr Speaker, this past year has demonstrated an unprecedented level of commitment and work in all areas of environmental management in Gibraltar. The Department is working with more entities both inside and outside of the public service than ever before. Not only are we leaving our mark locally, but internationally as well, as Government officials are increasingly networking and demonstrating our vision and working practices in Europe and within the UK Overseas Territories.

I am proud to say that the Department of the Environment officials are finally part of a network with all other Environment Departments in the Overseas Territories. I mention this, Mr Speaker, because for many years, I would attend these meetings as an NGO representative and feel embarrassed that the only Environment Department missing was Gibraltar's. The benefits to the Department from this network are tremendous, as we work and collaborate on projects with the wider international community, and indeed we will provide leadership in many areas.

The Department is also taking a more prominent role within EU conferences and working groups with active participation in a number of marine and maritime conferences, the habitats biogeographic process, energy and climate change projects, as well as in the field of air quality.

I have myself already held meetings with officials and ministers in the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Joint Nature Conservancy Council, the Environment Agency and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and in Strasbourg I have met with the Fisheries Commissioner and most of our MEPs and members of various EU Commissions.

This is a truly exciting time to be working in the Environment in Gibraltar, as we strive to lead by example in all things environmental.

Mr Speaker, environmental civil servants and advisers continue to be involved in discussion and decision-making at all levels of Government. They not only work for me for but for all other Ministers in this Government and are called upon by my colleagues for input and advice on a regular basis. They continue to be appointed to important committees, including those dealing with legislative change.

Home-grown environmental legislation has been neglected for too many years and it is this Government's commitment to ensure that gaps in local environmental management are filled. New policies are being implemented and where necessary, will be included in legislation. This is the case, for example, with the green procurement practices and the newly revised Environmental Action and Management Plan, which was launched last week to meet yet another manifesto commitment. This document exemplifies this Government's commitment to environmental change in Gibraltar.

Environmental workshops within the public service are now an annual event in order to provide support for the whole service as we lead by example. The measures introduced to date are working well, and new measures are being discussed continually.

Mr Speaker, they say that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and this is indeed the case in the area of green procurement. Not only do members of the Department attend all tender boards but the Department has found that environmental alternatives are now more readily available as evident by their inclusion by prospective tenderers in all tenders regardless of the field or subject.

Building Applications continue to be filtered by the Department of the Environment and they now attend all meetings of the DPC.

Environment representatives are also present in any cross-departmental committee which may arise, as well as in the Government's Projects Committee.

Mr Speaker, the recycling of paper, small items of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and batteries is finally occurring from all Government Agencies, Authorities and Departments. Furthermore, waste electronic equipment bins, similar to the existing blue, green and yellow bins have been purchased and a trial will commence shortly, placing them in strategic points, thereby making it easier for the general public to dispose of these items in the proper manner. We are asking the public to use these bins, as we aim to increase the number of these pink bins in the not-too-distant future.

Waste is an area where we are dedicating a lot of time and effort, as we need to ensure we minimise the impact our waste has on our local and surrounding environment.

Promoting awareness of the need for careful disposal of waste has been and will continue to be one of the subjects covered in the Environment Department's promotional material. The massive success of the recycling campaign featuring 'El Teren' will be enhanced to capture the recycling of other waste streams.

900 Mr Speaker, it is hard to believe that just six months ago, there were no recycling facilities in Gibraltar for cardboard, paper and plastics, once again well behind the rest of the world, the result of a 'couldn't care less' attitude to the environment on the part of the Members opposite, the latter-day self-styled saviours of spider crabs and limpets.

905 The increase in recycling rates as a result of the introduction of paper, plastic and tetrabrick has been greater than what we hoped for, Mr Speaker. So much so, that we are having to increase resources to cope with the services of the bins. It is a great problem to have!

Mr Speaker, in 2012, the yellow bin used for cans only at the time collected a total of 14,620 kilos. In 2013, specifically from January to May, the yellow bin – now collecting cans, plastics and tetra brick – has collected a total of 29,490 kilos, about twice the weight for the whole of last year, in just five months.

910 The green bin, where we deposit glass, collected a total of 126,400 kilos in 2012. In 2013, the figure is already 57,938 kilos.

I must congratulate the Gibraltar public for this great response. Further measures are planned to facilitate the disposal of this waste stream from bars and restaurants, which are still lagging behind. We have to continue our efforts if we are to meet EU targets of recycling 50% of household waste by 2020.

915 The blue bin, used for paper and cardboard, was introduced this year so we do not have a figure to compare it to. This said, I am happy to report that already this year, we have collected 33,430 kilos.

Another waste stream which we intend to include into our recycling scheme is that of domestic cooking oil. It is our intention to start placing orange bins for the collection of waste cooking oil in strategic places around Gibraltar.

920 I am happy to report also that works continue in building refuse-holding facilities, with approximately four to five shelters expected to be done this year.

Further to the report commissioned last year and details of which have been presented in this House, the Government has now entered into the tender process for a waste treatment plant that will include the collection, segregation and treatment of waste streams without incineration. The plant will have to comply with the Best Available Technology and ensure that Gibraltar is as self-sufficient as possible in our waste management. As a result of this, our Waste Management Plan will be updated to reflect the Government's change in waste policy and re-submitted to the European Commission.

925 The Litter Committee, which I set up last year, continues to meet regularly and improvements have already been made in many areas of Gibraltar as a result of the resurrection of this group. Indeed, work is progressing on many fronts in the area of waste and litter management, the fruits of which will become evident in the coming months.

930 Already, through the Litter Committee we have achieved opening of the large items compound at Europa Advance Road seven days a week, increased cleaning of areas, including areas on the Upper Rock, Northern Defences and the tower block lift shafts, increase in level of litter fines and litter patrols by the Environmental Agency and the RGP, and the issuing of a leaflet on waste distributed with water and electricity bills. As from 1st July and thanks to discussions in this Committee, we will be providing facilities for disposal of cooking oil and ink cartridges.

935 Mr Speaker, it is very difficult to pin offenders down, but the issuing of litter tickets has increased. Ten litter tickets were issued in 2012, and 10 already in the first five months of 2013. In contrast, in 2011, only four tickets were issued in the whole year.

940 Mr Speaker, work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is increasing and regular meetings take place with Government officials and with me as Minister.

945 Government's commitment to involve the wider Gibraltar in its work continues in this way. Government this year more than ever was involved in supporting the 'In Town Without My Car' event. I have referred also to the involvement of the ESG, with whom we also work in supporting their 'Clean Up the World' campaigns. Similarly, Government is maintaining close contact with the Ornithological and Natural History Society, through regular meetings and discussions on matters related in particular to the natural environment.

950 Resources to the Avian Control Unit will be increased and the Government will continue to assist them in their work in the rehabilitation and captive breeding of birds of prey, both for release into the wild and for use in gull control. Significantly, I can report that the Raptor Rehabilitation Unit, under the expert eye and dedication of Vincent Robba, last year released seven endangered Lesser Kestrels, bred in captivity, into the wild, some of which returned this spring after spending their winter in tropical Africa.

955 Regular meetings have been held with the Scientific Authority and the Nature Conservancy Council, which now perform their true roles as statutory scientific advisers.

960 Another example of community involvement is in our meetings with the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses and Chamber of Commerce on a number of issues. These include waste and energy. We have found, Mr Speaker, that commerce in Gibraltar is now more amenable than ever to environmental initiatives. The Chamber of Commerce and the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses continue to be engaged and are aware that their members have to work towards introducing greener products and services within the local market, as Government is now procuring on that basis whenever possible.

Mr Speaker, this year has seen the preparation and launch of tenders, which will leave a lasting improvement in Gibraltar's environmental scene. These include the power station tender, the waste treatment facility tender and solar thermal project tenders for certain Government buildings. More tenders will soon be published, including one for providing solar heating to St Bernard's Hospital.

This will result in considerable savings in energy and money. Additionally, progress is being made in discussions to bring about more production of electricity from renewable energy. Never before have so many environmentally innovative projects occurred at the same time. This, Mr Speaker, is our commitment to delivering a sustainable Gibraltar.

The actions taken by this Government in the last 18 months, through initiatives such as the Thinking Green Conference and trade fair, have enabled a range of possibilities and products to become available to Gibraltar and, more importantly, have increased awareness and commitment.

And there is nothing more important than awareness and commitment in the young.

Environmental education continues to be at the top of our agenda, as will be seen in the coming months. Education creates awareness and awareness leads to action, action as individuals and action as a community.

I am delighted to say that we are looking into innovative ways to bring the environment to the forefront and making it more readily accessible to children. As part of our work on e-Government, the Department has recently launched the Thinking Green website and will be producing a 'kids' zone' on this site as well as apps and e-games. All of these will portray local environmental resources which children not only from Gibraltar but from all over the world can download and learn about as they play.

Mr Speaker, this year Government celebrated the ninth anniversary of World Environment Day on 5th June. The purpose of this United Nations Programme Day is to spread awareness of centre stage environmental issues. This year's theme is food waste with the slogan 'Think, Eat, Save.' I must say this is one of the environmental highlights of the year for me: the ever-popular performances by our school children are not only inspiring, but demonstrate that together we can make a difference.

The work done by children, teachers and parents has to be praised. It is very encouraging to see how environmental issues have now become an integral part of the classroom and for this we have to thank the teachers and the officers at the Department. The involvement this year too of world-renowned explorer, Mike Horn, in Gibraltar served to inspire many of our young people. As a result of this, the message continues to come through loud and clear, each year with more energy, enthusiasm and determination.

In the coming year, the Department of the Environment will continue its public awareness campaigns, with a continuation on the one on recycling and a new one on reduction of energy consumption.

Mr Speaker, this year will finally, after nine years of inconclusive work, see the delivery of Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping to the public service. In using GIS to collect data, store, manage, analyse and produce useful information, Government Departments can monitor and map areas under their competence. In the case of Environment, these include many of Gibraltar's natural assets.

As part of our obligations under the INSPIRE Directive, the Department of the Environment has been working with consultants, Technical Services and the IT Department to deliver a digital map of Gibraltar. This map will be viewable by the public through a geoportal which will be launched in the coming weeks. The GIS database will consist of a series of layers that can be overlaid to provide information concerning spatial patterns. A GIS allows a great degree of flexibility to the categorisation and display of data.

As the Government of Gibraltar competent authority for INSPIRE compliance, the Department of the Environment in conjunction with the IT Department have combined efforts and resources to ensure Gibraltar complies with this European Union responsibility. Together with existing work by the GIS Committee, which also includes representation from Town Planning and Land Property Services, the GIS project will enable all Departments to digitise all spatially relevant information to enable better decision-making and update of Government information repositories.

Mr Speaker, last year I announced that Government is promoting the reduction of energy consumption through a number of initiatives. This is a vital element of Government policy. The less we consume, the less we spend, as individuals and as Government, and the less we pollute. It will also reduce the amount of carbon credits that we will now be obliged to purchase. Moreover, we have to meet an EU target of producing 20% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020.

Government has commenced and will continue with a programme to replace public lighting with solar powered devices and/or LEDs, and encourages all citizens to do the same. As part of this initiative, we have for the first time set to quantify our energy profile and have conducted an assessment of our carbon footprint which will shortly be published.

This consumption-based analysis, which uses as a basis the 2011 Family Expenditure Survey, which was based on 2008 data, indicates a carbon footprint for Gibraltar of 15.67 tonnes per capita per year. This is significantly higher than the world average of 5 tonnes per capita, but well within the range of 1 tonne per capita for some African countries to 30 tonnes per capita for Luxembourg. We have, in fact, a carbon footprint higher than Spain, which is 14.44, but lower than the UK, which is 16.99, which is not unexpected.

1025 Mr Speaker, I can neither understand nor believe that in all their years in office, through the period in the Earth's history that this global crisis became apparent and this type of analysis became necessary and crucial, the Government of Gibraltar of the late 1990s and the whole of the first decade of the 2000s, the Government of Gibraltar that had the privilege of seeing in the 21st century, did not have a clue as to what their carbon footprint was. It was a Government that had loitered without vision and been left stranded in the past. This Government, I am proud to say, has confidently jumped one decade in one leap.

1030 Mr Speaker, what this study has shown is that the main contributions to our carbon footprint are transport, food and electricity, and so indicates where we have to make progress – in rationalising transport, as far as possible promoting fresh food and reducing food waste, and reducing consumption of electricity generated by burning fossil fuels.

1035 Mr Speaker, *this* Government's trademark is evidence-based action. Our carbon footprint analysis assists us in taking decisions that will help Gibraltar meet and we hope, exceed European Union targets – targets that are punished with heavy fines of millions, if not met. Not only will these actions reduce our carbon footprint, but they will also lead to a significant improvement in our air quality.

1040 And we are certainly moving in the right direction. The total removal of the three existing power generating stations continue a top priority for this Government, as we have seen. The commissioning of the temporary turbines located at the North Mole, just six months ago, especially when the fitting of silencers and scrubbers is complete, will mean not just resilience in power supply, but much less overall noise and pollution.

1045 As a result of these turbines, Mr Speaker, the South District power stations are now turned off at night, and up to the present, this has meant they have been switched off, since mid-January, for 1,100 hours. That is 1,100 hours' less pollution for residents in the South District. Already the reading of nitrogen oxides in the South District monitoring stations have shown significant reductions in the levels detected.

1050 Mr Speaker, we are serious when we say we will revolutionise the environment for our people. The worst thing, Mr Speaker, is that it has been so easy to do. Where was the Government before December 2011? Was anyone thinking, anyone planning, anyone caring?

1055 Mr Speaker, as is well known, the tender for the new, much more environmentally-friendly power station is out, and this will be a quantum leap into the latest technology and will give us resilience in power in a much cleaner and quieter environment, once and for all putting the residents both of the South District and the Waterport area out of the misery they have had to endure for so long, as we banish another negative legacy into the past.

1060 Mr Speaker, our efforts to mitigate and contribute towards the global fight against climate change led to the honour of Gibraltar being chosen as one of only 21 European cities to be part of the EU Cities Adapt Project, together with major cities such as Birmingham, Barcelona and Rotterdam. Moreover, it was the city chosen to host the second peer review visit for the Project. The conference was a success and Gibraltar showcased our continuing efforts on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

1065 Mr Speaker, this work and other relevant initiatives are all reviewed by the Climate Change Forum, which has not only been reconvened but whose technical advisors have been increased and now meets every two months. As a result of the work and projects I have just mentioned, the Forum will deliver a revised and informed climate change programme for Gibraltar during this financial year.

1070 Mr Speaker, our aim is that our climate change strategy will make Gibraltar a 'Top 5' city in environmental governance.

1075 The water quality monitoring programmes carried out by the Department of the Environment and the Environment Agency continue to be in operation. New requirements under the Water Framework and Marine Strategy Framework Directives are being incorporated into the latter programme. Further developments in relation to the Marine Strategy Directive are expected to take place in the very near future and the Government is committed to meeting and if possible expanding upon the requirements.

1080 The Department has also expanded its groundwater monitoring network to include sampling of groundwater pools within the Rock itself. This work is now being conducted in-house and has thereby reduced the need for consultancy fees.

1085 In line with HM Government of Gibraltar's commitment to improve access to environmental information at our beaches, new beach signs are currently being designed by the Department together with the Environmental Agency. These signs will provide the public with easily accessible information on the characteristics of each beach in Gibraltar, along with further information on the results of the bathing water monitoring programme, which at present are only available online.

1090 Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that works to improve the North Front Cemetery have been progressing. This has included provision of benches and planting of trees. More work is envisaged for the coming year.

