



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 4.30 p.m. – 5.51 p.m.

**Gibraltar, Monday, 22nd June 2015**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 4.30 p.m.*

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

## Order of the Day

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Appropriation Bill 2015 – For Second Reading – Debate continued**

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia.

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, this is my 17th contribution to a Budget debate in this House, my fourth as a member of the Government. It is also the last Budget before a general election takes place later this year. I have been collating data for these debates therefore for the past 17 years.

It is important to make the point, once again, that there is a vast improvement in the volume of information that is available and in the accessibility to such information compared to what was the case when I first started. This improvement benefits both sides of the House but it is particularly beneficial to the Opposition. Indeed, as I have remarked before, sixteen years ago *Hansard* was not available until nearly a year after the event. This severely curtailed the ability of the then Opposition to do its work – how things have changed Mr Speaker!

The existence of something as simple as a Parliament website means that a considerable amount of information is now placed in the public domain automatically. These changes reflect the Government's commitment to the democratic agenda. That democratic agenda listed 28 points. Twenty of these have been finalised and the remainder are in progress. *Hansard* is now produced far quicker than before and it is placed online. The proceedings of this House are now televised.

We have delivered on a more inclusive form of politics. Collective decision-making through the Cabinet is now the norm. A Command Paper on Freedom of Information legislation has been published. The Chief and a Bill Minister has answered questions from the electorate once a quarter. A 20-year rule for the release of documents is in place. A Public Interest Disclosure Act has been adopted. A Ministerial and Parliamentary Code are nearly finalised. There have been more meetings of Parliament than ever before with no limit on the number of Opposition questions. More economic and financial data is published by the Government automatically on-line than ever before. These are not cosmetic changes, Mr Speaker. The way in which Gibraltar works has been transformed.

The Opposition should not belittle what has been achieved. We have gone as far as the pledges in our manifesto allow. This is, after all, what we were elected to do. However, in some cases we have gone even further than the manifesto itself.

The reforms which have been introduced go to the very heart of the way in which Parliament places information, including its proceedings, before the press and before the people. It is a fact that the system in place now is therefore far superior to what was there before. The GSD, Mr Speaker, had plenty of time to reform the system over a period of 15 years and they did not. The plain fact is that in a quarter of the time we have already gone much further than they ever did.

Mr Speaker, moving on, the House knows that this year is the 75th anniversary of the wartime evacuation of the majority of the civilian population of Gibraltar. The Government has set out to honour that generation of Gibraltarians.

A series of activities to commemorate this landmark in the political development of Gibraltar and its people have already taken place and more will follow. A set of stamps was issued last year. A dedicated website on the Evacuation has been set up by the National Archives in Gibraltar. The Archives have used the website as a focal point for the creation of a register of former evacuees. The number of persons who have registered on-line and in person has exceeded all expectations. The result of the success of the project was that a memorial event had to be moved from the Evacuation roundabout to Casemates Square quite simply because there was not enough room at the former location to accommodate everyone.

There are now over 700 people in the register of evacuees and they will be invited to the events that are being planned for later on in the year.

The House will know that a very successful exhibition on the subject took place at the John Mackintosh Hall last month. This included photographs and memorabilia showing evacuee life in Madeira, Jamaica, Northern Ireland and London. The exhibition generated considerable interest. There were always groups of people browsing over the photographs and over the other exhibits. I had the pleasure myself of seeing groups of young schoolchildren being taken around the different exhibition rooms. The Government would like to thank Mr Joe Gingell who very kindly donated the majority of the material to the Archives for this purpose.

Mr Speaker, given the success of the exhibition, I am happy to report that the exhibits have been converted into digital format and that the Government intends to place everything on-line. Therefore the whole collection will be available electronically all day every day to anyone in Gibraltar or indeed in the whole world.

The highlight of the Evacuation commemoration so far was the memorial event which took place on Friday, 22nd May. This was the anniversary of the exact day when the first evacuees sailed for French Morocco on the Government scheme 75 years ago. It was a pleasure for the Government to have marked the occasion in a way which clearly touched those people who were forced to leave our shores under threat of war so many years ago. The memorial event and the reception which followed were both very well attended, as was the earlier talk by Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown from the University of the West Indies.

The Chief Minister has already announced that Monday, 7th September this year will be a Public Holiday known as Evacuation Commemoration Day. This is a fitting tribute to the sacrifice made by many thousands. The day will serve to remember further those evacuees who are no longer with us and at the same time to again honour those who remain. The details of forthcoming events will be announced nearer the time.

Mr Speaker, it is important to commemorate the Evacuation at this juncture for a number of reasons.

Firstly, because the sad reality is that the number of evacuees will have regrettably diminished by the time the 100th anniversary comes round. Secondly, because younger generations of Gibraltarians should learn about this watershed in the political development of Gibraltar. The Government considers that it is essential that young people come to understand and to appreciate the sacrifices made by their forefathers, without which Gibraltar as we know it would not exist today. Indeed, it is the understanding and appreciation of our history and of the struggles of the past that prepares us best for the challenges of the future. Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved with the exemplary organisation to date of the Evacuation events. This includes the Archivist and his staff, the Ministry for Culture, the Protocol Section, the press team and finally my own personal staff in No. 6. *(Banging on desks)*

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, last year a very successful seminar on 'self-determination' was held at the Garrison Library. A number of high-profile international and local academics looked at the concept from different angles. There was considerable debate and discussion. The right to self-determination of the people of Gibraltar featured specifically in the presentations that were delivered and in the questions afterwards. There was also discussion on the subject of devolution and regional identity, with an examination of the case studies of Scotland, the Basque Country and Catalunya. The imposition of direct rule on the Turks and Caicos and self-determination in relation to the Falkland Islands were also raised. I know that my friend and colleague Joe Bossano contributed to these debates.

Mr Speaker, this year, a follow-up seminar will take place from 22nd to 24th October at the Garrison Library. The subject matter will cover the Second World War and the subsequent progress towards decolonisation through the principle of self-determination. In this way, the World War II theme will tie in very well with the parallel commemoration of the wartime evacuation of Gibraltarians. I would like to thank the Director and staff of the Garrison Library for their continued assistance with this project.

Mr Speaker, I move on now to Europe.

In December I was formally allocated the portfolio of European Affairs and political lobbying. This formalised the work which my office had already been doing for some time. Indeed, it was already taking up an ever increasing amount of that time. It will be recalled that in August 2013 the Prime Minister, David Cameron, formally requested the involvement of the European Commission after the unacceptable and deliberate delays generated by Spain at the border.

100 The Government continues to actively bring the situation at the border to the attention of the European Commission. Reports are compiled in my office every month and sent to the Commissioner responsible in Brussels. The Chief Minister and I held several meetings with Commissioner Malmstrom, who handled the Home Affairs brief in the Barroso Commission and more recently I have met with Commissioner Avramopolous in the Junker Commission who is responsible for Migration and Border Management.

105 There have been two inspection visits to the frontier. The first took place in September 2013 and the second in July 2014. The House knows that the Commission made a number of recommendations following on from those visits. The Commission saw in July 2014 that Gibraltar had complied with the recommendations that had been made to us.

110 They also saw, as was clear to the Government and to any impartial observer, that Spain had not complied by the due date. This was reflected in the tone of the Commission's subsequent letter to Spain of 30th July 2014. The Commission took up a number of issues with Spain. This included the exit checks that Spain was then conducting on persons and vehicles leaving that country. The Commission called for the intensity of these to be reduced or eliminated completely. The waiting times, then up to five hours to enter Spain, the Commission described in that letter as 'disproportionate'.

