



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.15 a.m. – 1.08 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 19th February 2015

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<i>The House recessed at 1.08 p.m.</i>	<i>54</i>

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.15 a.m.

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

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

PRAYER

Mr Speaker

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 19th February 2015.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the last meeting of Parliament which was held on 22nd and 29th January 2015.

5 **Mr Speaker:** May I sign the Minutes as correct? (**Members:** Aye.)

Mr Speaker signed the Minutes.

10 **Clerk:** (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be laid; (vii) Reports of Committees; (viii) Answers to Oral Questions.

Questions for Oral Answer

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & THE GSB

Q163-168/2015

Trainees –

Details of levels followed

Clerk: We commence today with Question 163, the Hon. E J Reyes.

15 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can the Government provide details of how many of the Trainees who obtained NVQs Level 1, as listed in answer to Question 768/2014, have continued working towards obtaining NVQ Level 2; providing a breakdown showing the corresponding NVQ discipline being followed?

20 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question with Questions 164 to 168.

25 **Clerk:** Question 164, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Government provide details of any of the Trainees who obtained NVQs Level 2, as listed in answer to Question 768/2014, have continued working towards obtaining NVQ Level 3; providing a breakdown showing the corresponding NVQ discipline being followed?

30 **Clerk:** Question 165, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Further to the answer provided to Question 60/2015, can the Government say by when it is estimated that the Assessor at the Engineering Training Centre will obtain the required EAL Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment Level 3; as well as indicating who is carrying out any
35 official assessment duties until the necessary qualifications are obtained by the individual concerned?

Clerk: Question 166, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Government provide the missing information in respect of all the 134 Trainees listed in answer to Question 768/2014, as the information provided through answer to Question 62/2015 only accounts for 123 Trainees in respect of NVQs attained?
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Clerk: Question 167, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Government provide revised and/or updated information in respect of the 74 Trainees listed in answer to Question 766/2014, as the information provided in answer to Question 63/2015 accounts for 75 Trainees in respect of NVQs they are currently undertaking?
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Clerk: Question 168, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Government provide details of any new Trainees enrolled at either (a) Construction Trades Training Centre; (b) Engineering Trades Training Centre, since the answer provided to Question 64/2015, listing the specific discipline or course being followed indicating at what NVQ Level, the Examination Board and Awarding Body who will upon successful completion certify the award, as well as stating at which Training Centre they are enrolled?
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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, the Trainees progressing to Level 2 are in the following trades: Carpentry – four; Bricklaying – two; Plastering – two; and Wall and Floor Tiling – one.
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The Trainees progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 are in Carpentry – four; and in Bricklaying – one.

The Assessor undergoing training within the Engineering Training Centre is expected to attain the qualification by the end of September 2015. Currently official assessment duties are overseen by the Gibraltar College.
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The 11 Trainees omitted from the answer to Question 62 were 10 trainees obtaining NVQ Level 1 in Plumbing, accredited by City & Guilds and one trainee NVQ Level 3 in Fabrication and Welding and accredited by EAL.

In respect of the answer given to Question 63/2015, the extra trainee at NVQ Level 2 was in Carpentry. The correct figure was one trainee and not two. 24 trainees have now enrolled at the Construction Training Centre and are following City & Guilds NVQ Level 1 Courses in Painting and Decorating, Carpentry and Plumbing.
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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have got a small query that perhaps the Minister can clarify for me. Having been able to see an actual certificate of an NVQ Award, the Minister keeps on referring to the awarding body as City & Guilds yet on the certificate it says that it is the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).
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Does the Minister have any sort of explanation as to why on the one hand we call it City & Guilds and the certificate as such is issued under the nomenclature of CITB?
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Hon. J J Bossano: Well I am not able to clarify the point about the specific certificate he is talking about because I have not seen it, but I can tell him that at one stage the City & Guilds and the CITB were awarding the qualifications jointly.

Quite recently, I think within the last 18 months, they split and now they no longer provide – they provide the same qualification but they are now separate. So there are people who will have a certificate that will have both logos, as it were, and there will be people who will only have CITB and there will be people who will have City & Guilds.
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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Mr Speaker, it helps at least to a certain extent to clarify that. Should the Minister ever come into further information of division or reunification of boards and so on, I would be grateful –
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even if it is behind the Speaker's Chair, if he just updates me, because sometimes I try to look on official websites to try and see the actual contents of the syllabus and one does not know whether to search under City & Guilds or under CITB. Whatever the Minister can do for ease of reference, I appreciate that.

Hon. J J Bossano: I am not sure that there is much difference in the content, although one of the reasons why... well, the initial move, as the hon. Member knows because I told him, I think, three years ago when I started on this, was that there were employers in the industry who were saying they preferred City & Guilds. He was right in that the information that I brought to the House, which was information that they had provided to me, which was that they were talking about City & Guilds as if it was a different qualification, when in fact it is a different awarding body, which is something he pointed out to me and was right. But I was acting on information that they gave me which I was not in a position to question.

So in terms of the awarding bodies, I do not think the difference between them is all that much, given that until a couple of years ago, they were both doing the same syllabus. But I am told that in the City & Guilds version, there is now more practical work and less written work, and that I think is an important consideration, because we have a problem in that many of the school leavers and some of the older people in the industry who are coming back to get qualifications are not all that proficient in the English language. Although they know what they are doing and they can describe it to you in Spanish if you question them, it does not mean necessarily that they can write a thesis on it.

So to the extent that there is a difference other than for example that the training is now more geared to maintenance work because we believe that is where the long-term future is in terms of secure jobs rather than putting up buildings which go up, and then when they are finished there is no more work, other than that element which would be the same whichever of the two we took, I think that is the main difference.