Mr Speaker, I have reconvened and expanded the Cemeteries Board, which has now met for the first time in over a decade, and will continue to do so, under the chairmanship of the Reverend David Hoare. I

1085 am also having the legislation governing the Cemetery reviewed and updated. The current Cemetery Act dates from 1889.

Mr Speaker, over the last year we have planted over 100 trees. Trees have been planted at Edinburgh Estate, Alameda Estate, Watergardens and Camp Bay, among other areas. Plans continue to be developed to create new green areas. Protection of trees is another of our manifesto commitments, and we plan to
1090 introduce legislation in order to do so more effectively. We have also increased the monitoring in planted areas with a view to delivering more and improving existing green spaces within our urban fabric.

Works on Commonwealth Park, are progressing very well indeed. While Opposition-inspired ginations – saves me using the word ‘spin’ too often – suggest that nothing is happening, a close look will reveal the truth. Services diversions are progressing, designs of the various areas are complete or near
1095 completion, foundations for hard-paved areas are progressing, as is the procurement of plants. Even the lawn has been ordered, and the green grass destined for our lawns is already growing in a plant nursery in the south of England.

In keeping with environmental good practice, water for irrigation will be recycled after collection in underground tanks, and much of the soil will be manufactured locally. Mr Speaker, we are working on
1100 this project with Mark Gregory, a renowned landscape designer, multiple gold medal winner in the Chelsea Flower Show, and we expect to complete on schedule next spring.

Mr Speaker, last year we took the overdue step of designating the Rock of Gibraltar terrestrial site as a Special Area of Conservation under the European Union. This year will be the year of an expanded and rebranded Gibraltar Nature Reserve, which will see the launch of the Upper Rock Management Plan. Projects are being developed; the Department of the Environment is working closely with the Tourism
1105 Department and the Department of Education to deliver big improvements in this largely neglected area.

The Upper Rock Management Team continue with their habitat creation and maintenance of footpaths. Refurbishment work to the Upper Rock sites has already begun, as is evident in the Devil’s Gap Footpath to Town project, now complete, and clearance and enhancement works to other areas such as Devil’s Gap Battery and Tovey Battery continue, as we carry on from the progress achieved last year and move into the next phase in developing the Upper Rock towards its full potential.
1110

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens at the Alameda continues to develop as a major player in research and conservation in the region, and to promote Gibraltar internationally in these fields. I am pleased to see that now that I have severed my links with the Gardens, they continue to go from strength to strength
1115 under their new management.

This year has seen the completion of works to the Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park, funded by Government and the Bonita Trust. I had the pleasure just a few weeks ago of inaugurating the new world-class facilities. The improvements to the site have been tremendous and long overdue.

Moving to the area of habitat management, Mr Speaker, I am delighted to report that great strides have been and continue to be made in the fields of terrestrial and marine habitat management. The existing surveillance monitoring programme will continue to be enhanced this year to ensure greater data capture for species of flora and fauna of local and community interest. The Department of the Environment is now better resourced than ever, both in terms of personnel and equipment and, as a result, is more proactive than ever before, working steadily on increasing surveillance and on various
1120 reintroduction programmes for flora and fauna, including habitat creation. The results of this proactive approach will not only assist Government in meeting the requirements of the relevant Directives, which include ensuring that the favourable status of our European protected habitats and species is attained or maintained locally, but also in enhancing local ecosystems and making Gibraltar an example in the field of ecological management.
1125

The Government has published the updated Southern Waters of Gibraltar Management Scheme. The management regime which is being put in place following on from the recommendations of the Report into the Management of Marine Resources in the Waters around Gibraltar will include the regulation of all types of activities in Gibraltar waters which impact on the marine environment, including rod fishing, diving, spear fishing and diving and dolphin trip operators, as well as other issues affecting Gibraltar’s
1130 marine and coastal resources. All the relevant stakeholders have been fully consulted, in developing these initiatives. One example of increased monitoring is the fish tagging programme where the Department works closely with the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers.
1135

Mr Speaker, the illegal Fishing Agreement of 1999 was torn up, not by two lines on Facebook, but by the people of Gibraltar when they voted on 8th December 2011. That Agreement, and the inability of the Government of the time to detect the Spanish designation of the *Estrecho Oriental* European protected area which enveloped all of our territorial waters, were possibly the two greatest blunders of the former Administration, and have led directly to all the problems that arose since, in relation to waters and incursions.
1140

Mr Speaker, Facebook, Twitter and cameras on everyone’s phone give the impression that there are now more fishing incursions than ever before. But, Mr Speaker, that is simply not true. Where mobile phones survey our waters now, I used to, daily, survey our waters through my binoculars following the
1145

Agreement in 1999. It was much worse then. Just the Agreement, by allowing four boats a day, allowed a minimum of 120 fishing incursions a month, and believe me, the limit of four was usually not adhered to. *That* was a fishing crisis.

1150 Our strategy now, following from the very necessary Fishing Report, is to increase monitoring, to provide more resources for environmental protection, to deliver a programme of unprecedented marine habitat creation and growth of populations of marine life, which will be hugely beneficial to our recreational fishermen, divers and spear-fishermen, to well-regulated diving tourism, and by logical consequence, to artisanal fishermen in neighbouring towns.

1155 Mr Speaker, a protected area, in particular a marine protected area, as our waters are, is a dynamic natural system. Its management has to be robust but has to track the very dynamism that defines it. The new regulations, Mr Speaker, will allow me as Minister for the Environment, to respond to such changes, by delimiting protected areas and protection regimes, by declaring closed seasons and closed areas, or temporary protection of particular species at particular times, allowing sustainable exploitation when possible and strict protection when necessary.

1160 At all times, all Gibraltar stakeholders will be involved in arriving at such measures, and in time, all users of the sea, in Gibraltar waters and beyond, will benefit, as will marine species themselves.

1165 Mr Speaker, this is the type of regime that will gain us respect and make the European Union realise that those who can best govern what happens in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, in fact the only ones to be able to do so, are the Gibraltarians themselves.

1170 In the meantime, Mr Speaker, we continue to fulfil our responsibilities for our waters. An initial assessment of BGTW as required under the Marine Strategy Directive has been conducted and will this week be submitted to the EU. A bathymetric survey of BGTW has also been conducted, the first full survey of this nature ever carried out in our waters, and an essential tool in good environmental management. This will allow us to better manage the marine environment and the resources therein.

1175 The Macaque Management Plan, already announced, will be launched within the next few weeks. Measures have already started to control the movement of macaques in built up areas. An example is the enclosure of refuse bins in key areas, and the use of noise, and other means of dissuasion when they are in town. At the same time, habitat is being opened up on the Upper Rock, and an increased programme of contraception has been introduced.

There has already been some considerable success. However, monkeys are intelligent and persistent and so work has to be continuous and the increased resources to the Macaque Management Team will greatly assist here.

1180 I must here thank the team, which includes the Natural History Society and the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic for their work so far, and must highlight also the members of the Department of the Environment who have also deployed in fair weather and foul to assist in management.

1185 Mr Speaker, I will also be appointing a panel of experts to advise me and the management team on scientific and conservation matters in relation to the macaques. This will include all the local experts who have worked on our macaques, as well as international scientists foremost in the field. The membership will be announced at the time of the launch of the Plan.

1190 The wisdom of having such close relationships with internationally acclaimed scientists is evidenced by the success of the high-tech monitoring programme currently being carried out in conjunction with Indiana and Washington universities and National Geographic. This is actually the biggest tracking programme on macaques to date anywhere in the world. Only yesterday, Mr Speaker, I received news of some fascinating movement patterns emerging that will greatly assist cull-free management.

1195 In the area of environmental noise, we have met our EU obligations and updated our noise maps. Environmental noise in Gibraltar focuses on noise from traffic and despite the previous Administration's belief that the legislation did not apply, leading to the halting of work in this field for many years, I am happy to report that we are now up to date on our EU obligations in this field. The Noise Core Steering Group has been reconvened and will work on updating the Noise Action Plan.

The revised noise maps are up on the Department of the Environment and Environmental Agency websites and the process is now in the public consultation stage.

1200 The services provided by the existing Gibraltar Air Quality Monitoring Programme continue to inform the Government on local air quality and how we can address the issues arising. The appointed consultants have been coming to Gibraltar to address Government officials and, on occasion, Ministers for eight years now.

Improvements to air quality monitoring – also a manifesto commitment – have continued.

1205 Mr Speaker, among my various current responsibilities, I am Minister for Urban Renewal. I am therefore very pleased that we will this year be investing in the fabric and appearance of parts of the Upper Town. I also applaud and support the efforts of my colleagues in other Ministries whose work in renewing the Estates and in the superbly designed conversion of my old workplace, the old St Bernard's Hospital into two new schools show the depth and breadth of vision that exists throughout this Government.

1210 Mr Speaker, I have mentioned the work which the Department is either spearheading or working on in collaboration with other Departments and Agencies. Indeed, as everyone now knows, work across the boundaries of Agencies and Departments is a hallmark of this Government. A lot more work is going on behind the scenes which I simply do not have time to go into, all of which contributes to improved environmental management in Gibraltar.

1215 I will however, mention a few examples of inter-departmental collaboration. The first example, Mr Speaker, I must mention is the dedication and efficiency with which the Department of the Environment, the Environmental Agency and the Port Department deliver on areas including marine, waste, habitats and industrial processes.

1220 These entities now meet regularly and work proactively, as well as reactively, to ensure the highest levels of environmental protection. Similarly, the work and close collaboration between the Department of the Environment and the Technical Services Department on a wide range of issues, including the Sustainable Traffic and Transport Study, which will be used to inform decision-making in areas such as traffic and transport, air quality and environmental noise, beaches – in which we also work with the Ministry for Tourism – and coastal protection.

1225 In order to help us in achieving the Government's environmental aspirations, the Environment Department continues to progress. A programme of Continual Professional Development is also taking place, ensuring that officers are up to date with the latest advances in all fields of environmental management. This will allow for a greater level of environmental management and polluter enforcement.

1230 Mr Speaker, I must now pay tribute to the tremendous work done by the staff of the Ministry and Department of the Environment, including administrative, technical and monitoring staff. They work continuously and enthusiastically in taking the very full and very challenging environmental agenda forward. They go well beyond the call of duty to deliver for Gibraltar.

I must also thank the contractors who work for the Department, be it in cleansing, running depots, or providing horticultural, veterinary or scientific services. They too are working hard to improve the service.

1235 And of course, the Environmental Agency who themselves carry a large number of responsibilities. I would like at this point to thank and pay tribute to Francis Martin who is soon to retire after excellent work for many years in the Agency, including most recently, as Chief Environmental Health Officer.

1240 You will have seen, Mr Speaker, that, in the same way as I stated last year, it continues to be true this year: the amount of work being carried out in relation to the Environment, not just by the Ministry and the Department and the Environmental Agency, but also by NGOs, professional bodies, contractors and other Government Departments is greater and of a higher quality than ever before, and I must add, is being done and delivered with ever-increasing enthusiasm and excitement.

1245 Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment has a mandate to achieve a high quality environment by providing effective environmental protection; addressing the threat of climate change; protecting and enhancing our natural environment; developing sustainable waste management practices; promoting energy efficiency and sustainable energy generation as well as ensuring that Gibraltar's development respects the delicate balance between environment, economy and society.

1250 Securing the integration of environmental considerations into all Government policies is one of the Department's key objectives. This means that as well as providing and maintaining policies, programmes, legislation and information for the protection of the environment, we also promote the integration of environmental considerations into the wider decision-making process.

All of this is possible, because of the environmental governance which we are promoting.

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority.

1255 I make this distinction, because up to the present, little distinction had been made between the two, with the Minister for Health essentially just, in effect, taking responsibility for the GHA. I feel that my role is much wider, and that it is all health issues that I have a responsibility for. This includes practitioners in health-related disciplines in the private sector, and organisations outside the GHA.

1260 For that reason, Mr Speaker, I have met with private doctors, dentists and pharmacists, and visited organisations such as the Red Cross and St John Ambulance, and I make myself fully available to approaches by them.

1265 Further afield, Mr Speaker, I have supported initiatives to send ambulances and equipment surplus to requirement to Morocco and other African countries, and will continue to do so. This is a much better outcome than throwing them away, but more important, Mr Speaker, gives a relevance to Gibraltar in the context of the needs of countries less fortunate than ours.

Mr Speaker – here we come to the delicate bit – when I delivered my Budget speech last year, I referred to some details emerging from a Health Survey, to which I will refer later, which stated that – I quote –

1270 '¾ of men in Gibraltar over the age of 45 are overweight'. I was one of that number and therefore committed myself to – and I quote again:

'reaching a weight and level of fitness ... which will be a reflection of a healthy lifestyle'.

Mr Speaker, what I did not yet appreciate was that a Minister's lifestyle is not a healthy one, and so when I looked this morning, the reflection was a realistic representation of an *unhealthy* lifestyle.

1275 I could of course claim that as my weight gain happened after an accident in 2011, months before the General Election, that it is the fault of the former Administration. (*Laughter*) What I could not claim is that I stand before you as a mere shadow of my former self. (*Laughter*) I have at least made some progress and I can state that I have lost five kilos. (*Banging on desks*) So, at least there should be no misunderstanding of that statistic by the Opposition!

1280 Seriously though, my struggle with weight loss is representative of that of many people, particularly as they progress through middle age. And it is in experiencing this and understanding this for myself that I am better able to lead in the initiative for a fitter population.

1285 I now make the commitment again, well aware of Winston Churchill's observation that 'The only problem with committing political suicide is that you live to regret it', and aware also that if I do not deal with this matter, the likelihood increases that I might *not* live to regret it.

Mr Speaker, I do not make that comment lightly. This job has brought me into contact with real life and death situations, almost every day, and I am more aware than many of the fact that simple decisions in life can in fact determine whether you live or die.

1290 I have been enriched as a person by coming into contact with many members of our community with real health problems. I have been able to give good advice to some, less successful with others, but I have been both humbled and inspired by what some members of our community live with, day by day.

Mr Speaker, I will of course *not* blame the former Administration for my accident in 2011 nor for my weight gain at the time. But I will blame them for other things.

1295 Mr Speaker, the Opposition has in recent months sought to evade responsibility for their actions of nearly 16 years by accusing the Government of playing a 'blame game'. Mr Speaker, sadly, it is no game.

If I said during the 2011 Election campaign that the former Administration had caused the Health Authority to lose its heart, then I was understating the real facts. Mr Speaker, the GSD had taken its heart, its lungs, its kidneys and, worst of all, its very soul.

1300 Mr Speaker, I rush to point out that it was the *organisation* that had lost this, not the hundreds of professionals who work inside it. But they had become disempowered, demotivated and uninspired. The lack of leadership at the very top – including the absence of political leadership – has left lasting scars that will take their time to heal.

1305 But they are healing already, Mr Speaker. I pay tribute, Mr Speaker, to the professionals, domestics, labourers, attendants, maintenance staff, nurses, the ambulance team, doctors, administration and clerical staff, allied health professionals – everyone – for their dedication, attitude and friendliness. They all know – every last one of them – the importance of their tasks, and perform it well.

Mr Speaker, we still have our shortcomings, but the growing warmth in the GHA is palpable, and the heart has begun to beat again.