The Commission also told Spain that the period of time during which 100% of vehicles are checked were not compatible with a sound risk-based approach and that such checks should be eliminated.

115 Spain was also asked to increase the planned number of lanes going into the country from two – one red and one green – to three – one red and two green. The Commission expressed concern that Spain had not discussed the programmed temporary works with Gibraltar, and although a *note verbale* had been sent to the United Kingdom late in the day, they urged that there should be direct engagement between Gibraltar and Spain as well. There has, to this day also been no formal direct engagement with Gibraltar and our information is that the *note verbale* was never received.

120 Mr Speaker, it has probably not escaped this House that the works on the Spanish side of the border appear to have been designed to cause the maximum disruption possible at different points in time. There is no doubt that with better planning, organisation and coordination it would have been possible to carry out these works with a minimum of inconvenience to those crossing the border in either direction. Sadly, this has not happened.

125 On 2nd February 2015 the European Commission met Spain in order to discuss the implementation of their technical recommendations. This meeting confirmed that the works relevant to frontier flow will be ready by the end of June 2015 and that the works that remain would take until the end of the year. The House knows that this information was released by the European Commission in response to probing from the Petition's Committee of the European Parliament. It is significant to note that the Commission, from studying the data supplied by Spain itself, has concluded that although the number of checks on persons have decreased, 'it is still high'. The Government takes note that the Commission has acknowledged that Gibraltar has:

135 'Progressed in adopting the relevant measures to address the recommendations [that they made]'

In the case of Spain, however, they make it clear that:

'Further efforts are needed in order to balance the intensity and the frequency of checks with the objectives being pursued.'

140 Mr Speaker, it is a just recognition of the efforts made by Gibraltar that the European Commission has now acknowledged just how seriously we take these matters. Whether the infrastructural changes on the Spanish side will be completed in the timescale given remains to be seen. These changes must be accompanied by different procedures in order for there to be any real and sustained improvement in the flow rate of traffic across the border. Mr Speaker, we will wait and see.

145 It is certainly very useful for the Government to be able to engage directly with the European Commission and with other institutions in Brussels. The House will recall that thanks to the hard work of the EUID and the Ministry of the Environment, the Spanish complaints against the artificial reef, the bunkering of vessels and the land reclamation on the Eastside were all dismissed. That is to say the Commission found that on examining these cases, there had been no breach of EU law on the part of Gibraltar.

150 It is also significant that a complaint about pollution in Western beach, caused by illegal sewage connections to a storm drain in Spain, has finally been addressed. This complaint was first made many years ago by the Environmental Safety Group and Sir Graham Watson. It moved at snail's pace for many years until we raised the issue directly during a meeting in Brussels with the relevant Commissioners. Finally, Spain has accepted liability for the problem and we now await a programme of works to see when they intend to rectify it.

155 Mr Speaker, it is important to stress that results will not always go our way, nor will they be to our liking, but at least this is a positive start.

160 In the area of taxation, for example, the Government continues to be concerned at the way in which Spain is manipulating the European institutions with a totally political agenda. This is one of the reasons why my friend and colleague, the Chief Minister, addressed the TAX Committee of the European Parliament during our visit there in May. The fact that Gibraltar chose to appear before the Committee at our own request was not lost on the Chairman.

165 In this context, it is important to note that Gibraltar was not included in the list of 30 tax havens published by the European Commission last week. However, Mr Speaker, we have seen Spanish Commissioners, Spanish Members of the European Parliament and even Spanish judges adopt questionable positions on Gibraltar in the past. Spain continues to push and we must push back.

170 Therefore the Government continues to raise Gibraltar's profile in Brussels in different ways. This year I have visited the EU institutions three times, on one of those occasions with the Chief Minister. In each visit we have chosen to concentrate on specific issues like the border, taxation or aviation. In January a very successful exhibition was held at the European Parliament. The location of the stand on the main third floor concourse worked very well and many MEPs and officials approached us to learn more about Gibraltar. Indeed, it also led to the ire of a senior *Partido Popular* MEP who brought television cameras to the stand and denounced it as a provocation to Spain. The result, Mr Speaker, was an increase in the number of visitors as a consequence of the additional publicity!

175 I also took the opportunity to meet with two Commissioners, Violeta Bulc who is responsible for Transport, including aviation, and the Regional Development Commissioner Corina Cretu.

At the end of May, Gibraltar House in Brussels was officially opened by the Chief Minister. The building will serve as the nerve-centre for the Government's enhanced operations in Brussels. Indeed, it had been used as a base before it was officially opened by both the Financial Services Commission and the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

180 The Government was delighted with the interest in Gibraltar shown during the opening by Ambassadors, Members of the European Parliament, Brussels-based think tanks, and the media. The Government's activities in Brussels are guided and directed by Sir Graham Watson whose commitment, energy and network of connections have already proved to be extremely useful. A lawyer from the EUID Daniel D'Amato has been seconded there. There are two interns recruited locally in the same way as happens in the EU and one original member of staff who has served Gibraltar for more than 10 years, continues to do so. Mr Speaker, the Government is confident that this team, supported from a legal perspective by the Attorney General, Michael Llamas, and politically by myself will assist in putting across the Gibraltar message across in Brussels.

190 I must also at this stage express the gratitude of the Government to the United Kingdom Representation UKREP who have been very helpful during the period of the establishment of the office and with whom we continue to work closely.

Mr Speaker, on aviation the Government welcomes the position taken by the United Kingdom in relation to the inclusion of Gibraltar Airport in EU civil aviation measures. The Government has been assured that this remains a red-line issue for the United Kingdom.

195 In a written statement to Parliament earlier this month, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the UK Department of Transport Robert Goodwill said that the UK will continue to press for the extension of air passenger rights legislation to Gibraltar Airport in line with the EU Treaties.

200 The House can rest assured that this Government will continue to lobby at every opportunity, particularly in Brussels, to ensure that our position is fully understood. We cannot do more than is being done at present.

205 In January, as part of this strategy, I addressed the European Policy Centre, which is one of the main think tanks in Brussels, precisely on the subject of aviation coupled with an explanation of our position as part of the European Union. The hall was packed with diplomats, officials, MEPs and journalists. This helped to get across the Gibraltar point of view. In March of this year I was able to meet with a number of Vice Presidents on the Transport Committee of the European Parliament and with different spokespersons from different political groups. It is important that Gibraltar's message should continue to be heard face to face.

210 For the first time, I also met with the coordinator of the European People's Party, EPP, which contains Spain's *Partido Popular*. The House will recall that the EPP voted against Gibraltar's inclusion in civil aviation legislation as a block. It was a lively meeting but nonetheless a very useful one.

Mr Speaker, the position of the Government is that Gibraltar is entitled to inclusion in EU civil aviation legislation as of right. The UK Act of Accession lists the areas of Community policy which do not apply to Gibraltar. Aviation is not listed among them. Therefore the exclusion or suspension of Gibraltar Airport from such measures would run against the Treaty and would be illegal.

215 The Government continues to argue that there was already a wording agreed at Cordoba between Gibraltar, the United Kingdom and Spain for the application here of EU law on civil aviation. This was a clause which stated that such legislation would apply without prejudice to the positions of the United Kingdom and Spain as to the sovereignty of the land on which the airport is situated. The acceptance by Spain of this language between 2006 and 2011 meant that EU civil aviation law was extended to Gibraltar during that time. However, it is important to point out that this principle was applied going forwards and in relation to new and amending legislation but it was not applied going backwards.

220 In other words, Cordoba required the UK and Spain to seek the inclusion of Gibraltar in pre-2006 measures as well. This did not materialise and has further complicated the situation. Mr Speaker, the House knows that at the end of 2011, a new Spanish Government chose to dishonour what their predecessors had agreed and we are where we are today as a result of that. In other words, progress on EU aviation dossiers is not being held up by Gibraltar and is not being held up by the United Kingdom. It is important that the blame for this impasse is placed roundly and squarely upon Spain.

225 Mr Speaker, the House will know that Gibraltar will be included in the Referendum to determine whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union or remain within it. The United Kingdom and Gibraltar Governments are now engaged in discussing the detail of the legislation that will be required to make this happen as well as the timing.

The Chief Minister has asked the Attorney General, Michael Llamas, and I to represent Gibraltar in the working group that has been created between the two Governments. Good progress is being made.

230 Mr Speaker, the Government welcomes the political decision to include Gibraltar in the UK Referendum because we are part of the European Union, and clearly have something to say on the subject.

235 It is no secret that the view of the Government is that both Gibraltar and the UK should remain in the EU. This is the case for both political and for economic reasons. We all know that our experience with the European Union over the years has been far from perfect. For years many of us have urged the EU to be more robust when it comes to calling Spain to account over its behaviour towards Gibraltar. Very often we play by the rules of the club and we do not enjoy the benefits of the club. I have told them this in Brussels myself to their faces.

240 However, the harsh reality is that without the framework of rules provided by the European Union, Spain would and could do much worse. Who can forget the reports that early on the *Partido Popular* had commissioned a study to see whether they could close the frontier? Who can forget Mr Margallo's plan for a frontier toll which was scuppered by the European Commission? Things are not perfect in the EU, Mr Speaker, but we can work together to make things better.

245 Before I close on the subject of Europe, I would like to welcome the recent visit to Gibraltar by Cecilia Wikstrom MEP, who is the Chair of the Petition's Committee of the European Parliament. The Government is convinced that there is no better advertisement for Gibraltar, no better advocate for Gibraltar, than Gibraltar itself. We have nothing to hide. It was a very useful visit.

250 This week a group of Parliamentary Assistants to MEPs arrive in Gibraltar on a fact-finding visit. They come from Estonia, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Poland. It is important to make sure that the Assistants are well-briefed of the reality of Gibraltar because very often MEPs depend on them for advice.

255 The Government intends to continue visits to Gibraltar by relevant MEPs and also by Parliamentary Assistants. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Michael Llamas and the EUID for their assistance and support to this new Ministry. I would also like to thank Sir Graham Watson and the staff of Gibraltar House in Brussels.

Mr Speaker, I move on now to my responsibility for Civil Aviation.

260 Within the UK, responsibility for the conduct of aviation security inspections in all UK Airports, including those of the Crown Dependencies and Gibraltar, has passed from the Department for Transport to the Civil Aviation Authority. In common with other European airports and in response to European legislation that will come into effect on 1st September 2015, the Airport is preparing for the increased use of Explosive Trace Detection equipment in the screening process. Although already used in the screening of hand luggage, the legislation will, for the first time, allow the use of the Explosive Trace detection equipment in certain circumstances for the screening of passengers in lieu of the standard hand search. The use of this equipment will be less intrusive for passengers and should help to speed up the screening process. To meet the requirement the Airport is in the process of procuring one additional Explosive Trace Detection equipment.

265 Mr Speaker, during the course of the last financial year, as a part of the ongoing work in preparation for the Tunnel project, the Government has significantly upgraded the security fencing along almost the entire length of the airfield's northern boundary. The only remaining area of the northern boundary without fencing is the part at the very eastern end of the airport, which cannot be completed until after the tunnel works there have been finished.

270 Mr Speaker, on aviation safety, the Gibraltar Airport Emergency Orders have been completely rewritten during the last year. The air terminal was fully exercised as part of these new Orders, which incorporated

new roles that had not been previously practised before. There was a very positive feedback from the staff that participated. Indeed, two full-scale exercises have taken place at the Airport to test the integrated response from both the Airport and Gibraltar Emergency Services. The second exercise was observed by a specialist inspector from the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority and received very favourable comment.

The continuing efforts made by all Departments including in the plan to take ownership of their respective areas and to suggest improvements deserves recognition and I would like to record my thanks for all their efforts.

Mr Speaker, my colleague the Minister with responsibility for Tourism, Samantha Sacramento, will deal with airport issues in more detail. I simply want to congratulate her and her predecessor, Neil Costa, for the growth of 8.1% in the number of passengers handled through the air terminal. There has also been a growth of 4.7% in aircraft movements. The two new services provided by Royal Air Maroc to Tangiers and easyJet to Bristol have no doubt contributed to this growth. I continue to take a close interest in these matters having shadowed tourism in Opposition for more than ten years.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the fact that work has continued to improve the passenger experience at the air terminal with all staff now receiving disability awareness training specific to the aviation industry and again I congratulate my colleague for that.

I take this opportunity to thank the Director of Civil Aviation, the Air Terminal Director and the management and staff of the Borders and Coastguards Agency.

Mr Speaker, I now move on to my responsibility for Town Planning.

The Government is satisfied that the commitments it made in relation to Town Planning are either in place or in progress. The Town Planner is the Chairman of the Development and Planning Commission, DPC. The meetings of the Commission now take place in public. Objectors and applicants are heard at DPC meetings as a matter of right. A sub-committee of the DPC has been set up in order to expedite minor works. The Environmental Safety Group is now a valued voting member of the DPC. The minutes, decisions and agenda of DPC meetings are published on-line. A new Town Planning Act is about to be published as a Command Paper. A part of the planning process is now available on-line. The rest is to follow. Government projects are subject to the planning process using a mechanism which has worked very well. The details of all Government applications are available on-line.

There can be little doubt, Mr Speaker, that by any objective analysis, the planning process is now light years ahead from where we found it. No system is perfect, but what we have today is certainly a huge improvement compared to the system that we inherited. The level of public participation and the level of public debate and interest in the planning process has exceeded all expectations. This is a good thing. It is often standing room only for the public and the media in the DPC. The Opposition continue to be obsessed with turning the clock back to the system that they used to preside over. We have replaced that secrecy with transparency. We have replaced a closed system with an open one. We have let the public into the planning process, when they shut them out.

Mr Speaker, there were 1,645 planning applications made from January 2012 until the end of May 2015. Two hundred and fifty of those applications related to Government projects. The policy of the Government continues to be that under the new legislation the views of the DPC must be taken into account by all applicants including by the Government itself.

Mr Speaker, it is important to highlight the fact that there is already more information available on-line automatically about planning applications than ever before. As I have indicated, the ultimate objective of the Government remains to make the whole planning process of any application available on-line. I am pleased to tell the House that the development of this policy is now in its final stages. Mr Speaker, e-planning will make the planning process even more accessible and interactive with the public. This is in line with the overall policy of the Government to increase contact with the public electronically. It is important to stress once again that at the same time as the improvement in electronic interaction between the department and the public, there has also been a reinforcement of staff on the ground.

The system that we inherited was unsustainable, Mr Speaker. There was no proper structure which allowed for succession planning and for smooth internal operation. There are now two young assistant town planners who were locally recruited in place. There are town planning technicians with proper job descriptions that they lacked when we came into office. This has resulted in improvements for the staff and in improvements for the public. There are also more administrative grades in place.