1310 Mr Speaker, before diving into the detail of this part of my speech, let me say that in the context of the community, my regular contact with health-related charities has continued unabated. I will not list them all, lest I omit one, and will only mention by name the two that have been established in this past year – Babystepps and the Multiple Sclerosis Society – but I will state that thanks to the suggestions and constructive approach of all of them, we have made real progress this last year and have plans for next, for example: lift access to the Hospital Garden; benches outside the hospital; increase in visits by neurologists and revamping of the neurological service; introduction of neonatal hearing screening; changes in the laws regarding still births; encouraging of hearing protection during public events; improvements to catering services; improvements in access to primary care by particular disability groups; introduction of sound chips for lifts to assist the visually impaired.

1320 This process will continue. I like to regard, Mr Speaker, the requests by community groups, as my alternative manifesto. And I once again acknowledge and thank members of these groups – old and new – for their work.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Health Authority, by which I mean its Board, has continued to meet regularly in public, bringing a totally new dimension to the way the Health Service is administered.

1325 During the course of last year, I commissioned a Review of the Health Service whose recommendations are in the process of being implemented. The former Chief Executive resigned and I am currently undertaking a reorganisation of the GHA's management structures. I decided to follow the novel approach, at least as far as the party opposite is concerned, of a formal competition. I am delighted to tell the House that a Gibraltarian, Mr Freddie Pitto has been appointed as the GHA's new Chief Executive and will begin his duties officially on 1st September, following a period of induction. (*Banging on desks*)

1330

The GHA is creating a unit-based management structure, Mr Speaker, comprising three units: a Hospital Services Unit, based on St Bernard's Hospital; a Primary Care and Community Services Unit; and a Mental Health Unit; and will shortly be appointing Unit General Managers.

1335 I have been concerned for some time about a lack of clarity on organisational responsibilities and believe that the changes the GHA Board and Cabinet have approved will greatly improve not only accountability within the GHA, but also both clinical and corporate governance.

1340 I am also, Mr Speaker, taking steps to increase the involvement of clinicians in management through the designation of new clinical leads in each unit linking with the new Medical Director to address issues of common concern and provide integrated clinical leadership for the GHA. I anticipate that much of the new structure will be functional from the beginning of September this year. The GHA is also revisiting the work undertaken a decade ago by the Gibraltar Healthcare Development Team, which was commissioned by the Party opposite at a cost of over £2 million, but then, in their usual manner, discarded, and will transform the way we deliver services to patients and make them more responsive and truly patient focused.

1345 Mr Speaker, I would like to tell the House about progress made over the past year in meeting our manifesto commitments and improving health care services to our population. We have made great strides with the Colon Cancer Screening Initiative, which will come into operation later this year. I must say that I found that what was supposed to have been a programme that was ready to go had been under-resourced and has required a great deal of work to get back on the rails.

1350 Mr Speaker, we have introduced, as promised, an In Vitro Fertilisation programme; made excellent progress with our new Mental Health in patient facility; and commenced work, together with the Care Agency and the Minister for Equality and Social Services, on a new Dementia Day Hospital which will vastly improve services currently available for these patients in Gibraltar and have a significant impact on bed utilisation at St Bernard's Hospital by avoiding the need for admission.

1355 The issue of bed availability at St Bernard's Hospital is, Mr Speaker, and remains a continuing concern, not helped by the misleading statements constantly issued from the Opposition benches. Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady, the Opposition spokesperson for Health refers constantly to the number on the waiting list increasing; but, Mr Speaker; this is a wholly irrelevant figure. The only figure of consequence is how long people wait for their operation and in that respect, we are still clearing up the mess that they left us from their years in charge of the GHA.

1360 Members opposite, Mr Speaker, use statistics, if I may borrow from poet Andrew Lang, 'as a drunken man uses a lamp post, for support rather than illumination'.

1365 So, let me highlight for their benefit, Mr Speaker, the real issue faced by the GHA which is the same as that faced by all health care organisations in developed countries, where the needs of patients are changing, as the population ages and the incidence of chronic disease increases. St Bernard's Hospital is not an appropriate setting for the delivery of care to many of the patients currently residing there.

1370 This is not something new and it was evident a decade ago that the hospital was becoming predominantly a facility for the care of the elderly. But, Mr Speaker, little was done to address this growing problem. It was preferred instead to pour millions upon millions of pounds into other grandiose schemes, rather than tackle the rather less eye-catching but much more important issue of providing proper facilities for elderly people in Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, quite frankly, they did not care.

1375 Well, Mr Speaker, the parties in Government now do care. We have focused relentlessly on the things that matter to those we serve and the new Dementia Day Hospital, when allied with the dedicated in-patient facility for those with Alzheimer's disease and dementia will make a very real difference to this community. Not only will these schemes provide modern purpose-designed buildings for the frailest members of our society, but they will reduce admissions to St Bernard's Hospital, allowing us to bring much more of its current resources to bear on treating acutely ill patients even more quickly.

1380 But, Mr Speaker, we will also approach this from other angles. In most UK Trusts, some 70% to 85% of elective surgical patients – the majority of waiting-list patients – have their operations in a day surgery unit and are discharged home the same day. In Gibraltar, only just over 30% of elective patients have day surgery. This has to change, Mr Speaker. There is no reason why we cannot double our day surgery caseload and free up a very substantial amount of bed capacity in the hospital. The new Chief Executive will be taking a lead in changing the way we work to ensure that there is always an adequate supply of beds and that cancellation of operations is further reduced.

1385 Added to the use of empty theatre slots on Fridays, minor procedure and plastic surgery initiatives, rationalising of waiting lists, and other steps, the unacceptable levels of waiting times that I inherited, will begin to whittle away.

1390 Mr Speaker, when I leave this Ministry I will certainly make sure that I do not leave a list with patients on it who have been waiting for an operation for a full 15 years, which is what I found.

Mr Speaker, I must mention here the incredible work to this end that is being done by nurses, surgeons and anaesthetists in bringing all this about. They are so pro-active, working together as a team,

contributing of their knowledge and experience. Because they know that they now have someone, and a Government, that will listen and respond. I am proud to have them as colleagues.

1395 Mr Speaker, because continuing simply to add more and more beds is not the solution, we will also be looking at other measures to develop more community-based services to support patients in their own homes which many of them desire and which, where it is feasible, will be a better alternative than being admitted to an acute hospital.

1400 Mr Speaker, I have to report that the GHA has not yet reached an agreement with the consultants about a new contract. However, in my meetings with the consultant body, strong representations have been made to me about some of the changes they are seeking in particular the dismantling of the ludicrous three-month contracts imposed by the previous Government. The draft contract that I inherited, in about its 20th iteration ever since it was first put together in 2004, was closely studied and found not fit for purpose. My team, including our interim Chief Executive, has therefore been undertaking a great deal of work on this matter and now the new Chief Executive will be leading the negotiations to achieve this contract.

I am very hopeful that an agreement which is fair to both sides will be reached before too long. This will allow security of tenure for the consultants, establishment of job plans, and open a new era for the medical profession in the GHA.

1410 In our manifesto, Mr Speaker, we committed ourselves to creating additional posts for General Surgery, Psychiatry and Accident and Emergency Services. A new General Surgeon, Mr Ezzat Tadros was appointed in September 2012; an additional Consultant Psychiatrist, Dr Alan Lillywhite started with the GHA on 1st February; and the new post in Accident and Emergency Medicine will now follow.

1415 Mr Speaker, we have delivered on our electoral promise but that is not the end of the matter and we will continue to review our consultant staffing levels to seek out further opportunities to deliver more of our services locally and reduce our reliance on overseas hospitals.

Mr Speaker, we are committed also to reviewing the contracts of our Non Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs). These doctors provide the 24-hour seven-day cover that keeps hospitals running and as soon as the negotiations on the consultant contract are complete, we will open discussions with the NCHDs and their trade union representatives to address these outstanding issues.

1420 The annual expenditure on sponsored patients has more than doubled over the past decade and now exceeds £9 million. In 2003, only 291 cases went to Spanish hospitals, whereas last year, it was over 500 cases. Clearly, Mr Speaker, many people in our community prefer the convenience, for them and their families, of more local treatment and the Government will continue to facilitate processes for this, whilst also retaining close links with UK centres of excellence, and thereby offering as much choice as possible to the GHA's patients.

1425 We have already made changes to the allowances for disabled people, increasing them by 50% and we will continue our examination and review of the whole programme, in order to ensure that our patients are not disadvantaged by having to travel abroad for specialist treatment.

1430 Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's first ever Health and Lifestyle Survey was conducted in 2008, but funds for analysing and publishing the data were only made available in 2012 – another example, I am afraid, of the Party opposite fulfilling Abba Eban's famous dictum of 'never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity'. Mr Speaker, I most certainly will not miss this opportunity.

1435 The Report is a substantial piece of work. It runs to 250 pages and is supplemented with over 230 charts and tables to illustrate the text.

These are some of the key findings: 50% of the Gibraltar population are overweight or obese. Gibraltar has higher obesity levels than Spain, but lower than the UK; 42% of Gibraltar people who are overweight are unaware that they are; one third actually think they are about the right weight for their height.

1440 Three quarters, as I said before, of men aged 45 and over are overweight; 75% of Gibraltar people do not eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day – significantly worse than in the UK.

The youngest men – 16 to 24 – have a significantly worse diet than any of the other age/sex categories; 29% of the population are current smokers. In the youngest group, Gibraltar has the highest smoking prevalence rate of all the countries studied.

1445 A third of the population do not normally use sun cream.

Mr Speaker, this list is the health equivalent of a ticking time bomb and has to be addressed urgently.

1450 This Government has already taken action to ban smoking in public areas. The Smoke Free Environment Act, which came into force on the 1st October 2012, formed a significant milestone in the history of public health in Gibraltar. Not only was it significant in that passive smoking was at last officially acknowledged as a major health risk, but the general welcome and acceptance by the public was a striking demonstration of how society has moved with the times in taking health matters seriously.

The Health Promotion Department also continues to work with the dieticians to develop local initiatives for helping those who are overweight and/or obese.

1455 Mr Speaker, our Health Services already operate under grave pressure and things are only going to get worse, unless we give much more priority to prevention rather than cure. It will therefore be a key objective for the new Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health to develop ever more sophisticated and extensive Public Health programmes, utilising modern methods of communication, to get our messages over to the population and particularly young people.

1460 As an example, the Public Health department has produced and broadcast its first infomercial on GBC Television, encouraging adults to quit the smoking habit, which was presented through the voices of children. Further infomercials on the dangers of smoking during pregnancy, the new Stop Smoking clinic, colorectal cancer screening and other key health topics will be produced and form part of a bank of infomercials.

1465 Mr Speaker, there are so many messages in the Report of value to all of our citizens that the Public Health department is producing a digest, in the form of a slim 16-page booklet, which captures the essence of the Report on a user-friendly format. This will be widely distributed to households in Gibraltar. I have ensured that appropriate resources have been made available to do this.

1470 Linked to this, Mr Speaker, one of my two ministerial initiatives, announced this year and which will continue into the next, was the establishment of a Healthy Living Group, which has met on several occasions and which will continue to discuss and advise on these matters.

1475 Mr Speaker, colorectal cancer is Gibraltar's most commonly occurring cancer, as well as its third most frequent cause of cancer deaths. The incidence is also rising compared to a decade ago and this disease has a high mortality if untreated.

1480 A plan was prepared for investment in this programme which I found was incomplete and under-resourced and which required this Government to provide considerable resources in order now finally to move towards implementation.

1485 The screening plan will initially consist of a programme targeted at all persons between the ages of 60 and 74. Such a programme is currently in place in most major countries and uses a laboratory test to detect faint traces of blood in the individual's stools, a sign of possible hidden cancer. The screening programme will start later this financial year and will be a very significant step forward in detection of this cancer.

1490 In our manifesto, Mr Speaker, we committed ourselves to providing In Vitro Fertilisation or (IVF) treatment for couples with fertility problems that have no children. The GHA Board approved the scheme at its meeting in December 2012 and it came into force from January this year. To date, some 20 couples have been referred for treatment under this much-needed programme, and I am happy to report that so far there have been six pregnancies. Mr Speaker, the difference we have made to these couples' lives...

Mr Speaker, this Government delivers on its promises.

1495 And we are moving on our other commitments. Work has started on introducing a much-needed protocol for stroke patients.

1500 Children's Services are being reviewed in order to cater more efficiently for their journey through primary and secondary care.

Plans are in motion to deliver another important screening service, that for abdominal aortic aneurisms, which we are hoping to introduce towards the end of the financial year.

1505 And, Mr Speaker, we will not rest at just manifesto commitments. In my time in office, I have been able to pick up specific areas where the Health Service was failing. Either from my own observations, or discussions with staff, patients or relatives, I have come across a number of areas where we are falling short.

1510 One of these is neurology, and as I have already announced, we are fully revising this service. Another is management of children with conditions related to autism. Once again, we are reviewing the relevant aspects of the service in conjunction with our UK visiting consultants.

Last year, we introduced Public Access Defibrillators for the first time, and we will this year expand the number of locations where these are located.

A&E is another area where we have been working – and will continue to work. This front-line service, often misunderstood, has been improved by structural changes to the department, which will continue.

1515 And, Mr Speaker, we are looking at how we can improve the services offered by the allied health professionals, such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, dietetics, audiology and speech therapy.

1520 Mr Speaker, the Government is committed to ensuring registration with the General Medical Council for all our doctors. The current medical registration legislation is chaotic. Rushed transposition of an EU Directive by the previous administration means that one of our laws says one thing and another says the very opposite. That is, faced with a doctor's particular qualifications, one law says he can register and the other says he cannot. How this got to happen in a Government full of lawyers, I cannot understand. I suppose, Mr Speaker, that there are lawyers, and there are lawyers. *(Laughter)*

Therefore, in order to achieve a new and consistent system of registration, the Medical Registration Board has commenced direct discussions with the GMC, whose headquarters in London I will be visiting next month. We aim to achieve that our doctors will both achieve revalidation and licence to practice and

1515 that our new laws will allow that. At the same time the GHA, as an organisation, will need to tighten up on governance and processes, including appraisal of doctors. We will take the opportunity in revising the law to introduce for the first time in Gibraltar regulation and registration of professions allied to medicine.

1520 And that is not the only health-related law that needs work. There are others, including the Mental Health Act, which hails from 1968 and is completely outdated. We are well advanced in drafting new legislation which will better fit the needs of a modern society.

Mr Speaker, we have also advanced in amending the legislation that governs the Ombudsman in order to achieve another manifesto commitment – that is the passing of dealing with medical complaints to his office.

1525 Mr Speaker, crucial to the delivery of excellent health care is a well-trained and well-motivated nursing staff, delivering through high quality care to our patients. Equally important, however, is to plan for the future to ensure that we are well placed to anticipate change and manage and develop our services to meet future demand. Earlier this year, the GHA approved a five-year Nursing and Midwifery Strategy, entitled ‘Keeping your health at the centre of what we do’, developed through effective engagement with our nurses and midwives and between them and their patients. Our ambition for the future is to place the needs of the patients at the centre of everything that we do and ensure that fundamental standards of care and practice are consistently high in all of our care environments.

1530 So, Mr Speaker, patient involvement is crucial to fashioning services which are responsive to their needs.

1535 Mr Speaker, this Government committed itself to a major increase in nurse staffing – 33 additional posts – to rectify years of neglect on this matter and all of these posts have been filled. But our manifesto commitment is not just about nursing increases in the main wards and services; we are also addressing nursing staff needs in the smaller specialist areas and, for example, are in the process of increasing the number of Diabetic and Palliative Care nurses.

1540 Mr Speaker, one of the biggest successes of the past year has been the reorganisation of the Primary Care appointments system. For many years, patients have struggled to obtain appointments, often by queuing up at the PCC early in the morning, in a vain attempt to get an appointment to see their doctor. At the same time, hardworking staff have had to endure criticism and even abuse.