Mr Speaker, at a meeting of the Urban Renewal Committee earlier this year, it was decided to commence the review of the Gibraltar Development Plan. This will be a work in progress and it will take time. The last plan dates back to 2009. The traditional practice was for these plans to be renewed every 10 years which means that the 1991 plan should have been reviewed by the then GSD Government on or around 2001. It took eight more years for this to happen, until 2009, when the new plan was finally formally put in place.

Mr Speaker, the number of Building Control applications received continues to increase with an all-time record of over 500 applications processed in 2014. There has also been a record number of Approval Notices issued which now stand at over 400. This was reflected in another all-time record with respect to the revenue generated by the department of £289,225. The Government has recently advertised for the post of TG1 in the Building Control Department, where the intention is to also provide, over a period of time, a similar succession chain as in Town Planning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of the Town Planning and Building Control Department for their continued positive and professional approach. It is public servants like them who are instrumental in the successful delivery of the policies of the Government. The Town Planning and Building Control Department is at Head 12 and the total amount of estimated expenditure for this financial year 2015-16 is £1.127m.

Mr Speaker, I will say something briefly now on Urban Renewal and Land. A new urban renewal officer is now in place at the Town Planning Department. There are a number of useful projects that the department has now embarked upon as a result. This includes the compilation of a database which will show all vacant properties in Gibraltar particularly in the Upper Town area. This work will culminate in the long term in the creation of an action plan for the areas of the Upper Town that most need work and where action is most critical. It is important to make the point that in many cases buildings are not owned by the Government. This means that there will be a need to work closely with private sector landlords when the time comes. It is also relevant to point out that Land Property Services Ltd and the Ministry for Housing are now engaged in identifying those Government-owned properties that can be put out to tender in the Upper Town. This has already happened both with individual dwellings and with building clusters. It is clear to the Government that there is a demand for these properties and the policy will remain to regenerate the Upper Town and bring it back to life in this way.

Mr Speaker, during the financial year 2014-15, 19 residential properties were advertised and sold by tender. In addition to this, seven commercial properties have been advertised for tender during the same financial year. A number of sites have been advertised for expressions of interest. This includes the old air terminal, The Mount, Lathbury Barracks Parade Ground, the KGV Site, part of the Victualling Yard and Central Police Station. A number of these are still open for applications or are pending assignment, further discussion, or completion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of Land Property Services Ltd and at the Lands Office in Convent Place for their assistance and support throughout the year.

Mr Speaker, the House will recall our commitment in Opposition to ensure that prime plots of land were not permitted to continue to lie idle. We wanted to ensure that developers developed. This is a policy that we have pursued in Government. It has turned out to be very successful. We had been critical of the terms that the previous Government had negotiated with the Ocean Village group when we were in Opposition and we vowed to change these. Those changes were made. The result is that the World Trade Centre project has finally got off the ground. This is an example of a project that had been stalled for a number of years that is now finally moving. There will be others, Mr Speaker.

The Government also came to an agreement with the developers of the Mid Town site whereby part of the plot was handed back to us. The remainder of that plot, as the Chief Minister said earlier, is now finally being developed. The announcement made last week in relation to the Eastside also falls into this category. The Government negotiated and agreed to buy back the plot of land from its original owners for £28 million after the plot had been allowed to lie idle for many years. It will be sold for £83 million by way of cash premium and will lead to the development of the Blue Water resort. There are plenty of public gains from this project. This includes over 1,000 affordable homes, a car park, a public pool on the Eastside and a law enforcement marine base. Mr Speaker, the total development value of the project will be an investment in Gibraltar in the region of £1.1 billion. This will deliver considerable economic growth and opportunities for employment.

The Government looks forward to the progress of these and other developments. It is important to point out that the estimate from the Building Control Department is that private sector capital investment in Gibraltar has grown to £106.8 million in 2014.

Mr Speaker, by way of conclusion I would also like to say a few words on the delivery of the GSLP/Liberal manifesto which has been our programme of Government over the last three and a half years. Time has gone by quickly. We have taken our commitment with the electorate extremely seriously. In the recent past, other Governments have regarded their manifestos as little more than a 'wish list'. We took the view in Opposition that this was not good enough. A manifesto is much more than a vague idea or a rough indication of the way in which a Government intends to proceed. A manifesto is a commitment with the electorate. It is a commitment that this Government takes seriously.

It is true that sometimes the best Government plans can be thrown off course by unforeseen circumstances. This has happened to all Governments and it will happen to us too. There are areas where we have had to accommodate the commitment at a different location in Gibraltar, due to technical or other



considerations. Therefore the car park in the centre of town was moved the short distance from beneath Commonwealth Park to above Reclamation Road. The bathing area at Mid-Harbours has now been provided in the GASA area and so on.

400 However, the number and proportion of manifesto commitments which are complete, in progress or on-going is without precedent in Gibraltar and the Government takes considerable pride in this achievement. From Commonwealth Park, to affordable housing, to the small boats marina, to the University and the new schools, to improvements in health and elderly care, this is tangible and there for all to see.

405 Mr Speaker, there are those who will nonetheless still choose to nit-pick no matter what the Government does. In many ways the arguments that those people parade are often inconsistent or contradictory. For example, those who held two or three meetings of Parliament a year now call for greater democracy. Those who practised a closed system of town planning call for greater transparency. Those who used to carry out capital works using Government companies, complain when others continue the same practice. Those who presided over 16 years of traffic chaos mock the positive solutions that we have started to roll out. Their approach is one of 'do as I say and not as I did'.

410 Mr Speaker, this is not a credible way for an Opposition to conduct their business. Having said that this is also clearly a matter for them. However, the electorate will see through this. They will also see through the second pillar of their strategy which is the well-worn tactic of scaremongering. This is sadly the approach they have chosen to adopt on matters like the LNG power station, on public finances, or on the savings bank.

415 The reality is that by any objective analysis this Government has improved Gibraltar for the better. We have progressed forward with the physical fabric of Gibraltar, with improvements to administrative practice and with important additions to our legislative framework as well.

420 Mr Speaker, the Government knows that everything is not perfect and that there is still plenty of work to be done. No Government can be perfect. However, it is clear nonetheless as we approach an election that we have taken Gibraltar huge strides forward in a positive direction.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by thanking you, the Clerk and the staff of the House for your support throughout the year. I also want to publicly thank my personal staff in my office at No. 6 Convent Place.

Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

425

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

**Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, it is an honour to stand here today to deliver my fourth Budget address. The last before a General Election, when the people of Gibraltar will be able to take account and analyse exactly how, in their minds we have fared, as a Government.

430 It is my honest opinion, Mr Speaker that we have done well. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) It is impossible to please everyone, but I sincerely think that we have managed, via our thorough manifesto promises, to steer Gibraltar well into the future. Our successes across the board have been noteworthy indeed, two new schools, a University for Gibraltar, almost 1,000 new affordable homes already close to completion and a new 1,700 recently announced, the refurbishment of the once forgotten housing estates, public meetings of the DPC, a new small boats marina, a draft traffic plan, a new psychiatric unit, Commonwealth Park, achieving the lowest levels of unemployment ever seen locally, a new bank for Gibraltar, the Gibraltar Mega Music Festival, a new ID Card, the list goes on and on, Mr Speaker.