1545 The introduction of a new appointments system in October, designed by the Primary Care team itself, has led to a much better service to patients. Improvements to their repeat prescription processes have also helped. The main remaining problem is that of telephone appointments which, despite the hard work of the operators on site, is due to the large number of calls first thing some mornings which simply flood the system. Further improvements are due which should improve this, which will include the ability to book your health centre appointments online.

1550 The nurse prescribing system is running well, with nurse practitioners at last being able to prescribe.

In addition, Mr Speaker, we have added three Nurse Practitioner Emergency clinics each day supported by the emergency doctor and this has also helped provide a better and more responsive service to our patients.

1555 Nurse-led clinics have a tremendous part to play in developing our Health Service and we are looking at possibilities here.

In fact, Mr Speaker, primary care as a whole, including the work of General Practitioners, space and administration requirements, and services out in the community are in the process of being reviewed and I look forward to developments during the coming year.

1560 Mr Speaker, the GHA is Gibraltar’s largest Government Department, when assessed by budget, and this year spending will exceed £90 million. For many years and certainly the past decade, there has been a managerial failure to control spending, leading to constant overspends of millions.

Mr Speaker, this Government expects expenditure to be controlled and I have taken steps to ensure that this is the case. I am delighted to report that, for the first time in many years, the GHA has in 2012-13 achieved a balance of its budget with its expenditure.

1565 This, Mr Speaker, is a most significant achievement, as in fact over the past year, we have made considerable improvements, including staff increases, but have spent less money in real terms. What does that say about past management of taxpayers’ money?

1570 Mr Speaker, I am not saying that we will not invest more in healthcare. But I am saying that we will make sure that every pound spent is put to good use and that the investment made in the GHA is managed effectively and efficiently. I am, as I stated earlier, Mr Speaker, taking steps to restructure the management of the GHA and part of that involves strengthening budgetary discipline to ensure that for the future we continue to balance our budget.

1575 Mr Speaker, we promised in our manifesto to computerise patient notes within two years. To this end, the Electronic Health Technology Team has reviewed a number of options for an Electronic Health Record (EHR), including UK and Spanish models and will be preparing the specification paper in order to initiate the tender process. I make no apology for making haste slowly on this particular commitment,

as the experience of the NHS on such initiatives has been one of only occasional successes on a road littered with many extremely expensive failures, and our project will not suffer the same fate.

1580 That said, Mr Speaker, an EHR system is vital to the future success of the GHA, not only because it will vastly improve our information flows in support of the provision of excellent care for our patients, but also because such systems are the bedrock of good clinical governance.

1585 So, Mr Speaker, I have commissioned a short, sharp review of our preparedness for procuring and implementing an EHR and expect to receive that report within the next two months and then move forward. It is very important not to underestimate the scale of such a task which, to be successful, will require the involvement and commitment of all of the GHA's staff. But with the re-kindled spirit of teamwork and co-operation now so evident in the GHA, we will achieve it.

Mr Speaker, over the next two years, we will prove that we will, finally, have an electronic health record system in Gibraltar, a system that we all deserve.

1590 That does not mean, Mr Speaker, that we are standing still with other much-needed developments in our IM&T systems across the GHA.

Projects and systems improvements undertaken in the past year include: in Mental Health Services, a module which covers patient information on referrals and management of outpatient and inpatient activity, which has been developed and was launched in February this year; and also a system for processing risk management, claims and litigation.

1595 But, Mr Speaker, that is not the end of it and other IT projects to be completed in this financial year include: a computerised colorectal screening programme, including a call/recall service; a similar system for abdominal aortic aneurism; a cancer registry patient management system; improvements to the Patient Registration management system; an improved referral system from Primary to Secondary Care; a sponsored patients module; a Child Welfare Clinic module; a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease module; and paperless prescribing.

1600 The aging digital telephone system in the Primary Care Centre has been upgraded to IP telephony technology and all phones have been replaced with modern IP Phones. We have also increased telephone lines to allow improved access for patients.

1605 The Gibraltar Health Authority website is currently undergoing a complete redesign with a new look, updated content and increased functionality and is expected to be available by the end of this week.

1610 Mr Speaker, I stated last year in my Budget speech that records staff, both at St Bernard's and the Primary Care Centre, needed better accommodation in which to operate. A new Medical Records Department at St Bernard's Hospital will shortly be completed, providing spacious and functional accommodation for the safe storage and retrieval of medical records. A new patient administration area and expanded record facilities at the Primary Care Centre has already also been provided.

This past year the Department of Pathology has brought about significant improvements to its services. Mr Speaker, I will mention just a few of these.

1615 The first impacts on the whole GHA and has resulted in the delivery time of results to clinicians to be much quicker than before. As soon as the results are ready and validated, they are available on-line for clinicians to see. In addition, electronic requesting of tests has removed the need for filling in paper requests, removing possible typographical and other errors, and improving patient safety.

The Department is continually fine-tuning this information system, based on feedback from users and a level of excellence has been achieved, such that the software supplier has recognised our system as cutting-edge in the way it has been configured.

1620 Mr Speaker, the supplier has the system installed in over 700 laboratories in 15 countries and has classed the GHA's laboratory as a reference centre. This led to the system being show-cased to a delegation of specialists from Thailand, looking to introduce it in their hospital.

1625 Mr Speaker, in line with the Government's aspirations to explore university level education as close to home as possible, I am delighted to announce that in September 2012, we recruited 15 local students into Gibraltar's first full-time nursing degree programme. The BSc (Adult Nursing) course attracted significant local interest, and this programme is now being taught in the School of Health Studies by our own lecturers.

1630 Thanks to the enthusiasm and co-operation of our clinical staff, all of the clinical placements required for these students to undertake these practical aspects of the course on the wards and departments are also able to be delivered in Gibraltar. This has required us to ensure that we have sufficient educational mentors – and these programmes have been run locally, also – enabling practitioners to gain additional local qualifications in mentorship.

1635 In addition Mr Speaker, the Director of Nursing and his hard working team have been carefully managing vacancies as they arise, in order to ensure that the 14 Diploma in Nursing students who will graduate in September this year will all have a staff nurse's post available.

We have also successfully appointed a new senior lecturer to the department, Gibraltarian James Viñales. A significant amount of post-registration education has also been provided.

1640 But, Mr Speaker, provision of education must now go further. There has been substantial investment and planning with respect to opening the gateway to professional career paths for those who may have an aptitude and enthusiasm, but may not necessarily hold the required entry qualifications. In order to assist these staff, NVQ Level 2 training has been developed and delivered, with the support of our local School of Health studies – notably the tutor, Janet Lane. I am pleased to report that 21 candidates have successfully completed and passed their NVQ Level 2 in the past year. This is a significant achievement, for which I commend both these staff and their tutors.

1645 Mr Speaker, I am delighted to confirm that the GHA is renewing the educational contract with Kingston and St George's University. This has proved a mutually advantageous partnership and I look forward to its continued success over the coming years.

1650 What I think is the biggest achievement of the school this year, Mr Speaker, is the re-introduction of Enrolled Nurse training, offering once again opportunities for progression for Nursing Assistants who, for whatever reason, cannot go down the degree avenue. Enrolled Nurses would then be able to train further to achieve staff nurse status. This is an improvement on the UK system and shows how this Government cares.

1655 Mr Speaker, the development and modernisation of the Gibraltar Ambulance Service was a stated priority for the Government. Over the past year, a significant amount of attention and investment has been made to address a number of deficiencies which were seriously affecting staff morale and the capacity to deliver the standard of service which we believe the people of Gibraltar deserve.

In this respect, Mr Speaker, I was most recently proud to have presented the members of this fully fledged emergency service with long service medals for the first time.

1660 Mr Speaker, we have seen the delivery of three new state-of-the-art ambulances for our Emergency Ambulance Service. Funding has also been provided for a further five ambulances, which will arrive during August and September this year.

1665 The GHA is providing an expanded rest area for the ambulance crews, which are a marked improvement on the cramped area they previously occupied in the A&E Department. This is an interim solution, pending a longer-term permanent replacement to be provided, as part of wide-ranging changes in the layout of St Bernard's.

1670 The Government has continued to invest in paramedic training for staff, which was recently topped up with some additional practice placements overseen by the paramedic tutor. Our paramedic students are due to complete their degree programme in September 2013 and work is currently underway to design the job descriptions to ensure that on completion of their degree, the paramedics can move seamlessly into the new roles.

I am also delighted to report that the paramedic degree programme was also validated by the Health Professions Council in the UK – its first overseas validation.

1675 In order to ensure that we make the best use of this new expertise, the Government has commissioned an external review of our ambulance services. The review is due to report by the end of the summer.

1680 Let me now turn, Mr Speaker, to a subject very close to my heart, Mental Health Services. These services continue to go from strength to strength and this Government remains 100% committed to rectifying the under-investment of its predecessors. The last financial year saw an investment in excess of £70,000 simply to provide basic levels of comfort within the unsatisfactory environment at KGV. This has brightened up the existing facility and has improved significantly the morale of both patients and staff.

All of the professionals from the Mental Health Services have been actively involved in planning their new facility on the old Royal Naval Hospital site, which has occupied a significant amount of staff time over the past year.

1685 Finally, I am delighted to note that in the last financial year, KGV Hospital was successfully nominated as team of the year for our staff awards ceremony. The fact that such a touching citation came from users of our services is testimony to the work that our excellent staff have managed to continue to deliver in what we all acknowledge are sub-optimal surroundings.

1690 We should also remember, Mr Speaker, that mental health problems are not confined to adults and can strike at any age. A contract has therefore been signed for visiting Consultants for Children's Services in Mental Health, so that we can also offer first-rate services to our children. There is a growing and fruitful partnership between the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the GHA, and a number of visits to Gibraltar have now been completed by Dr Bruce Clark, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist.

1695 This Government remains committed too to improving the community services provided by the Community Mental Health Team, a small team, but of undoubted commitment and capability.

Mr Speaker, a top priority for the forthcoming year, is the completion and commissioning of the new unit which we anticipate will be handed over in October or November. Then, at last, Mr Speaker, Gibraltar will have the first rate mental health facility that should have been provided many, many years ago!

1700 Mr Speaker, last year the Government increased the GHA's Capital Expenditure funding from £800,000 to £3.3 million – an increase of 312%. This substantial increase was not a manifesto commitment, but simply recognition that after years of under-investment by the Party opposite we needed to increase capital expenditure in the GHA to allow it to develop important projects necessary to improve facilities and upgrade medical equipment that has become either technically or clinically obsolete.

1705 This increased funding has allowed the GHA to embark on an ambitious medical equipment lifecycle replacement programme to ensure that our clinicians are supported with the modern technology that is now an integral part of health care delivery.

1710 For example Mr Speaker, we have been able to: upgrade the St Bernard's Emergency Oxygen System; upgrade the St Bernard's Cardiac Alarm System, so that cardiac arrest alarms now go straight to a pager-triggering system, which includes specific location details and will also cut the manual step of contacting the call centre from the loop. Electronic logs of these alarms will be generated, improving on reporting and auditing trails.

1715 We have procured two new dialysis units, which brings to four the total of units which have been replaced, and it is envisaged that the two remaining units will be replaced during the course of this financial year.

We have redeveloped theatre 3 to provide the necessary space for increased throughput, as part of our Day Surgery Initiative.

1720 But that is only part of the story, Mr Speaker. Work continues on a host of other projects to meet the GHA's urgent needs and also to deliver on all of our manifesto commitments. These include, apart from those already mentioned: the new Dementia Day Care Facility at the old Royal Naval Hospital site; redevelopment of the Accident and Emergency Department; expansion of the Day Surgery Ward, to increase capacity to 15 patients; an expansion of the Blood Department, which is an EU Blood Directive requirement which had been ignored for years; a new patient counselling area for Palliative Care; a new clinical area for the Hepatitis B immunisation service; and a new area for colorectal screening.

1725 And Mr Speaker, there is more to come. We said in our manifesto that we would:

'make alternative arrangements to improve the delivery of meals and consequently their quality'.

1730 We have decided to go much further than that, Mr Speaker. It beggars belief that the previous Administration could have settled on a scheme which places the kitchen providing meals for patients at St Bernard's, KGV and HM Prison in its current location and then purchased an extraordinarily expensive plated-meals service which not only fails in its basic design, but costs a fortune to maintain. We have therefore started again from scratch and examined the relocation of the facility, via a feasibility study for which a preliminary outline design has been completed.

1735 Plans are progressing for the creation of a new Catering Department at St Bernard's Hospital. This initiative is very important as it will improve the quality of the food served at the bedside and good nutrition is an essential aid to the provision of excellent health care.

1740 Could I, at this juncture, Mr Speaker, pay tribute to the excellent work done by Duncan Cerisola, our Catering Manager and his team, who have continued to work in very difficult conditions to provide a good service to our patients. I should make clear, Mr Speaker, that, as a team, they are not at all happy with their current working conditions and strongly advocate these changes being implemented as quickly as possible. We will not let them down.

1745 The GHA is very conscious of the need to reduce the environmental impact brought about by its increasing use of facilities and services. A specially established GHA team is actively working on a range of environmentally friendly initiatives aimed at reducing energy consumption, enhancing energy conservation and recovery, and the reduction of operational costs. These include: a solar thermal initiative to reduce the use of oil burners and provide a large amount of hot water throughout the Hospital; an LED lighting scheme, to replace conventional lighting throughout the GHA estate; air-conditioning set-back controls; smart metering installations to ensure we can monitor power usage throughout St Bernard's; heat recovery systems, ensuring we recover heat load generated from our air conditioning systems in order to provide hot water.

1750 In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to two people who I have not mentioned so far: the interim Chief Executive, John Langan and Ernest Lima, his adviser, for assisting us to get through a period of change in the Health Service.

1755 But what can I say about the salient points that remain to be made?

1760 Well, the first is the way that clinical staff, including nurses and doctors are listened to so much more, and encouraged to get involved in initiatives and decision-making. The second is the great teamwork that has developed, not just within the GHA, but also between the GHA and other Departments, particularly the Departments so ably led by my friend and colleague the Minister for Equality and Social Services, Samantha Sacramento.

1765 But also in particular with Education and with Housing, the seamless integration of multi-agency, multi-disciplinary and inter-departmental teams is making a real difference to the community. To mention but one example, the Occupational Therapy department is now fully involved with other professionals in a wide range of activities, from assessments of the needs of the elderly at home, through the design of new facilities, to ensuring that our new housing schemes are fit for the elderly and disabled, not like those we inherited.

1770 Mr Speaker, I must once again pay tribute to all the staff. Health professionals because they deserve our thanks every single day that they get up to go to work; supporting services because without them the Health Service would not function; administrators because they provide the chain that links the cogs to keep them turning.

And I would like to make mention of management as a whole, clinical, support, and administration. They have kept the machinery running, and improving, while so much change has been going on around them. That is never easy.

1775 While things have begun to be looked at differently, as the way of doing things and who has been doing them has been evolving. Thank you for your patience. We are nearly there.

And of course to the unions, whose support for their members is strong and resolute, but whose sense of responsibility in the delicate environment of healthcare is just as strong and just as resolute. Your job is not easy, but you carry it out admirably.

1780 Mr Speaker, this Government has already made very substantial progress on fulfilling its manifesto commitments for health. I believe that under the leadership of the new management team, we will be able rapidly to move forward and complete our programme during the next two and a half years.