440 I am very proud of being part of this team, working together for what we believe is for the good of Gibraltar. Clearly, not all will agree with us, not least the hon. Members sitting across the floor. Mr Speaker, clearly they would have done things differently, of course they would have, but they had their chance for almost 16 years in Government. Now it is our turn.

445 Mr Speaker, I sincerely think that most will agree and I am very confident that this will become evident when the time comes for the electorate to choose the way forward, that we have done very well indeed.

450 Mr Speaker, I will now turn my attention to my Ministerial responsibilities and start with Technical Services, a Department that often goes by without sufficient mention, as they quietly are responsible for providing all the technical advice and know-how to the vast majority of Government projects. I wish to put on record that I am most grateful for the assistance provided by such a professional and hard-working Department. I can still recall my first briefing meeting when the one thing that rung out most clearly was that the Department felt that they were not being put to their full use. Too much outsourcing was being done then and the Department felt that they could do so much more. Today, TSD is at the heart of most Government projects.

455 During the past Financial Year, the Department has been involved in a number of projects covering a large variety of areas such as coastal protection works and rock fall prevention as well as works in relation to their defined responsibilities such as highway maintenance and works to the main sewer amongst others.

On the coastal works side, Technical Services has been directly responsible for the delivery of two major projects. The Sandy Bay Beach protection and regeneration project was completed in time for last year's bathing season and has seen a major transformation with the creation of a wide stable beach, (Banging on desks) something that has not been the case for a number of years now. This project was one of our manifesto commitments.

The Department has also led on the North Mole Reclamation project, which is currently underway. This project will see the existing Western Arm extended northwards by just under 120 metres. In all, nine concrete caissons have been sunk to create the perimeter of the new reclamation. Approximately 80,000 tonnes of rubble from the Eastside will be processed as fill material and a new landmass of approximately 10,000m<sup>2</sup> will be created. These works are earmarked for completion in July this year.

For the incoming year, Technical Services will continue to develop various other coastal works projects including regular maintenance of the existing coastal defences.

Turning now to cliff stabilisation and rock fall prevention projects; Following a tender award, the Department carried out slope stabilisation works above Windmill Hill Road in an area, which had suffered from a major landslide. In addition, assessments and designs for further rock fall protection measures at the Eastside slopes and Green Lane were commenced and are currently on-going as part of the Government's cliff stabilisation and rock fall prevention programme which will continue during this Financial Year.

Technical Services Department have also been fully involved with the need to relocate the Motorcycle Club from Brian Navarro Way to a new site within the Governor's Cottage Industrial Park. The original motorcycle club suffered extensive structural damage following a major rock fall in November 2012. Given the rock fall hazard that exists in this area a new site for the motorcycle club was identified within the Governor's Cottage Camp Industrial Park. The Department acted as project managers at all stages of the design, including the procurement and construction of the club. I am pleased to announce that this was completed in November 2014.

Mr Speaker, with regard to highway maintenance, the works programme has once again been successful over the past year with on-going repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls. Resurfacing works have been carried out during the past year to a stretch of Europa Road to the south of the '1772 Club' where a new footpath has also been constructed to improve pedestrian safety in the area. Additionally, resurfacing works has also seen the extension of the Catalan Bay car park to provide better parking facilities for beach users and the resurfacing of a new temporary coach park on the site of the old air terminal.

The replacement of pelican crossing lights and equipment has been undertaken in a number of locations working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. This year saw the introduction of countdown timers at the Line Wall Road crossing. This was as a direct result of the recommendations of the Sustainable Transport, Traffic and Parking Plan – the STTPP for short.

Yes, Mr Speaker, the plan which has received much attention of late, often mocked at by the hon. Members Opposite, (**Two Members:** Shame!) a plan that they themselves would have been proud of, a plan that they would not discard through their own admission and that is clearly a very good thing, a plan that the Members Opposite would wish we rushed for who can imagine what reason.

It is this Government's General Policy as part of this Plan that we encourage people to adopt alternative and more sustainable modes of transport, the most basic of which is walking itself. In order to do this, it is this Government's view that we must provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to make walking safer, more comfortable and hence acceptable to the population at large. These countdown timers will help to do exactly that. They inform the pedestrian of the time that they have left to cross and therefore give them confidence, feeling less rushed when crossing the road. Pedestrians can therefore now take an informed decision as to whether they will have enough time to cross and there is no confusion between cars and pedestrians as to who has right of way. The programme to improve our existing pedestrian crossings will continue during the coming year with the installation of further countdown timers at some of our busiest pedestrian routes. Importantly, there will also be important new pedestrian improvements at the Trafalgar Interchange, by way of a new puffin crossing at Ragged Staff, something very much needed and was very obvious, and that came across loud and clear as part of the public consultation process of the STTPP. This new crossing at Ragged Staff is earmarked for completion shortly. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (Banging on desks)

Mr Speaker, as in previous years, the Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the Public Highway, both for its own in-house works and for all utility companies and contractors, in a manner that balances the need to undertake works against allowing vehicles to circulate. The increased construction activity generated by new projects makes this task increasingly difficult. In order to reduce the impact of road closures works are only carried out avoiding peak times wherever possible, and after-hours and weekend work, as always, is the default condition imposed on contractors in order to minimise inconvenience to the public.

As stated in my last Budget speech, Mr Speaker, a comprehensive major resurfacing programme was commenced by the Department last year in an effort to tackle the under-investment in road maintenance in

past years. Major resurfacing works were undertaken along Rosia Road and also along Line Wall Road. Over the coming year the major road resurfacing programme will continue with the resurfacing of the southern section of Queensway from Ragged Staff Roundabout until the Mid-Harbours roundabout. Additionally, the roundabout at Europort Avenue, adjacent to the fuel station, which is colloquially known as Morrison's roundabout, has been completely resurfaced. These works were undertaken at off peak times and weekends, thus avoiding the traffic disruption that would inevitably ensue should these works be carried out during normal working hours.

Mr Speaker, as many will have by now noticed, walking along certain stretches of Main Street has become safer for ladies wearing high-heeled shoes. We are pleased to announce that works to repair the joints in the paving on Main Street have now commenced. These works entail the lifting and relaying of the stone blocks along Main Street and the filling and stabilisation of all joints using a special polymer resin. Presently a stretch of Main Street from its junction with Engineer Lane to its junction with Cooperage Lane has been completed. These works will be extended to other areas during the course of the year. These works were another one of the manifesto commitments for which the appropriation of funds was sought last year and this should see a vast improvement to what was an area of concern to many.

Mr Speaker, works to install a new fire-fighting main and emergency telephone line along the full length of Dudley Ward Way Tunnel in line with our manifesto commitment have also been recently completed. During the coming year mobile phone coverage and ventilation requirements will be designed with a view to improving the current situation as much as possible, working within the constraints imposed by this ex-military tunnel. The measures in place now make the tunnel a far safer place making it possible for the essential services to attend to any accident within the tunnel expeditiously.

Mr Speaker, although I have already touched upon and mentioned the Sustainable Transport, Traffic and Parking Plan earlier, I will now turn to this major Government project and indeed Manifesto Commitment. The STTPP has been a truly inter-ministerial and inter-departmental project which has seen involvement of Technical Services, including Highways and our Traffic team, the Ministry for the Environment, the Bus Company and our consultants Mott MacDonald, who are market leaders in Traffic and Transport Plans across the world for many years. Mr Speaker, Although my shadow has complained about the time that this project has taken, he must understand that for a project of this magnitude, one that cuts across the whole community and affects all of us whether we choose to drive or not, walk or take the bus or not. This plan is not something that should or indeed can be rushed in any way, shape or form. One cannot spend taxpayer's money on ideas dreamt about one lazy Sunday afternoon having then to back track when it fails through a lack of proper research. Mr Speaker, this plan is a comprehensive document, which will form the blueprint for traffic and transport for at least the next 10 years. Already the plan has churned some very well thought out ideas, which are within the very comprehensive draft document already published.