1785 Mr Speaker, this is a new Gibraltar. So much has changed. It feels like smoke-free restaurants and paper-recycling have been with us forever – but it has been much less than a year for both. The community have now got used to being able to openly comment on – and yes, criticise! – the Government without fear of reprisal from the chamber of horrors that was No. 6. *(Laughter)*

We now accept that a Government's plan can be constructively discussed by the people and that the Government will listen.

Gone are the days of autocracy and secrecy. We have taken Government back to the people.

1790 Mr Speaker, the new dawn came, and now, the sun is rising. *(Applause)*

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, may I invite you to recess the House now for 15 minutes? Although we have been invited to refrain from digestives, perhaps we can at least enjoy a cup of tea!

1795 **Mr Speaker:** The House will now recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed at 5.40 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 5.58 p.m.

1800

**Appropriation Bill 2013
For Second Reading
Debate continued**

1805 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

Minister for Education, Financial Services, Gaming, Telecommunications and Justice (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to present my Budget address as Minister with responsibility for Education, Financial Services, Gaming, Telecommunications and Justice.

1810 Mr Speaker, the 9th December 2011 indeed saw a new dawn for Gibraltar politics. Since that day, my fellow Ministers and I have worked to bring about the agenda for change that the people of Gibraltar elected us to deliver.

1815 The Government has, of course, an overreaching desire, and indeed a duty, to deliver stability, opportunity and growth across all areas for which we, collectively, have responsibility. But it also has a political responsibility to deliver fairness, equality and transparency in governance, as well as providing the building blocks of a healthy and vibrant economy.

This Government will bring about a new era of social and economic prosperity and the positive change that the people of Gibraltar want and deserve – a change which already, a mere 18 months since we took office, is palpable and evident.

1820 That said, Mr Speaker, I turn to the various areas of responsibilities that form part of my ministerial portfolio, starting with Education.

1825 Education, Mr Speaker, remains a top priority for the Government. The Estimates reflect that the amount required for the year ended 31st March 2014 for salaries, wages and expenses is £37,892,000. The forecast outturn for the year ended 31st March 2013 is £33,861,000. There is therefore a projected increase this year of around £4 million – that is just over 10% – in recurrent expenditure.

1830 This follows an increase in last year’s Budget of around 23%. In two years, the Education budget for recurrent expenditure has gone up from £28,407,000 to an estimate for this year of £37,892,000. That is an increase of around 33%, one third, in two years. It is, I believe, unprecedented and clearly serves to confirm our continuing commitment to Education.

1835 As anticipated in last year’s Budget, September 2012 saw an increase of 47 in the complement of teachers. In fact, the complement increased by 48 as, in addition to the 47 new teachers, one post of instructor was converted to that of qualified teacher.

1840 One of the effects of the increase was to resolve the long-standing problem of having supply teachers permanently on supply, whilst covering what was clearly not a temporary need. These teachers have now been given the opportunity of having permanent tenure of employment, with all the benefits that this brings, including all employment protection rights, sick leave, maternity leave and pension rights. Those engaged have also had years worked on supply taken into account for salary and pension purposes.

1845 The increase of 47 teachers also means that there are now more teachers in our schools than there have ever been. This benefits the teachers themselves, the schools, the pupils and, ultimately, the whole of Gibraltar.

1850 The eradication of the concept of permanent supply has not just affected teachers. It has also resulted in the permanent engagement of over 20 cleaners who, again, are now able to enjoy the full employment rights which they were previously denied.

1855 We have also seen the engagement through a Government-owned company of 153 lunchtime supervisors. Until now, these ladies were engaged in September of each year and dismissed from employment the following June. The result was that they had no security of employment, did not enjoy full employment protection rights, were not able to take maternity leave and had no pension rights whatsoever. All of that has been remedied by the engagement of these ladies earlier this month.

1860 With regard to scholarships, Mr Speaker, hon. Members will note a provision for 2013-14 of £10,250,000 compared to a forecast outturn in 2012-13 of £9,689,000. That is an increase of £561,000. This reflects the increasing number of students supported by the Government.

1865 As a result of the changes the Government has already made since elected into office in respect of mandatory, distance learning and discretionary scholarships, the Department of Education has commissioned a bespoke student data management system to cope with the increase in the number of our young people that now have access to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and other qualifications.

1870 In nurseries, applications for nursery placements are substantially higher this year, totalling 398. In order to meet the demand, St Mary’s and Governor’s Meadow First Schools will open for the next year in the afternoon. There will be a nursery place for every application, should parents wish to take up the offer they receive.

1875 Apart from the more than 50% increase in the complement of Special Needs Learning Support Assistants, which were formerly known as Classroom Aides, implemented in last year’s Budget, their role has also been reviewed. A more modern and enhanced job description that better focuses on learning support has been devised and successfully implemented.

1880 Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that the new extension at Notre Dame, with enhanced facilities for Special Educational Needs, was completed in record time, and was ready to receive pupils, as promised, by September 2012.

1885 I can also confirm that works for a much-needed extension at St Martin’s started in April 2013 with an expected completion date set for the beginning of August. This should provide the school with approximately 170 m² of extra space. This project is being carried out with the support of the Kusuma Trust to which the Government is very grateful.

1890 Government is also committed to developing a clearer understanding and awareness of the needs of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and this continues to be developed by the Department of Education’s Advisory Service. One of its members is currently completing a Masters degree in Education in this area of educational practice. A programme of in-service training for teachers and other professionals will be launched for the next academic year 2013-14. The Department of Education will also offer individual teachers further opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding in this and other fields of interest.

1895 The Department of Education has developed a programme for the support of children with emotional and behavioural issues. The provision is specifically aimed at supporting children who cannot be educated within the school context. Such arrangements are always undertaken as temporary measures and the goal will always be to re-introduce the child back to the school as soon as is practicable and the child is ready.

1885 All Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators have now received training in autism, delivered by one of the UK regional specialist centres. With the support of the Advisory Service, further in-service sessions have already been delivered to one Middle School and other schools will follow during 2013-14. All schools will benefit from similar in-service sessions in understanding autism.

1890 In addition to this course, members of the Advisory Service have received specialist training in understanding autism by the Autism Education Trust in the UK. This Level 3 Training Programme is designed to support professionals working in education. The focus of the training is on the UK's National Autism Standards, which are used to identify good practice in schools for pupils with autism, as well as helping in the development of the provision already in place.

1895 Mr Speaker, our 14-to-19-year-old children continue to enjoy a range of fascinating science and mathematics activities and experiments prepared by outreach teams from the British Science Museum and Cambridge University. These initiatives continue to be sponsored by the Kusuma Trust and serve to give children different perspectives of what science and mathematics are all about.

1900 The Young Enterprise Scheme continues to thrive and clearly enjoys the support of the business community. This is a good example of Gibraltar punching above its weight, inasmuch as our Young Enterprise teams always do extremely well when competing against the 26,000 students and the 2,000 companies across the UK, in the National Championships in the UK every June. The Gibraltar representative has achieved third and fourth places in recent years and last year, Y-Tangle, an innovative product designed to prevent headphone cables from becoming tangled, won the Best Product award.

1905 The finals in Gibraltar for this year took place last week, with seven teams displaying once again imaginative products with very high standards of design and production. I congratulate the winners Elementz, with a product called Bootz – a waterproof boot designed to be worn over shoes and trousers to prevent them from getting wet – and wish them every success at the forthcoming national finals in the UK.

1910 As an example of the very real results that schemes such as Young Enterprise can deliver, I am very pleased to see that one of last year's teams from Westside School, Develop I.T., has now become a Private Limited Company. This group of young people developed an App called Key2Gib, an electronic tourist and visitor guide. The App includes diverse sections including What to See, What to Eat and Things to do. The App is also an extensive guide to all things Gibraltar – with the inclusion of tourist hotspots, restaurants and a great range of activities available on the Rock. I have the App myself on my iPhone and I can certainly say that it should be downloaded by every visitor to Gibraltar, as well as by all residents.

1915 The Government congratulates all those involved in the Young Enterprise Scheme for their magnificent achievements.

1920 This academic year, Mr Speaker, will see the implementation of a repeat programme at Bayside for Year 12 boys who have need to improve their grades in the core GCSEs. A repeat package of GCSEs and qualifications will be on offer to children who wish to improve their grades and possibly progress onto A-Level study or seek employment at a later stage. This will mirror the repeat provision that has existed at Westside for many years.

It was wrong, Mr Speaker, for boys not to have the same opportunities as those which were available to girls. The Government has now corrected this anomaly.

1925 Bayside is also piloting an exciting new series of courses from the ASDAN awarding body, as a more vocational, life-skill-based pathway. ASDAN programmes and qualifications are well established in the UK and offer flexible ways to accredit skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life.

1930 Mr Speaker, the Department of Education continues to keep a close watch on 14-19 developments in England and will advise the Government accordingly. The public examination system in England is in a constant state of flux. Our secondary schools and the College have successfully adapted to these changes, sometimes at very short notice.

1935 There are more changes on the horizon, such as the curtailing of the 'repeat' system within the A-Level examinations, the reintroduction of two-year courses with terminal examinations at the end, the uncertain future of the GCSE in England and the constant updating of the examination specifications, or syllabi.

These are examples of the challenges which our local education system will continue to face. I am glad to say that all the professionals at the Department of Education have always risen to such challenges and will undoubtedly do so again as they arise in the future.

1940 Mr Speaker, Government remains firmly committed to the provision of Higher Education programmes in Gibraltar. The Department of Education is currently exploring a number of potential routes leading to the development of university faculties in Gibraltar and the provision of a range of professional qualifications and post-graduate programmes. I expect to be able to make further announcements on this during the course of this year.

The Department of Education is also firmly committed to providing opportunities for professional development for all staff. The Leadership and Management courses for teachers, which is accredited by

- 1945 Durham University, terminates this year. The Department of Education is currently working on the provision of a more specialised programme of teacher professional development, focusing more on practical teaching, learning and pedagogy, as an alternative to Leadership and Management. It is envisaged that these programmes will also be at Master's degree level.
- 1950 The Advisory Service has also provided or facilitated in-service courses in the following areas: Safeguarding Children Tier 1 Training – this multi-agency commitment, which education forms part of, has continued to offer monthly training. So far 110 teachers have completed the Safeguarding (Tier 1); it is forecast that the full teaching complement will have received Tier 1 training by the end of the academic year 2013-14.
- 1955 Tier 2 training is now well established and provides additional guidance and support to senior leaders requiring a greater depth of knowledge and skill in this area.
- Dignified Care and Responsibility Training: this continues to be facilitated by the Advisory Service. Restraining children should always be a last resort strategy. DCRT is commended for its focus on de-escalation techniques and serves to reduce the need to physically restrain children. This course includes both the theoretical aspects, such as understanding aggression and aggression cycles, triggers, self-awareness and risk assessments, as well as the practical skills needed to safely restrain children.
- 1960 The Advisory Service continues to work in partnership with all schools to enhance and develop anti-bullying strategies. A common anti-bullying framework is already in place offering guidance to schools on how to manage incidents of bullying. Following on, Mr Speaker, from the introduction of a permanent BEST team last year, twilight sessions have already been held in the majority of schools to reinforce the support that this service provides.
- 1965 First Aid Courses in schools: this is part of a rolling programme facilitated by the Advisory Service. British Sign Language Level 2: the Advisory Service is funding teachers attending the Level 2 course. 'Using Smartboards More Effectively': this is funded and facilitated by the Advisory Service and involves the training in the UK of a Middle School teacher in the use of Smartboard technology. This teacher will then in turn cascade the training to other practitioners.
- 1970 Mr Speaker, apart from this, schools continue to prepare and deliver their own 'in house' in-service, which addresses individual schools' priorities in support of school improvement and development.
- The number of Smartboards and access to these is growing and a programme to substitute first generation Smartboards for new models is being implemented. Six IT technicians have now been employed by the Government's IT and Logistics Department for deployment in schools. This should address the historical lack of dedicated IT support and maintenance of ICT equipment in schools.
- 1975 The Department of Education is also actively encouraging, fostering and funding the development of technological developments and initiatives by individual teachers. These include educational mobile phone 'Apps', websites and sophisticated, web-based pupil-teacher interfaces for PE, Music or ICT.
- 1980 Mr Speaker, the Health and Safety Audits of all schools commencing in January 2012 were completed within a year, as per our manifesto commitment. A technical officer from the Ministry for Housing has now been seconded to the Department of Education in order to support the addressing of the repairs and maintenance issues arising as a result of the Audits.
- 1985 As part of these recommendations, Asbestos Surveys have also been completed in all schools except St Martin's School, which is currently in progress. Asbestos registers have also been completed and updated.
- Computer software is being commissioned as a result of the increase in the volume of repairs. This will replace the current legacy system in use by the Department of Education. The new system will support the processing of works orders in respect of repairs carried out by the dedicated GJBS maintenance team for schools. This will offer substantial savings in time, accuracy, improved management and tracking of the huge volume of repairs and maintenance generated by the maintenance and repairs programme for schools. The software will also be used for accurately costing works for budgeting purposes.
- 1990 During the financial year ended 31st March 2013, the following works have been carried out.
- 1995 An extension was completed at Westside School. This extension includes two new kitchens and a drama studio. The total cost during the last financial year has been £313,360.
- New classroom conversions have been completed at Westside School at a total cost of £10,625.
- A special needs purpose-built extension at Notre Dame First School was completed at a cost of £539,000.
- 2000 The windows of the western façade of St Anne's Middle School have all been replaced. The cost has been £146,000.
- The works to provide St Joseph's Nursery with special flooring have been completed at a cost of £14,466.
- 2005 The gymnasium flooring at Bayside and Governor's Meadow Schools have been replaced with new 'Taraflex' flooring at a total cost of £12,000.
- Structural timber support works have also been completed at Bleak House at a total cost of £32,600.

Works planned for the current financial year include the following.

2010 Works on the extension, as I have already mentioned, to St Martin's School commenced on 18th April 2013 with an expected completion date set for the beginning of August. Works involve the building of a one-storey extension with an approximate area of 170 m².

Westside School will benefit from the construction of two much-needed science laboratories. These works will commence this summer and will be completed for the new academic year 2013-14.

2015 A full mezzanine floor will also be constructed to maximise the usable space available at St Joseph's First and Middle Schools in their lunch hall. The works will commence this summer and will provide six extra classrooms for the two schools.

The refurbishment of Bayside School will commence this year, with the painting of the school and the replacement of windows at the ICT/History area.

The ICT Suites at both the Hebrew School and St Paul's First School will be re-sited this summer.

2020 The toilet block at the present Sacred Heart Middle School site will be re-configured and refurbished.

St Mary's First School will have the windows to the west façade replaced.

The patio flooring at Bleak House will also be replaced during the course of this year.

The fence at the east side of St Paul's First School will be repaired and the playground fence will be removed to be replaced with a brick wall, for increased privacy of the school grounds.

2025 Mr Speaker, in accordance with the Government's manifesto commitment, Sacred Heart Middle School will be relocated. We will also relocate St Bernard's First School.

The Government has announced the conversion of the Old St Bernard's Hospital site into two new schools and community sports facilities. The works will primarily involve the renovation and modernisation of existing buildings to turn these into a First School and a Middle School.

2030 In addition, there will be a Sports Hall which will be shared by the two schools with a play area/sports court on top of the Hall. Both the hall and the court will be available for community use. These can be accessed separately and will house toilets and changing room facilities.

The First School will have eight classrooms, rooms for teaching children with special educational needs and specialised teaching areas and spaces specifically designed to cater for this age range, including rooms for Music, ICT and a library.