Mr Speaker, I am very proud to have delivered a major manifesto commitment in the form of this draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan for Gibraltar. As part of this plan and with the use of digital modelling, we now have the means to be able to put certain potential scenarios to the test. We can now compare before and after scenarios to compare what real effect a change has on traffic flow. This draft document was open to public consultation until the end of March this year and our consultants are presently compiling a database of all responses received. This database will set out the issues and suggestions raised by members of the public and how these will be considered and addressed as part of the work to complete the final version of the plan, which is earmarked for completion before the end of this year.

Mr Speaker, as part of the work carried out so far a number of pilot schemes have already been introduced including a new drop-off zone outside St Joseph's Middle and Primary Schools as well as the introduction of a temporary roundabout at the junction of Glacis Road and Bayside Road. The changes at St Joseph's School have brought about mixed comments ranging from the very positive from parents picking up and dropping their children off with much greater ease, to the negative of residents who are unhappy about the loss of permanent parking in their area. Parking still exists all day except for three hours each day and parking is restored at all times during weekends, public and school holidays.

Change, Mr Speaker, especially when it comes to parking, is something that is difficult to come to terms with and any traffic plan will be faced with these issues at every single step of the way. We are currently working very hard with the tenants of the South District to try to find solutions to these in conjunction with other historical issues, which have surfaced as a result of these new changes. We are clear that for any plan to work, we have to be brave to enforce change that will hopefully bring about the long-lasting positive changes that will benefit Gibraltar as a whole, including the environment.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has one of the largest vehicle ownership rates in the world. The easiest thing politically would be to do nothing until one is forced to do something in the future. It takes a forward thinking Government to try to bring about positive change in this respect. To be able to see the whole benefit of the plan one needs to wait until all of the parts of the puzzle are in place. This will come about once the final document is read and discussed in order to prepare a plan of action based on the recommendations received. Until then the picture will be incomplete.

580 Mr Speaker, on traffic matters the Department has continued to make good progress this year and has  
 seen a number of other improvements and initiatives. Speed Indicator Devices have been installed on  
 several of our main arterial roads. These Speed Indicator Devices are vehicle-activated signs, which detect  
 and display real time vehicle speeds as vehicles approach them, in order to advise drivers of the speed they  
 are travelling at. The aim of these devices is to provide information, which will allow drivers to change  
 585 their behaviour towards speed and are one of several measures that form part of a wider speed management  
 plan. In this respect the Department is also carrying out a full review of the speed limits on all of Gibraltar's  
 roads and has commenced a programme for the installation of speed cameras on some of the roads which  
 statistically have the highest accident rates in Gibraltar in an effort to make our roads safer for all our users.  
 The Ministry for Traffic has been working closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police to ensure that the speed  
 cameras are placed in the most strategic of locations throughout Gibraltar, especially in accident hotspots.  
 590 There have been other road calming measures also set up using speed ramps within densely populated areas  
 For example, Prince Edward's Road, Lower Castle Road, St Joseph's Estate and at the entrance of Camp  
 Bay.

Mr Speaker, other initiatives have included the installation of a new pelican crossing at Queensway by  
 the area of King's Bastion and the upgrading of the zebra crossing on Glacis Road to a pelican crossing.  
 595 Apart from the new pelican crossing at Ragged Staff the Department is currently carrying out a review of  
 crossings at the Trafalgar Interchange with a view of making changes to improve circulation routes for  
 pedestrians in this busy junction, which has historically neglected the needs of those travelling on foot.

More initiatives will continue until the final plan is printed and beyond. Mr Speaker, this plan is not  
 short term but a plan for the foreseeable future.

600 In relation to assisting the Bus Company with improving their service to the public, Technical Services  
 identified a means to allow buses to turn around within the area of Brian Navarro Way. This area is  
 relatively narrow and in the past prevented buses from safely turning around without the need to manoeuvre  
 and cause an obstruction and danger to other road users. A purpose built lay-by was constructed within an  
 area of waste ground bordering the main road to allow the safe turning circle of buses. This has meant that  
 605 there is no longer the need of having an extra minibus to service this route and hence a saving may be made  
 to the public purse. These works were completed at the start of the year at a cost of £57,848.83.

Mr Speaker, moving onto the sewers section, during the past year flood prevention measures along the  
 southern end of Fish Market Road and at Wellington Front were completed, meaning that the historical  
 problems of flooding in both of these areas during periods of concentrated heavy rainfall will now be a  
 610 thing of the past.

The condition and upkeep of Gibraltar's main sewer and storm water drainage networks continues to be  
 a matter of great concern for the Government, arising from a lack of investment and neglect to what is  
 arguably the most important and essential part of our local infrastructure. To this end, works were carried  
 out to desilt large sections of our drains at a number of locations. These have included the main sewer along  
 615 Rosia Road, the Main Street sewer from Bell Lane to King's Street and the main storm water culverts from  
 Reclamation Road to Bishop Caruana Road. Further desilting works will progressively be extended to other  
 areas.

Other works carried out have included the relining of the Main Sewer along Line Wall Road from the  
 junction of King's Street up to Bomb House Lane, the relaying of a collapsed storm drain along the  
 620 Europort and the laying of new storm water culverts at Marina Bay.

Funding is once again being provided this Financial Year for the purchase of equipment to allow the  
 sewer infrastructure sections to continue to provide an efficient service in respect of its inspection of the  
 sewers network.

625 Mr Speaker, this is also the case for the Garage and Workshop where funding for new equipment is also  
 being provided. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles,  
 including the refuse collection vehicles. The situation within the Garage and Workshop is also under  
 review, given the previous administration's hurried signing of a Collective Agreement only a few weeks  
 before the Election last, which placed them in a Government owned Company as an interim measure that  
 would allow them to receive a 12% pay increase.

630 Mr Speaker, the Technical Services Department is one of those Government Departments who are  
 rarely in the limelight but they work tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver on their defined responsibilities  
 maintaining public infrastructure and to support and provide technical advice to other Government  
 Ministries and departments. As can be seen, they will continue to do so this coming year in all manner of  
 projects in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

635 Mr Speaker, turning now to Public Transport, late last year, an amalgamation of the Ministries of  
 Traffic & Public Transport took place following a reshuffle of Ministerial responsibilities. The Ministry is  
 now responsible for the Gibraltar Bus Company together with the local taxi service. Within public transport  
 there are many challenges that one is faced with in an attempt to improve the provision of such an important

640 service to the community. Furthermore, in order to be truly successful in the policies surrounding the STTPP, an efficient public transport service is essential.

The Government by way of the Ministry is continually looking for ways to improve the taxi service within Gibraltar. Clearly there are a multitude of issues that can affect the taxi service as indeed the bus service, the greatest of which are the traffic problems associated and surrounding the frontier and also the airfield barrier crossings. These, on a Sunday during the summer schedule, close to allow no less than nine  
645 scheduled flights to land and takeoff. This added to any potential private or military aircraft and runway-cleaning operations inevitably lead to great delays and an unavoidable deterioration in service. With the barrier down at least 20 times on a Sunday, clearly we have a problem. No doubt, a victim of our own success in attracting more flights to Gibraltar, something which we can only be totally proud of, but unfortunately this will affect other operations in such a small place like ours. It is at the airport arrivals  
650 terminal that we see the effect of this traffic build-up together with the frontier taxi rank itself. Hence, it is inevitable that this has a bearing on the taxi and bus service.