2035 The Middle School will have 16 classrooms, SEN rooms, a library and dedicated teaching areas for Music, ICT, Art, and Science in keeping with the needs of older children.

A salient feature of the Middle School will be a central glass-roofed, multi-purpose atrium which will be available for students and teachers to enjoy either for social or educational purposes.

2040 Both schools will be fully accessible to pupils, parents or teachers who may have mobility issues. The schools will also be fully networked and equipped with ICT resources and facilities.

Mr Speaker, this exciting project creates much needed school facilities in this area as well as sports facilities for the Community. This will be, in fact, the first purpose built Sports Hall in the Central or Upper Town area. It will be a showpiece of urban regeneration in the Upper Town, combining heritage with educational needs and new facilities for the whole community to enjoy.

2045 Work on the site has already started with expected completion in the summer of 2015, in time for the new intake of students in September of that year.

Mr Speaker, the Government promised one new school. It is in fact building two new schools.

This Government means what it says, acts on its commitments and delivers on its promises. We are seeing that not just in Education but across all Government Departments.

2050 Mr Speaker, I turn to other areas of my ministerial portfolio, starting with financial services.

Mr Speaker, the financial sector accounts for around 15% of total employment and contributes around 20% to GDP. Overall, there has been an increase in employee jobs in the Finance Sector of 2.1% – 66 jobs – during 2011-12.

2055 As part of the European Union, Gibraltar's financial services, licensing, regulatory and investor and depositor compensation regimes are fully compliant with all EU requirements. Gibraltar-licensed financial services firms have access to the EU single market of over 500 million people, with 'passporting' rights in banking, investment services, insurance, reinsurance and insurance mediation.

2060 Gibraltar's successful finance centre is based on the Government's conviction that it must remain squarely within the mainstream of international consensus. In line with its commitment to transparency and effective exchange of information, Gibraltar has to date negotiated and signed a network of tax information exchange agreements with OECD/EU Member States. Gibraltar is on the G20-instigated OECD 'white list', and is currently negotiating or concluding similar agreements with several other countries. Tax information exchange agreements signed so far have been with the USA, France, Germany, the UK, India, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Malta, Mexico, Turkey, Poland, Greece and the seven Nordic countries – Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Faroes and Greenland.

2065 To underscore Gibraltar's commitment to transparency and exchange of information, I undertook to personally sign further tax information exchange agreements since taking office in December 2011. As of

2070 the time of my last Budget speech in July 2012, I had signed TIEAs with Malta on 24th January 2012 and with South Africa on 2nd February 2012. Since then, I have signed a further six, namely with Italy on 2nd October 2012, Mexico on 29th November 2012, Turkey on 4th December 2012, Greece and Poland on 31st January 2013 and India on 1st February 2013, bringing the total signed so far to 26 – with more in the pipeline.

2075 Nineteen of these agreements have so far entered into operation and Gibraltar is awaiting reciprocal notification in respect of the remainder.

2080 Mr Speaker, on 2nd May 2013, Her Majesty’s Government of Gibraltar announced in a press release that it was ‘committed to continue to work with the UK Government... in a spirit of partnership with the UK as advocated in the Overseas Territories’ White Paper’, and the wider international community on a new package on tax transparency. The Government expressed confidence that it already had in place ‘a robust regime for the rooting out of tax evasion, particularly through its membership of the EU and full compliance with EU rules’. It reasserted its commitment to ‘pursuing this agenda with the UK in agreement, and subject to consultation, with the finance industry in Gibraltar.’

2085 It remains the Government’s firm view that tackling tax evasion and fraud is rightly a global priority, necessary to protect the integrity of public revenues, the confidence of taxpayers in the fairness and effectiveness of their tax systems and, ultimately, public confidence in open global capital markets. Gibraltar, uniquely amongst all British Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies, notes that it is required to comply, and already complies, with all EU requirements in this area.

2090 Increased attention has been given to tackling evasion and fraud over recent years, in particular through the development of international standards and the Peer Review process by the OECD Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes. The Government has said that Gibraltar has ‘...nothing to fear and all to gain from international initiatives to stamp out tax evasion and we would be very pleased to finally see a level playing field of all other relevant jurisdictions.’

2095 Gibraltar participated in the pre G8 summit held recently in London. This included a meeting between the Chief Minister and the UK’s Prime Minister. Gibraltar was able to demonstrate its full compliance with all relevant international standards and its commitment to continue to be at the forefront of developments aimed at fighting tax evasion and fraud.

2100 Mr Speaker, the international community has recognised that the action taken by the United States under its Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) provides a unique opportunity to develop a new global standard for multilateral automatic information exchange. Gibraltar has committed to entering into a FATCA agreement with the US and to enter into similar arrangements with the UK in keeping with the same timetable.

2105 Furthermore, building on Gibraltar’s actions as regards the EU Savings Directive, we have also committed to the pilot multilateral automatic exchange of tax information announced recently by the G5 countries – the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

Gibraltar has also asked the UK to extend to Gibraltar the Multilateral Convention on Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters.

2110 In agreeing to all of this, the Gibraltar Government has emphasised the fundamental importance of maintaining a level playing field in the international financial services area and the need to take firm enforcement action against non-compliance.

The updated Mutual Assistance Directive on administration co-operation in the field of taxation, which was transposed with effect from January 2013, provides for the introduction of standard forms for exchange of information on request and spontaneous exchanges, computerised formats for the automatic exchange of information and channels for exchanging information. It also introduces automatic exchange of information from 1st January 2015 in five categories of income and capital.

2115 The Government has received confirmation directly from the OECD that this updated Directive on administrative co-operation in the field of taxation is TIEA equivalent. This signifies that since January 2013, Gibraltar has had TIEA-equivalent arrangements in place with all 27 EU Member States, assuming that they have all already transposed this Directive – in addition to the bilateral agreements with which Gibraltar has signed with certain EU Member States.

2120 Mr Speaker, this morning we heard a statement from the Chief Minister in relation to a decision by ECOFIN, the Council of Financial Ministers of the EU, whereby ECOFIN endorsed the Income Tax Act in Gibraltar as being compliant with the EU Code of Conduct for Business Taxation. That is, Mr Speaker, very good news to Gibraltar and I am sure it is something that will be very welcome by all involved in the Finance Sector.

2125 I wish to echo what the Chief Minister has said and congratulate all those involved in making that a reality – in particular, the very hard work that has been put in in this regard by the Government’s external advisers, the Government’s Chief Legal Adviser, Michael Llamas, the Commissioner of Income Tax and the whole team that works tirelessly in order to be able to engage with the Code of Conduct and ensure that this magnificent result was achieved for Gibraltar. Congratulations on behalf of the Government to
2130 all of them.

Mr Speaker, in the field of international co-operation and judicial assistance, Gibraltar assists with claims relating to taxes and duties with EU Member States under the EU Directive concerning Mutual Assistance for the recovery of claims relating to taxes, duties and other measures as transposed in Part III of the Mutual Legal Assistance (EU) Act 2005.

2135 Gibraltar also provides judicial assistance under the Evidence Act 1948 in response to *Commissions Rogatoires* or Letters of Request, as well as mutual legal assistance with Schengen states under Part II of the Mutual Legal Assistance (EU) Act.

2140 Assistance is also given to non-Schengen states which have either entered into a reciprocal agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal proceedings with the Government of Gibraltar under the Mutual Legal Assistance (International) Act 2005, and in cases where the requesting state is a party to the UN's Transnational Organised Crime Convention and the circumstances of the case mean that the provisions of the Transnational Organised Crime Act 2006 apply.

2145 Additionally, Gibraltar has, since July 2005, been exchanging information with EU Member States under the EU Taxation of Savings Directive as transposed into our Taxation (Savings Income) Act 2004.

Mr Speaker, the Government of Gibraltar has a record of full co-operation with all relevant international bodies, such as the IMF and in the area of anti-money-laundering. Gibraltar has a good reputation internationally for co-operation and information sharing.

2150 The Government will continue to co-operate fully with the IMF and devise policies where appropriate, in order to ensure that any assessment undertaken by this body meets their assessment criteria.

The Finance Centre Department continues to compile Gibraltar's portfolio investment position for submission to the IMF, as it has been doing since 2004. Information on this can be viewed or downloaded from the IMF's website.

2155 Progress on the Fourth Money Laundering Directive, a Proposal for a Directive on the 'prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing', published on 5th February 2013, is being monitored by the Government with a view to timely transposition to ensure that Gibraltar maintains its position as being completely up to date with the transposition of all relevant directives.

2160 Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's financial services centre continues to post stable growth in a number of areas such as insurance, investment management and funds, notably experienced investor funds, of which there are now approximately 95. Gibraltar's future in financial services continues to rest in high-end, high-value-added private client business, insurance, both captive and retail, investment management and funds. Gibraltar has set itself the objective of becoming a major player as an EU funds domicile and EU centre for hedge fund management operations, particularly with the introduction of the Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive next month.

2165 The number of licensed insurance companies writing new business at present is 55: 13 of these insurance companies are captives writing general insurance business, three of which are protected cell companies that collectively manage 32 cells.

2170 The critical mass that has been achieved in this sector makes Gibraltar a mainstream insurance domicile within the European Union along with long-term players in this market.

Gibraltar motor insurers now write 10% of the UK motor market and that percentage is expected to increase over the next few years. A new motor insurer was licensed in the first quarter of 2013 and there are a number of other insurance businesses actively seeking to establish themselves in Gibraltar.

2175 Mr Speaker, following the commencement of the Income Tax (Amendment) Act 2012 which made amendments to the Income Tax Act 2010 in respect of certain pension schemes imported into Gibraltar, which are generally known as Qualifying Recognised Overseas Pension Schemes (QROPS), on 28th June 2012, the pensions industry has seen increased interest in Gibraltar as a pensions domicile and a number of new pension administrators are in the process of establishing businesses in Gibraltar.

2180 The amendment represented an important piece of legislation for finance centre practitioners involved in the administration of pension schemes. It opened up a line of business which had previously, in effect, been out of reach for Gibraltar. It created opportunities for pension schemes administrators and generates income from taxation for Gibraltar in respect of distributions from the imported pension schemes.

2185 With the expected increase in imported pensions business coming to Gibraltar, new pension administrators and the ability to offer more pension products, Gibraltar can develop into a truly international pensions centre over the next five years.

Mr Speaker, approximately 95 experienced investor funds have been established in Gibraltar since the 2005 Regulations came into effect in August of that year – almost half of which have been structured as protected cell companies. This represents an increase of five funds from the figure reported last year.

2190 The Government introduced new Financial Services (Experienced Investor Fund) Regulations in 2012. The new Regulations allow large funds to use reputable and substantial administrators based in jurisdictions of equivalent standing to Gibraltar. The new Regulations also allow funds to redomicile to Gibraltar, yet continue to use their existing reputable administrator, representing a significant advantage

for funds moving to the EU with, *inter alia*, the advent of the Alternative Investment Funds Managers (AFIM) Directive, due to be implemented by July 2013.

2195 Mr Speaker, this year the Government has supported joint initiatives with the Gibraltar Funds and Investment Association (GFIA). In February of this year, I addressed the FONDS 13 Conference in Zurich where I stressed that Gibraltar was well on course for the transposition of AFIM and that we were determined to hone our product range so as to become even more attractive for Swiss asset managers to consider using Gibraltar in various ways.

2200 In March of this year, I attended the Hedge Fund Brazil Forum in Rio de Janeiro. I addressed around 300 delegates at the conference and participated in a discussion panel. I said that Gibraltar had now firmly positioned itself as a strong EU alternative to Dublin and Luxembourg for the establishment of hedge funds. I am happy and gratified to report that the visit attracted considerable interest from the international media, including Bloomberg and the *New York Times*.

2205 Just a few days ago, Mr Speaker, the Finance Centre Department attended GAIM 2013 in Monaco, a conference which I attended and spoke at last year. This is an important conference for the global funds industry with all major players represented. We have received excellent feedback from the delegates, which give us good cause for optimism for the expansion of the Gibraltar funds industry.

2210 Mr Speaker, the Government is working closely with the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) on several proposals and pieces of legislation. Specific pieces of legislation are being enhanced and modified with the aim of making the jurisdiction more competitive for private client work, particularly as Gibraltar is a solid centre for High Net Worth Individuals. These include Anti-Forced Heirship Rules, changes to the Perpetuity Period, Private Trust Companies, Purpose Trusts and Foundations. I expect the relevant legislation to be in place during the course of this year.

2215 Upon the commencement of the Companies, Partnerships and Trusts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2012 in March 2013, Gibraltar had implemented in full all of the recommendations contained in the OECD's Peer Review Report, Phase 1, published in October 2011.

2220 The Phase 1 Review had found that of the nine areas examined, Gibraltar had been judged by the OECD to be compliant in seven, with just one element 'not in place', and a further element 'in place but certain aspects of the legal implementation of the element needed improvement'. Hence, Gibraltar was permitted to proceed to a Phase 2 Review in 2014. The Government is now confident that it is fully compliant in all of these areas.

2225 The Act which we passed amended Gibraltar's Companies Act, Trustees Act and Partnership Act to make provision for the enhanced keeping of full books of accounts including underlying documents such as invoices and contracts for five years, the maintenance of records identifying settlors, trustees and beneficiaries of all trusts, also for five years, and the abolition of share warrants to bearer.

A copy of the amending Act is publicly available on the [gibraltarlaws](http://gibraltarlaws.gov.gi) website. The full text of the OECD Report is freely available via the OECD's online library and is also available as an easily-downloadable pdf on the Government website.

2230 Mr Speaker, the areas of business that Gibraltar wants to develop include: insurance, with captives, open market, general and reinsurance; pensions, in the area of QROPs; funds, in the area of asset management and alternative investment management; and private clients, in the area of structuring, headquartering and fiduciary services.

2235 The Government continues to invest heavily in growth for the Gibraltar Finance Centre. In the last 12 months, two significant senior appointments have been made, namely a Senior Executive covering each of the Insurance and Private Client sectors; and a third Senior Executive specialising in the Asset Management, Alternative Asset Management and Funds area is in the process of being recruited.

2240 The staff complement overall has doubled from 4.5 to 9 since my last Budget speech of July 2012. The increase since last year includes specific marketing and logistics support staff, which together with the new Senior Executive Asset Management and a new Personal Secretary/Personal Assistant will take the total number of staff in the Finance Centre Department to 11.

2245 The primary objective of the senior executive is to convert leads and opportunities that they instigate, into tangible new businesses coming to Gibraltar. Senior executives are charged with developing close relationships with journalists from financial newspapers, specialist periodicals and web-based media, with regular interviews and press briefings on a systematic basis, as well as journalists' visits to Gibraltar. It is the intention to extend this to individuals and media based in non-traditional markets.

The Finance Centre Department and the Senior Executives in particular are charged with producing information notes, articles and other relevant material that can be uploaded onto the website, tweeted and disseminated via LinkedIn, as well as by the Finance Centre Council association members.

2250 We also accept articles written by the private sector for the above purposes. Individuals in key markets are also being contacted directly and being invited to meetings and focused seminars/workshops by the Senior Executives as part of the education process and the theoretical use of Gibraltar to more practical levels.

2255 It is the specific objective of the Senior Executives to use the facilities available at Gibraltar House to introduce London and UK-based professionals to what Gibraltar has to offer in financial services. This will also be done in tandem and close collaboration with the private sector in Gibraltar.