Mr Speaker, Government by way of the recruitment of five transport inspectors and the installation of the taxi GPS tracking system has managed to improve the taxi service in some areas, but we continue to work hand in hand with the GTA in order to jointly identify strategies to continue to better the taxi service  
655 throughout Gibraltar.

The new MAN buses have provided Gibraltar with a much-needed improvement to its aging fleet. The previous bus fleet was in fact not so much aged, as in fact simply showing the strains of being driven in an environment such as ours where we are faced with very steep hills, high temperatures and narrow, winding roads. They have clearly not provided the taxpayer with the years that were promised when they were first  
660 purchased. The old blue buses were fitted with American supplied gearboxes which when the service provider in the UK stopped supplying spares for, spares became almost impossible to acquire. Therefore a minor fault in a gearbox meant having to adapt a completely new gearbox from another manufacturer. Once this occurred the buses' performance was critically diminished leading to their steep decline. The new buses are fitted with powerful six-cylinder engines, which will amply provide them with sufficient torque to  
665 remove all historical issues associated with the previous buses, already mentioned. Users can enjoy travelling in air-conditioned comfort. These new buses are fully compliant with all the legal provisions applicable to all Public Service vehicles. Hence Gibraltar can now be proud of having a state of the art, eco-friendly and modern bus service, which will ensure an efficient, scheduled service for passengers for years to come.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Government is also looking into purchasing several extra minibuses to service the Upper Town area. Several models have been identified and negotiations with the relevant vehicle dealers are underway. These will also provide an accessible service to all of its users. The present buses are also insufficiently capable of negotiating all of the roads within the Upper Town area and especially at the junction between Gardiner's Road and Europa Road, the present buses' lack of clearance  
670 due to its very protruding overhang is causing much damage to the underside of the bus leading to a great ongoing maintenance cost.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Department. This Department is working closely with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) for the introduction of the tachograph cards for our drivers. At an administrative level, a Memorandum of Understanding has already been drafted and the DVLD is awaiting DVSA's comments. The Department is working forcefully to try and find a workable  
680 solution for our few local HGV drivers.

The European Commission has adopted rules for linking national electronic registers of road transport undertakings. This linked-up database is called the 'European Register of Road Transport Undertakings' (ERRU). ERRU allows a better exchange of information between Member States, so that the competent  
685 authorities can better monitor the compliance of road transport undertakings with the rules in force. Undertakings that do not respect the rules when operating abroad will face the consequences in the Member State where they are based. This creates fairer competition conditions in the road transport market. The set-up of the national registers and their interconnections are required under the legislation on the access to the profession of road transport undertakings. It is in line with this Government's commitment that we  
690 introduce and comply with all EU legislation, Mr Speaker, I can safely say that all the necessary procedures to link up to this database are now in place and are up and running.

Mr Speaker, as part of Government's initiative to provide personalised support and to assist applicants and transport undertakings wishing to complete the new driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) initial qualifications and periodic training, training is being provided by the DVLD and will be on-  
695 going. In the past year, 21 drivers have successfully passed the Bus Certificate of Professional Competence and 18 drivers have successfully passed the Lorry CPC initial qualification. Moreover, the Government, in an effort to ensure that all Directive requirements are met will continue to deliver the 35-hour periodic training for existing drivers during 2015-16. Presently, 151 bus and 71 lorry drivers have successfully attended the CPC periodic training. With this initiative both transport undertakings or individual applicants

700 who take advantage of the possibility of completing the 35 hours of periodic training over the five-year period will be able to spread the training costs over the full five-year period.

Mr Speaker, the carriage of dangerous goods by road carries the inherent risk of accidents. Taking into account the safety requirements of vehicles in Gibraltar that carry dangerous goods, and in accordance with the Transport (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) Regulations 2010, Government will continue to provide training to the DVLD's technical staff in order to qualify them for the issue of an authorisation certificate to these vehicles. This year a further course will be held by qualified persons from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), in UK in order to train the newly recruited vehicle testers. This course will be held in Gibraltar.

710 Mr Speaker, the introduction of the Motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course for riders continues to be a tremendous success. Feedback from the public at large has been extremely positive. Due to the fact that demand surpasses supply, Government is working with the DVLD and looking into possible measures to increase the delivery of these courses.

The demand for the issuing of the new photo card driving licences continues to be on the increase, and the waiting times for the issuing of these driving licences continues to be at an all-time low, between five to six working days. This combined with the success of an extra business counter being provided at the MOT offices is ensuring an excellent service for businesses and the public at large.

Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the above, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department continues to use information and communication technology as a tool to achieve better customer services. The general public is now able to access a number of online services and applications via the new e-Government portal; for example, roadworthiness test bookings – MOT bookings and driving test and theory test bookings. Furthermore, the Department is also working on a service to purchase personalised number plates online. These services will allow people to access and pay for such facilities 'at any time' and from the comfort of their own homes. This comes as a wealth of new market footprint coverage opportunities for the DVLD that will appropriately cater for market demands and service requirements.

725 Mr Speaker, further to and in keeping with our manifesto commitment, I am satisfied that all the relevant outstanding EU legislation and amendments have now been transposed. Furthermore, in anticipation the Department is now working closely with the EUID and studying all future directive proposals in order to expedite their swift implementation as and when the need arises.

Moreover, the Department together with the EUID, is looking to update all existing national traffic and transport legislation and determining ways that will make both Acts more user friendly.

730 The Traffic and Transport Commission continue to meet on a monthly basis; The Traffic Commission is constantly working to assist our citizens in all matters relating to traffic, while the Transport Commission works hand in hand with all the transport undertakings and the GTA in order to mutually find strategies to continue to better the Public Services in Gibraltar. To this effect, I am very satisfied that both these bodies have been able to promulgate all traffic and transport regulations successfully. From here, I would like to thank all the members of both Commissions, many of which are appointed volunteers.

Mr Speaker, E-Reg is the Association of European Vehicle and Driver Registration Authorities. It is a European co-operative made up of all the European registration authorities dealing with subjects concerning registration and documentation of vehicles and drivers. The main objective of E-Reg is to bring together all the European registration authorities to be able to share knowledge, experience and good practices and also identify, follow and influence European developments and regulations. I was proud to announce that from 3rd to 5th June 2015 the E-Reg General Meeting & Annual Conference took place here in Gibraltar. Government is positive that having held this conference here will further strengthen existing liaison procedures between European authorities and Gibraltar making this beneficial not only to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department but to Gibraltar as a whole.

745 To this end, I can proudly state that to date the DVLD has successfully completed and surpassed all the Commitments as set out in our Manifesto.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar Car Parks Limited continues to manage all covered and non-covered parking within the assigned car parks throughout Gibraltar. They are responsible for keeping the car parks in check for maintenance issues and for their cleaning. Gibraltar Car Parks Limited have assisted the Ministry for Housing with the parking schemes within Chilton Court and Albert Risso House. Recently Gibraltar Car Parks Limited has also been working within Mid-Harbour's Estate to bring into use the much needed parking barrier system within the estate, controlling access to those not from within the estate. This will go a long way in keeping such a large car park more secure.

755 Mr Speaker, this year, in fact barely months ago construction began on the 1,000 space multi-storey car park within the Mid Town – close to the city centre, on the site of the old Naval Football Grounds. Three hundred parking spaces have been sold to members of the public almost immediately. This building will house 700 public parking spaces together with the Coach Park. The expected completion for this car park is within autumn 2015.

760 Coaling Island is another area that has been designated as a parking area for private vehicles. This area was full of derelict vehicles and boats. The area was cleared and on the 16th October 2014, this free car park was officially opened to the general public, affording two disabled parking bays; 40 motorcycle bays; 88 motor vehicle parking bays; and 11 parking bays for GHA/CMHT employees from the Community Mental Health Team. There is a second phase expected in this area once the works related to the mid  
765 harbours new boat marina is complete.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to my responsibility for the port.

During the course of Financial Year 2014-15 the Gibraltar Port Authority spent a total of £5,650,323, including Capital expenditure, from a budget of £5,762,000. Under recurrent revenue, the Gibraltar Port Authority made a total of £4,812,863.

770 Looking at developments, the new electronic Vehicle Management System is now fully operational and is allowing ships' agents to input data remotely in order to provide the most recent information on a vehicle's movements, further streamlining port operations. Feedback suggests that local agents in general are very satisfied with this new product; nevertheless, the Gibraltar Port Authority continues to develop the programme to facilitate further the smooth running of the port.

775 Mr Speaker, in fulfilment of further manifesto commitments, work continues to improve port facilities and infrastructure, including the provision of enhanced facilities for operational personnel. As part of this commitment HM Government of Gibraltar continues to invest in the port. It also pleases me to announce today that work on the new port administration building, incorporating improved facilities and a better location for the Vessel Traffic Service, the VTS office, the GPA's nerve centre, is well underway. The  
780 concrete framework is fully complete and the first walls are starting to go up. Mr Speaker, we are also considering the possibility of replacing the VTS equipment itself, de-risking the move and building in improved performance, functionality and resilience for years to come, in the system which underpins safety of navigation in our busy waters. It is envisaged that the project will be completed towards the end of this year, representing a substantial injection of capital investment in the port in order to fulfil yet another  
785 critical manifesto commitment.

Mr Speaker, the process of tendering for a new port launch is also well underway and it is anticipated that a new vessel could be ordered within the next 12 months, to considerably enhance this important capability.

790 On security, Mr Speaker, in addition to the new closed circuit television system that was introduced at the port two years ago, enhancing both safety and security, the Government in conjunction with the GPA and Technical Services will be modifying the restricted area within the port estate to comply with the Department of Transport UK's recommendations. Linked to this, a new traffic management plan for taxis and coaches will be implemented shortly to assist with passenger flow.

795 Mr Speaker, the first stage of the Small Boats Marina, which will accommodate 700 small boats, has now been completed with the main perimeter quay having being laid. The second phase is well underway, along the main quayside, housing the infrastructure for all required services. Plans are also being considered for the use of the long outer berths for super yachts. It is expected that the Marina will be completed by September 2015 and the allocation process for berths is currently being considered and will be announced shortly.

800 The GPA, in close consultation with other Government Departments and Port Operators, has recently revised its Oil Spill Contingency plan. As a result, we now have a modern, up-to-date plan that reflects both the local environment and operations, and investment in equipment, by this Government. The new plan encapsulates the provision of the additional 600 metres of oil spill containment boom purchased last year, already pre-positioned at both harbour entrances to the west of Ocean Village. Mr Speaker, this delivers a  
805 significant improvement in the response time to successfully mitigate any impact of pollution to these areas. The revised plan also includes the Vikoma Alligator Skimmer purchased the previous year. Looking ahead, the tender process for the delivery of a specialised Oil Spill Detection radar to provide full-time dedicated coverage of all British Gibraltar Territorial Waters is almost completed – a state-of-the-art, low-profile system, adding an invaluable tool to the arsenal at the disposal of the Port Authority to continue protecting  
810 our maritime environment. Mr Speaker, further enhancements to the monitoring tools of the Port Authority, such as portable thermal imaging equipment, are also being considered.

815 Mr Speaker, the Environmental Health and Safety Advisor is doing an excellent job in raising health and safety awareness throughout the port community, ensuring compliance with safety regulations and marine environmental legislation. I am pleased to say that this is resulting in a positive shift in the port workers' culture and behaviour in this area of critical importance.

More generally, it is pleasing to see that activity levels in the port are showing a positive trend across the board. The port continues to go from strength to strength. The recent doubling of VTS operators, together with the introduction of a number of initiatives aimed at further improving efficiency, are bearing fruit in commercial terms. Safety, of course, remains our top priority and our professional crew members

820 continue to play a pivotal role, providing a vital search and rescue capability in our busy waters, 24 hours a day, throughout the year, often in challenging and hazardous conditions.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude my contribution to my Budget address thanking all my staff that have worked so hard to see our commitments become a reality. Thanks goes not only to those who ensure the rolling out of our commitments, my senior members of staff, but also to all those who do not go by  
825 unnoticed, who perform all the valuable functions within the service throughout all the various Departments and offices.

I also wish to reinforce my appreciation to all the staff here within Parliament who work tirelessly to ensure that proceedings run as smoothly and efficiently as they do.

In particular, I would finally also like to thank my personal ministerial staff for all of their help and  
830 support during the past year. It has been a very busy year and they have lived up to the expectation, as usual. Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10.30 a.m.

835 **Mr Speaker:** Before we do that, I had intended to raise a small matter to digress for a moment, before I called upon Dr John Cortes.

The budget session is an occasion when there is a particular Rule that becomes more relevant than on any other occasion and that is Rule 45(3). In my mind – I will be very blunt – it is a stupid Rule.

840 It is a Rule that forbids Members from reading their speeches. (**A Member:** Ah, yes.) Of course, what is implicit is that they are able to do so with the permission of the Speaker, which the Speaker obviously readily gives.

But why does that Rule have to be there in the first place? Is it because that is a Rule in the mother of Parliament? But it is a pretence, because even in the mother of Parliament, they do read their speeches,  
845 though the Speaker pretends that they just have copious notes – nonsense! They have got speeches written out and they read them. And that is what I did for 20 years that I was in the House. So this Rule is a nonsense, to my mind.

The House should have a Standing Rules Committee. Do we have one? (*Interjection*) I became Speaker in October whereas the House started in January. There may or may not be, I am not sure whether there is.  
850 If there is a Standing Rules Committee, it would be the easiest thing in the world to circulate a round-robin proposing that Rule 45(3) be deleted completely, I would suggest and the other sub-paragraphs be renumbered, that is all it takes. But I cannot for the life of me understand the sense behind this Rule, which is never observed, and as I say, I think it is nothing more than a pretence.

855 So if hon. Members agree with my sentiments, perhaps they can take some action in the future. They are going to be here longer than I am.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, thank you very much for pointing that out.

I have always found it something which is remarkable in the sense that it is a Rule observed in its breach in the time that I have been here.

860 I believe there is a Standing Rules Committee, which is appointed immediately after the election and the then Backbencher and I nominated people who had been on it from the beginning and that you should rightly refer the matter to them, and I think the proposal that you have made is the right way to deal with it.

865 **Mr Speaker:** And so, you are proposing that the House adjourns until tomorrow morning at...?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** At 10.30.

**Mr Speaker:** At 10.30. The House will now adjourn until tomorrow at 10.30.

*The House adjourned at 5.51 p.m.*