2260 Mr Speaker, the Finance Centre Department launched its social media profile in April 2012, prior to my last Budget speech, and its online presence received a significant impetus at the beginning of this year with the addition of the two new Senior Executives. Particularly noteworthy has been the enhancement of our Twitter page which now has around 200 followers and plays an important part in gaining a wider audience for Gibraltar. We set up an additional LinkedIn page this year and, from that, a Group. The audience for this media is now in excess of 800 industry professionals with a national and international reach. A Facebook corporate page is also under consideration.

2265 The Finance Centre Department is at an advanced stage of launching a standalone website which will support our international marketing activities and keep communication with our industry partners.

A new marketing management system is being introduced to manage more efficiently the wealth of contacts that have been established over time and ensure that this area delivers effective results. This will support our drive to increase direct marketing activity.

2270 During the last 12 months, Finance Centre Department staff have attended 10 international conferences, including industry leading events in London, Zurich, Rio de Janeiro and Monaco. In addition to this, we have participated in numerous events covering wider areas of interest including OECD, HM Treasury and EU and of course the flagship Gibraltar Day in London event.

The Government has committed to a significant increase in the budget for use in marketing and promotions. The financial provision has been increased for this year by a third to £200,000.

2275 A fundamental element in the Finance Centre Department's strategy over the next 6 to 12 months is to ensure a significant increase in Gibraltar's profile as a centre for financial services, specifically amongst professionals, such as lawyers, accountants, funds specialists, etc, within both traditional and new markets. The means by which this is being carried out includes the following.

2280 Databases with some 2,000 individuals specialising in financial services have been created. The medium-term objective is to increase the databases to cover some 5,000 individuals, based, for example, in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe. The databases will be widened to include professionals based outside traditional markets.

2285 The databases are used to send out key information and updates, via e-mail or hard copy, on a systematic and regular basis. The Department is beginning to use professional e-mail delivery programmes, which provide a very wide range of statistical information and helps identify, for example, which key individuals are receiving information and which appear to be taking the greatest interest. They are also being made available to periodicals such as the *Gibraltar International Finance and Business*, so that copies of third-party material are also being received by our network of professional contacts.

2290 With our increased staffing levels, we have been able to increase our presence, in conjunction with the industry, at international conferences, exhibitions and seminars, with an additional emphasis of obtaining, where possible, speaking slots.

We are identifying a number of key 'anchor' conferences per sector. Regular and systematic attendance at these events will reinforce our position within each sector.

2295 It is also important that the Department cements alliances with key international conference organisers. There will also, from time to time, be a need to attend specific one-off opportunities.

We have already scheduled attendance at a further nine major events for the remainder of 2013 and are planning to add a minimum of a further five visits to professional firms in London and major cities around the UK delivering our message on site.

2300 I have no doubt, Mr Speaker, that the increase in resources, both financial and human, and the work and efforts of all in the Finance Centre Department will pay dividends and will see increased business for those already established and licensed in Gibraltar, as well the establishment of new businesses in the financial services sector.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to Gaming.

2305 Gibraltar continues to be firmly established as a world leader in remote gaming. As an industry which constantly has to meet new challenges, the competitive nature of the gaming industry requires constant innovation by operators. And, with Gibraltar hosting the most important online gaming companies in the world, it is crucial that we keep abreast of new developments in the industry.

2310 The Government is strengthening the base of the industry by attracting more operators of the same high standing as existing licensed operators, but also including some diversification to reflect the changing and dynamic nature of the industry.

The remote gaming industry is constantly evolving. Not only does it face new and additional licensing and regulatory demands across the world, as the means of electronic communications evolve, so must its products and the way they are delivered.

Whilst the last year has seen the arrival of a number of conventional remote gambling operations, we have also seen diversification in, for example: the establishment of a company in the 'App' and HTML5

2315 environment, otherwise known as smartphone and tablet markets, aiming to draw the massive creativity
of the App world into remote gambling whilst ensuring customer protection is at the forefront of the
customer business model; the establishment of a company with a business model which runs in parallel to
approved lotteries; and the creation of links by Gibraltar companies with the world's biggest social media
2320 companies, applying Gibraltar's standards to their gaming offers as they extend into real-money gaming
whilst keeping their social products available for those who prefer to play for fun.

These developments and relationships are designed to strengthen the licensing base whilst ensuring
the standards and reputation of the Gibraltar industry remains pre-eminent in Europe and elsewhere in the
world. In each case, the Government's approach to licensing continues to be selective.

2325 Gibraltar is clearly seeing the fruits of that selective approach with new companies being licensed
whilst maintaining the very high standards which Gibraltar demands of its operators.

Last year, Mr Speaker, I attended the GiGse conference in San Francisco and visited two important
American companies at their headquarters in Las Vegas. Both companies are now licensed in and are
operating from Gibraltar.

2330 Also last year, I attended the EiG conference in Barcelona. The Conference was attended by over
1,700 delegates from around the world and I had the opportunity of having a working dinner with senior
executives of some of the top names in the industry. I also met with a major company in remote
gambling. That company is now licensed and is operating from Gibraltar.

2335 This year, I attended the ICE conference and exhibition in London. I met with two companies. One of
them is now licensed and operating in Gibraltar. The other has applied for a licence and I expect it to be
operational from Gibraltar very soon.

There are currently 26 remote gambling licensed operators established in Gibraltar and four more
applications are currently being considered. During the course of the financial year 2012-13, four new
companies were licensed, with a total of five remote gambling licences being issued, and one existing
licensed company also being issued with one additional remote gambling licence.

2340 Since the end of the financial year 2012-13, two more new companies have been issued with remote
gambling licences. One of our existing licensees ceased remote gambling operations with effect 31st
March 2013.

2345 As of 31st March 2013, Mr Speaker, the total number of employees in the remote gambling industry
stood at 2,647. This is an increase of 400 posts over the past financial year. This figure is expected to
increase modestly over the next few months.

In terms of GDP contribution, Gambling and Betting activities is estimated to contribute 21.6% to
GDP and represents 13.2% of total employee jobs. This includes all employers trading in gambling
activities. Remote gambling is estimated to contribute 21.3% to GDP and 12.4% of total employee jobs.

2350 The Government Revenue from remote gaming tax for 2012-2013 has increased to £12.1 million from
£10.7 million in 2011-12. Remote gaming represents 95.28% of the total gaming tax yield of £12.7
million for 2012-2013, the remaining £0.6 million gaming tax being in respect of domestic gaming.

PAYE from remote gambling operators totalled £17.9 million for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st
March 2013, with an additional £0.3 million for domestic operators.

2355 Corporate tax received from gambling operators for the same period currently stands at £17.2 million,
although a number of licence holders have yet to conclude their financial statements and make the
relevant payments.

Overall, direct Government revenues from gaming duty, PAYE and corporate tax from gaming
operators have increased by £2.5 million from the previous year.

2360 Mr Speaker, the Government is mindful that the demands on the Government's Gambling Division
continue to grow, especially with the influx of B2B licensees in addition to the increased number of B2C
licence holders; consequently an additional EO post has been introduced in the Gambling Division to deal
with the increasing volume of due diligence and company record checks arising from the new business
relationships the B2B and B2C licence holders create.

2365 Additionally, the Government has taken steps to consolidate the establishment of the regulatory
section within the GDC. A vacant post of Regulator will be filled very shortly. Consequently the staff
complement at the Gambling Division will consist of seven individuals, up from five in the last financial
year.

2370 It needs no saying, Mr Speaker, that it remains essential that our operators continue to provide their
services to the highest standards in the industry and, whilst we are confident that they already have the
systems and infrastructures to do so, efficient and effective administration and regulation are key to
maintaining the high global reputation we have. In this regard, during the course of this year we have
seen, once again, regular liaison between the Gambling Division and the licensing and regulatory bodies
of other states, including visits to Gibraltar by the US, Canadian and European regulators as well as
attendance at European Commission and other international events.

2375 Mr Speaker, an issue on the horizon for Gibraltar and our operators remains the proposed introduction
of a Point of Consumption Tax in the UK. As I reported last year, there is intense opposition to these

proposals. The Government is aware of a possible industry challenge to the UK Government's proposals, if they persist with the proposed licensing and taxation measures.

2380 The Government will naturally continue to support all efforts to defend Gibraltar's well earned and established gaming industry.

The Government has highlighted to UK Ministers and HM Treasury officials the serious threat that such a move could bring about for Gibraltar, given the key income streams this sector generates for our economy. This will, therefore, remain a vital issue which needs to be carefully monitored.

2385 Mr Speaker, it will be recalled that earlier this year, the Gibraltar Government sent a top level delegation to Brussels to address MEPs on the Rock's gambling sector, amongst other things, where the Chief Minister briefed the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee and told MEPs that Gibraltar was setting the standard for regulation in the fast-growing gaming industry and that the companies based in Gibraltar were operating to the highest standards of probity and integrity. It is the Government's firm belief and commitment that those high standards will continue to be met by
2390 all operators in Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to Telecommunications.

2395 Mr Speaker, the e-gaming industry, together with Gibraltar's finance centre and, indeed, other businesses, have a high dependency on state-of-the-art communications. Local telecoms companies have invested significant funds over the years in providing diverse and resilient international fibre optic routes. These companies continue to invest in infrastructure and I am happy to report that internet service providers in Gibraltar already provide next generation communications networks. These new networks provide some of the highest internet broadband speeds available in the European market. The technology is engineered to maximise the use of existing copper networks to produce internet download speeds of up
2400 to 100 Mbps, depending on the quality of the copper together with the distance from the new fibre nodes and related electronics being put in place currently throughout Gibraltar.

These systems cater for multi-media services to the extent that the technology allows television to be provided down telephone wires, if so required.

2405 The way people connect to the world nowadays continues to expand and be ever more vital. Through the internet, individuals can communicate and share data with each other, whether for business or just communicating with family and friends.

2410 Through the proliferation of smartphones, tablets, laptops and other mobile devices the public can now connect to the internet virtually anywhere, and at any time. The availability of Wi-Fi hotspots, affording additional mobility, continues to increase. Advances and investment in fixed line and mobile technology is facilitating the availability of higher broadband speeds, making for faster transmission of data.

The European Commission's target is for 30 per cent of households having at least 30 Mbps by 2020. In Gibraltar, telecoms companies aim to cover 95% of addresses before the year end. The penetration rate, per capita, for broadband services currently stands at around 41%, with the EU average being 28.2%.

2415 These figures are to be welcomed, and would not be possible without continuing investment in infrastructure. This is something for which Gibraltar is recognised by the online gaming sector. Without such a robust and high quality foundation, Gibraltar would not be able to cater for these demanding e-commerce businesses.

2420 Another vitally important area is the provisioning of data centre services. Gibraltar is also host to a number of companies that provide technologically advanced data centres located in secure sites around as well as inside the Rock itself. A comprehensive suite of services and solutions are available in Gibraltar, from traditional co-location to fully managed solutions, designed to meet the current and future needs of an organisation in this evermore interconnected world. These data centres employ the latest industry standard technologies, including cooling and standby power, and are Payment Card Industry (PCI) accredited.

2425 Data centre services are also supported by technologically advanced Network Operations Centres that operate round the clock every day of the year.

Mr Speaker, I have responsibility for certain aspects of the work carried out by the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority, under the provisions of the Communications Act 2006.

2430 The GRA is an independent authority which regulates electronic communications, which includes broadcasting networks, radiocommunications and licensing of the radio spectrum, and international co-ordination of satellite networks and licensing.

There are seven companies operating under the regime created by the Communications Act 2006 providing a variety of fixed and mobile networks and services.

2435 Currently, there are two active mobile operators, Gibtelecom and Eazitelecom. Eazitelecom, trading as Shine, has launched a pre-paid mobile service which will be expanded by the end of the year.

This year, CTS was removed from the register of authorised operators for failing to renew two licences and pay the statutory fees. As a result, CTS was directed by the GRA to stop operating its mobile network.

2440 In December 2012, A J Sheriff Electrical Limited, trading as Gibfibrespeed, was authorised under the Communications Act 2006 to provide an electronic communications network in Gibraltar. During the year, the GRA on my behalf, as Minister with responsibility for Communications, issued a public consultation under the Communications Act 2006 in relation to the procedure proposed to be adopted for the application for a right to instal facilities under section 49 of the Act. The form of application was also published and annexed to the public consultation.

2445 The GRA highlighted that persons authorised to provide a public electronic communications network who are granted a right to instal will still be subject to the necessary planning permits being obtained as well as the appropriate agreements with the relevant landlords.

2450 The GRA invited interested parties to make representations on the proposed procedure and replies were received from companies who provide fixed and mobile networks and services in Gibraltar. After having considered the views of all respondents, the GRA set out its response and its procedure for applications under section 49 of the Act has been established.

2455 The Satellite Division of the GRA is responsible for representing Gibraltar at international meetings and ensuring that the satellite operators comply with the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Radio Regulations and all other international obligations. The Division liaises closely with the UK Administration to submit new filings to the ITU, but the main workload comes from processing the international correspondence for each individual satellite project.

2460 The GRA collects Administrative Charges from providers of electronic communications services and networks, radiocommunications licence fees and other reimbursements. During the 2012-13 financial year, the total collected under the Communications Act was £1,976,612, which was paid into the Consolidated Fund. The figure is slightly lower than estimated because CTS did not pay its licence fees.

I will now give an update on to the conversion – although it was touched upon by the Chief Minister this morning – to digital broadcasting. Gibraltar's digital broadcasting network was launched in December 2012. The transmitters have been located at the Upper Signal Station on the Upper Rock.

2465 Gibraltar's new national digital TV network, replaced the analogue TV network which was switched off on 31st December 2012. This switch-off was agreed at an EU and international level, an objective the Government was committed to fulfil within the given deadline.

2470 The arrival of digital television, and the switching off of the analogue TV network at the end of 2012, is a very positive move for Gibraltar. Not only has this new digital service offered TV viewers with a clearer picture and better sound quality, there is also great scope for additional TV channels, information services and high definition television.

Digital TV also has an added benefit in that it is more efficient than traditional analogue TV because it uses less space in the broadcast spectrum band and frees up space which could be used for other purposes, such as the provision of mobile or broadband services.

2475 The launch of the digital TV network also marked the start of 'Gibraltar Freeview', a free-to-air service on the new digital terrestrial television platform. This TV service will allow other licensed broadcasters to offer new channels, for both TV and radio, and will widen the choice of programmes and information services for Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, lastly I turn to Justice.

2480 I would start my contribution on Justice, Mr Speaker, by congratulating Mr Liam Yeats, who was recently appointed Registrar and Additional Stipendiary Magistrate of the Supreme Court. I also congratulate Damian Conroy, who was recently appointed as Senior Crown Counsel at the Attorney General's Chambers. I am sure that in both cases these appointments are well earned and deserving.

2485 Mr Speaker, the Government successfully commenced both the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 2011 and the Crimes Act 2011 with effect from Friday, 23rd November 2012. The two Acts, which were passed by Parliament before the change in Government, have brought about a major change in the criminal justice legislation. New procedures and rights for suspects have been introduced as well as new criminal offences. The Acts strengthen the ability of our law enforcement agencies to combat crime and anti-social behaviour and provided for the first time comprehensive codes of practice for the exercise of these powers.

2490 In order to commence these Acts, the Royal Gibraltar Police, Customs and the Courts Service all required specific training on aspects of the laws and also needed to create and implement new procedures and manuals dealing with every aspect of the criminal investigation, from initial searches, to the dealing with seized property, to the detention, treatment and questioning of persons in custody.

2495 As I mentioned at the time, and time has shown, our law enforcement agencies have demonstrated that they are up to that challenge.

As a consequence of the commencement of the Crimes Act, what is commonly known as a 'sex offenders' register' is now in operation in Gibraltar. Furthermore, regulations have been made under this Act dealing with travel by persons on the register.

2500 On other legislation, Mr Speaker, various amendments have been made to the Supreme Court Act during the past year. The Act has been amended so as to allow the Chief Justice to nominate more than

one puisne judge as a 'Family judge' and also to give the Chief Justice the discretion as to what work other than pure family work he allocates to such judges. This is intended to ensure that the Chief Justice is able to utilise the resources available to him in whichever way he deems most suitable in the interests of justice.

2505 Further amendments have been made to this Act in order to increase the maximum age for justices of the peace, from 70 to 72, and to allow justices of the peace to be entered into the Lay Assessors List.

The Government enacted the Employment (Public Interest Disclosure) Act in order to provide for what is commonly known as 'whistle-blower protection'. The Act provides protection for people who come forward to provide information about abuse or other wrongdoing.

2510 Mr Speaker, pursuant to our manifesto commitment to legislate against hate crimes which are not currently specifically prohibited under the Crimes Act 2011, the Government will shortly be publishing a Bill. Specifically, this Bill will make provision for the creation of hate crimes based on sexual orientation and disability and also providing that the courts must, where it is a contributing factor to an offence, take hatred on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, disability or religion into account as an aggravating factor when sentencing.

2515 The drafting of a Bill for a law on civil partnerships, which is to be published as a command paper is nearing completion. The Bill is currently being reviewed and amended to take into account recent decisions of the Supreme Court.

2520 A draft Bill for a Companies Act has been finalised and it is intended that it will be published in draft form for consultation very shortly. This will completely update our companies legislation which is currently based on the UK's 1929 Act, but with various amendments over the years.

2525 The drafting of various regulations and forms required to be able to commence the Insolvency Act is almost complete. Given the correlation between the Companies Act and the Insolvency Act, it is intended that the Insolvency Act and subsidiary legislation will be implemented at the same time as the new Companies Act.

2530 Mr Speaker, as has been highlighted already, for the first time in modern history, Gibraltar is completely up to date with the transposition of EU Directives. The milestone means that every EU Directive that Gibraltar is required to implement has now been written into local legislation. The development is significant because it signals Gibraltar's commitment to serious governance and compliance with international obligations.

2535 This achievement reflects the priority that the Government has given to this matter since being elected into office on 9th December 2011. In order to achieve this milestone, the Government has recruited and increased the number of legal drafters in the EU and ID Department and the LSU, and has restructured that Department. I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Michael Llamas QC, the Government's Chief Legal Adviser and all of his staff on their work which has led to this historic achievement.

2540 Mr Speaker, the past year has seen significant improvements in the performance and services provided by the law courts. The completion of the new building, the provision of additional courtrooms, more court staff and the introduction of new administrative procedures have brought about the removal of the backlog of criminal cases waiting for trial dates in the Supreme Court. Furthermore, there has been a complete removal of the backlog of civil and family applications to the Supreme Court that were waiting for first hearing dates.

2545 The Government's increase of staffing to the courts now means that the vast majority of applications receive a first hearing date within five days of application. This is a dramatic improvement on the historical position, where court users had to wait many months to have their application listed. Also, the dates of those hearings are typically within two or three months of the date of application to the court.

Again, this is a dramatic improvement on the delays that the justice system used to experience.

2550 The introduction of the new videolink system between the courts and HM Prison has also introduced further efficiencies to the criminal justice system. The investment in this system has released considerable hours each week for both Prison officers and Police officers, time that can more effectively be used in other areas.

2555 Mr Speaker, in last year's Budget I mentioned the benefits that have been seen in the Magistrates' Court as a result of the introduction of the videolink system. The contract for their installation includes a further videolink for the Magistrates' Court and additional units that will be added to the Supreme Court. These additional units will give the court the ability to better handle the needs of vulnerable witnesses or victims, so that they can give evidence to the court without the stress of having to physically appear in the court itself. The courts will also be able to handle hearings where a party may be unable to travel to Gibraltar to attend court. Videolink has already been used with a vulnerable witness in a criminal case and has been offered for use in a family case.

2560 To further help the work of the staff in the Supreme Court, a new computer diary system is due to be installed to replace the current paper-based system. Not only will this help staff dealing with enquiries about pending hearings, but the system will also be able to give e-mail confirmation to the applicant's

lawyers of the hearing dates set by the court. The daily court list from the new system will also be automatically updated and shown on the display screen in the Supreme Court lobby.

2565 The Gibraltar Courts Service website continues to be developed. Supreme Court sentencing pronouncements are now added on to the website as a matter of course, setting out the details of any criminal sentences set down by the court. This is an important addition in the work to increase the availability of information on the justice system.

2570 Further work is also being carried out to look at adding all reportable Supreme Court judgments on to the website, which will be of assistance to the local Bar.

Mr Speaker, in addition to the appointment of the Registrar/additional Stipendiary Magistrate to the courts, we have also seen staff added to the courts; bailiffs, ushers and typists, with further administrative staff to be appointed shortly. This investment in additional staff, together with the removal of many of the backlogs from the courts, will ensure that we achieve and maintain the performance improvement which we expect from a modern and efficient court service.

2575 With regard to the Prison, Mr Speaker, as I have already mentioned, we have already seen the introduction of the new videolink which has significantly reduced the impact on resources required to manage the weekly escort operations. At times, these involved the movement of over 20 prisoners, presenting challenges not only to the Prison, but also to the Royal Gibraltar Police. It is an excellent example where the introduction of technology can be of great benefit, both in terms of reducing workload and improving security.

2580 The main area of concern for 2012 was the rising Prison population. This had risen steadily over the last five years. The average daily inmate population for 2012 stood at 75 prisoners, the highest on record. Managing such numbers, at times reaching 85 prisoners, can be challenging in many respects.

2585 Interestingly, Mr Speaker, a marked decrease in the average population has been noted since December 2012 and throughout the first quarter and subsequently in 2013. The average daily inmate population for January 2013 stood at 65 prisoners; the figure for March being 56 prisoners and in May 40 prisoners. For the first four months of 2013 there have been a total of 57 admissions into prison custody. This compares with 94 admissions for the same period last year.

2590 Between June 2012 and May 2013, there have been a total of 16 female admissions and 6 juvenile admissions. Juveniles are provided, when necessary, with educational classes by a qualified teacher.

Mr Speaker, some aspects that prison management will be focusing on during the next 12 months include enhancing vocational training opportunities for prisoners, mandatory drug testing and continuing specialist training for prison officers. Some of these initiatives are new and all are necessary and the Government is pleased to support them.

2595 Mr Speaker, on international co-operation, we recently had the case of a five-year-old autistic boy who was reported missing in April of this year. Further to a locally issued Letter of Request and a European Arrest Warrant, the RGP and other local agencies were able to obtain the assistance of Interpol and the German authorities in order to trace the child and his mother in Germany.

2600 The child has been successfully returned to Gibraltar and is with his father. His mother is under arrest in Germany and is awaiting extradition proceedings in order to bring her back to Gibraltar to face charges of child abduction.

2605 I would like to record my appreciation to all those that were involved in this case, including those who worked on the Letter of Request and the European Arrest Warrant, which were instrumental in allowing the German authorities to carry out investigations, locate and return the child, quite rightly, to his father in Gibraltar.

The Royal Gibraltar Police is operating four District Offices in Glacis Estate, Edinburgh Estate, Lower Castle Road and Witham's Road. Neighbourhood officers work from these offices responding to community issues. The intention and expectation is for these offices to be operated as multi-agency bases in the community.

2610 Sixteen bicycles have been bought and will be deployed at the district offices. They will provide a versatile and environmentally-friendly mode of transport which will enable neighbourhood officers to more effectively patrol their sectors.

2615 An extension of the Neighbourhood Policing concept is to engage with the community through social media. A revamped website has been launched and a Facebook page created, together with Twitter feeds. All of these mechanisms provide virtually instant methods of communication with the public and have had great success.

2620 The RGP has pioneered live Facebook clinics in Gibraltar. Six of these have now been held, dealing with neighbourhood issues in each of the four areas. The most recent had over 1,000 users engaging during the hour long session and over 4,000 have viewed the discussion since.

A Public Protection Unit has been set up comprising of a sergeant and two constables. The intention is for the team to deal with sex offender management and offender management. Parallel to this is a detective sergeant and two detective constables, comprising the Safe Guarding Unit, which, in liaison

with the Care Agency, investigates and deals with matters relating to vulnerable children, domestic violence and sexual offences.

2625 Officers of both units have received training and secondments to prepare them for their specialist roles.

Three new vessels have been received and are now deployed operationally by the RGP's Marine Section. The *Sir John Chapple* and *Sir Francis Richards* are two high powered interceptors capable of navigating at high speed and are ideally suited to combat drug trafficking and other illicit activity at sea.

2630 The recently acquired *Sir William Jackson* is a large vessel capable of remaining at sea for extended periods of time and provides a stable and well prepared vessel to co-ordinate and undertake operations at sea.

2635 The Royal Gibraltar Police has taken delivery of further new equipment to tackle and deter unlawful activity out at sea and especially the dangerous use of high speed craft that has endangered bathers at Gibraltar's busy beaches.

A new jet boat and two jet skis will enable officers from the RGP's Marine Unit to police shallow waters and respond at high speed to anti-social behaviour at sea. The jet boat and jet skis will provide a continued presence at Gibraltar's beaches throughout the summer, alongside the RGP's patrol vessel, the *Sir William Jackson*, which will act as a base ship. The jet vessels will act in support of shore based officers, policing the beaches and the lifeguards on duty.

2640 The seconded Highways Enforcement Officers continue to support the Traffic Unit with traffic management at choke points, at the beaches and in dealing with traffic offences and parking issues.

2645 The installation of CCTV has served as a successful deterrent and is a useful mechanism to prevent and detect crime. The continued future deployment of cameras will further strengthen the RGP's capabilities to combat crime and gather evidence.

2650 The first phase of the Government's Public CCTV Programme went live on 10th September 2012, coinciding with National Day. CCTV cameras are located at: Casemates Square; the top of Casemates Hill; to the east of Casemates covering the Landport Tunnel; in the Market Place bus station; covering Waterport Road in both directions; Cornwall's Parade; the top of Castle Steps; Irish Town outside Central Police Station; and Governor's Street.

The project also involved the laying of a dedicated fibre optic cable from Central Police Station to New Mole House in order to allow the monitoring of the camera feeds by the Royal Gibraltar Police from its Control Room. The cost of the equipment and works was £197,467.02.

2655 The Ministry of Justice has worked closely with the GRA's Data Protection Compliance Manager to ensure that the Public CCTV Scheme meets all obligations under the Data Protection Act.

2660 The installation of the cameras has proved to be an invaluable asset to the RGP in deterring anti-social behaviour and in their fight against crime. The RGP has recently procured and is in the process of installing a video wall monitor solution for its Control Room, comprising of twelve 46-inch screens which will allow for the optimum viewing of the CCTV camera feeds. The cost of this is around £53,000.

Following recommendations by the RGP and calls from residents requesting the installation of CCTV cameras in other areas around Gibraltar, the Public CCTV Programme will over the coming months be extended to include Mid Harbour Estate, Catalan Bay Village, Laguna Estate, Glacis Estate, Moorish Castle Estate and Engineer Lane Garden.

2665 Proposals for camera locations within the Government Housing Estates have been drawn up by the RGP and consultation with the Estates' Tenants Associations has taken place.

2670 Mr Speaker, the RGP is currently engaged together with other Criminal Justice partners and the Government's IT and Logistics Department in setting up a fit for purpose IT infrastructure platform suitable for the whole of the Criminal Justice System. A scoping exercise has been completed and the results will be presented shortly to the Government's IT & Logistics Department for consideration. Such a system will serve to improve service delivery within the whole spectrum of the Criminal Justice System.

2675 The RGP continues to invest in the professional development and training of its officers: a Superintendent has attended the Senior Command Course in Bramshill in the UK and a Chief Inspector has taken part in a Police, Leadership and Management Course with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the US. Police Cadets have been recruited in a joint initiative with the Ministry for Enterprise, Training and Employment and are receiving instruction in policing and other skills, which will serve them well in later life, whether in the Police or elsewhere.

2680 Also the Royal Gibraltar Police has this year achieved the Investors in People Bronze Standard and is working to progress to the next level.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my staff and all those areas in my various Departments as well as the many professionals in the areas which form part of my ministerial responsibilities, for their hard work and support throughout the year.

I would end, Mr Speaker, by referring to one other matter which arises from the work of an inter-ministerial committee of which I form part – the small boats marina.

2685 The previous Administration promised in 2007 that they would provide additional berths for small boats. They provided none whatsoever by the time they were removed from office in December 2011. In fact, there were some boats which were forcibly removed from the sea by the previous administration and placed on land.

2690 There were therefore less boating enthusiasts who were able to enjoy their small boats at the end of 2011 than there had been in 2007.

In our manifesto, we promised 700 new berths for small boats – and that is precisely what we are going to deliver before the next elections are called. There will be 400 berths for six-metre boats and 300 berths for eight-metre boats. In addition, we will create around 500 metres of new wharfage, together with a public promenade for the whole community to enjoy.

2695 All the necessary studies, including an environmental impact assessment, have been carried out and the matter has been referred to the DPC. I expect works to start on the new marina in July of this year, with completion in two years.

In the course of drawing up plans for the new marina, we have met and consulted with all relevant stakeholders. Since we announced the project, we have met again with representatives of the Mediterranean Rowing Club, the Calpe Rowing Club, the Gibraltar Amateur Rowing Association and the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club. Following these discussions and as communicated to them, we have modified the entrance to the marina to ensure that there are separate dedicated channels for rowing and sailing boats on the one hand and motor boats wishing to access the new marina on the other. Motor boats berthed at the new marina, therefore, will have a separate demarcated channel to that used by boats from the rowing and sailing clubs.

2700 Mr Speaker, the new marina is but one of the many commitments we made in our manifesto. We have already completed more than 200 of those commitments, with many others being either ongoing or about to start. It was undoubtedly an ambitious manifesto, but one which we were sure we could deliver.

2710 Our manifesto, Mr Speaker, was said by our political opponents to be too ambitious, that it could not be delivered, that it was unaffordable. The work we have already done and that which will be done during the forthcoming year shows that what we have promised *is* being delivered, *can* be afforded and with money left over, as the Chief Minister announced this morning in delivering this Budget, with an all-time record surplus of £37 million. All of this is part of the Government's aim to bring about a positive and long-lasting change to Gibraltar.

2715 In my address, Mr Speaker, I have talked about progress, achievement, and this Government's commitment and willingness to invest in our future, and the future of our children. We are all as excited today about the work we are doing for Gibraltar as we were on 9th December 2011, when we took office. I and my colleagues are grateful to the people of Gibraltar for their trust, for allowing all of us the opportunity to get on with the serious business of not only making Gibraltar a world class jurisdiction for business, but also a safe, socially inclusive and diverse homeland, to be enjoyed by its people, visitors and friends.

2720 Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Applause*)

2725

ADJOURNMENT

2730 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I note that there is less than half the Opposition here, but I would take this opportunity to, before I move the adjournment, simply invite those who are left to come to the public rally that we are holding at eight o'clock at the John Mackintosh Hall to launch the Albert Isola manifesto.

I move to adjourn the House now to 9.15 tomorrow morning.

2735 **Mr Speaker:** I will now put the question that this House do now adjourn to 9.15 tomorrow morning. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Passed.

The House will now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 9.15.

The House adjourned at 7.25 p.m.