But I will try and get the information for the hon. Member that is more accurate than the one I can give him standing on my feet.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and just to state in this House, I concur wholeheartedly with the Minister's views: City & Guilds does have quite a good reputation. Certainly employers in Gibraltar for many, many years have been satisfied with the standards required from City & Guilds and 'if it ain't broken, why fix it?' So the Minister will continue to receive my support if he carries on down the avenue of City & Guilds.

At the end of the day, I think all sides of this House prefer to have good quality craftsmen, irrespective of what the nomenclature on the certificate may say.

Hon. J J Bossano: I am grateful for his support, Mr Speaker.

Q169/2015
Public service employees –
Increase in numbers

Clerk: Question 169, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, what permanent increases have there been in numbers in employees in the public service since 1st April 2014 broken down by reference to the Civil Service, the GDC and any other Government company, public authority or entity for which the Government is accountable?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, the figures for December 2014 are not yet available. The increases in respect of the figures given for 31st March last year have increased by the end of September as follows: Civil Service – 4; GDC – 33; Public Agencies and Authorities – 72.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, does this include the over 70 recruits for the Customs Department, the figures that the Hon. Minister has provided?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, those would be civil servants and there are only four, so four cannot possibly include 72.

145 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So in fact the figure – obviously we do not have the figures post-September, I will ask again next month, but the figure is likely to be closer to 200 extra bodies within the public service as a whole as from March of last year?

150 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I am not able to confirm that figure. All I can tell him is that this is based on the same analysis that I gave him for 31st March figure which is the number of... If I remind the hon. Member, this is the quarterly exercise that is done by the Statistics Office, which was being done when he was in Government and every three months they produce a snapshot of the people that there are working at the end of the quarter. If you compare one quarter with the other, the difference that you get is the figures that I have given him.

155 I mean it is a net figure so there will be some Departments that have gone up and some that have come down; but the bottom line is that there are four more civil servants, 33 more GDC grades and 72 more in the agencies and authorities.

160 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the actual net increase... I have done the calculations, he may not agree but the actual net increase from March 2012 to March 2014, within the public service as a whole, that includes Civil Service, GDC, authorities, entities, etc was 513 at a recurrent cost to the Taxpayer, in terms of recurrent expenditure, of £8.2 million if we take into account the lowest possible pay scale. So it is actually likely to be more than that.

165 Does the hon. Member feel comfortable with these increases in recurrent expenditure and these increases in the public service or does he feel that perhaps he feels comfortable now but that moving towards the future, this is something that is going to have to be re-examined, these increases in the public service, because Gibraltar cannot sustain such increases in recurrent expenditure?

170 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I assume, Mr Speaker, that the 513 that he is referring to is the figure that I gave him for last year, but not the figure in this question.

Hon. D A Feetham: The figure is a figure calculated from the Estimates Book and also answers that the hon. Gentleman has given me and it is from March 2012 to March 2014. So it is those two full years for which the Government is responsible, there has been an increase, a net increase in the public service of 513 bodies at the lowest pay scale that is £8.2 million of recurrent expenditure that has been added to the recurrent expenditure bill on an annual basis.

180 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I think his figures are wrong, Mr Speaker, but of course it is difficult to analyse what he is saying because he has asked me what has happened since March 2014 and now he produces a figure of what has happened since March 2012. Well, if he wanted to know the figure since 2012 I would have had that produced and then I would have given it to him but I am not sure his figure of 513 for that period is there because I have not checked it myself and I have not provided it at this stage.

185 What I provided him for example the last time he put this question which was for the Financial Year 2013-14 was that there were 47 more civil servants and 12 more GDC. So if his figures were accurate, which I do not believe they are, it would suggest that in the first year there must have been an increase of 400. I do not recall 400 more civil servants or GDC employees, certainly not GDC because I remember the GDC number since I was much more involved in the GDC administration than in the Civil Service side and I remember that there certainly was not that level at all. I think what we had initially was the 84 people who came back from the Civil Service and in fact in the first year, those 84 might have gone up maybe by 30 to about 111, something like that from recollection that is in 2012-13.

190 So if in the first 12 months we had about 20-odd in the GDC extra and since then we have had 12 in the second year, which makes it 36, I do not see how he can get to 500 in the period. But I will go back and check the figure and if he wants to ask me the same question again, I will tell him whether I think the financial side of the question is correct.

195 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, Mr Speaker, I can assure him that we have been meticulous in our consideration, but if the answer is that the hon. Gentleman has given this House... but also in the comparison of Estimate Books as to compared to previous Estimate Books – but leaving aside the question of the past, we are talking about this year, substantial increases within the public service and the figures that he has given me are likely to increase, they do not take into account the 70-odd Customs officers who have also been recruited. What I am asking is, in terms of Government policy and intention moving towards the future, does he feel comfortable with that kind of increase within the public service and the recurrent

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expenditure that entails, or does he believe, as indeed I believe, that moving towards the future, there really has to be a taking of stock and keeping under control those numbers of coming into the public service, because in the current climate I do not think that is sustainable, moving forwards.

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, it is self-evident that what is not sustainable is that everybody should finish up working in the public sector, which is what most people would like, because there would be nobody left in the private sector to pay taxes.

So clearly, the philosophy has to be that we employ people in the public service, not because people like to be in the public service because they are much better off, but because the public service needs them in order to deliver the service. And I think the philosophy of any government has to be to make use of the human resource that employing people is, in the most efficient way possible so that without the quality of the service suffering, we do it with the least number of people that it is possible to do it, so as to keep the cost within sustainable limits.

But it has to be accepted, I think, that if there have been four more civil servants since March, in that six-month period, it is because a case has been made for the need for those four additional ones. I can tell the hon. Member that generally the case is made for ten times that many and if there are four there, it is quite likely that the request was for 40 in the first place – something that I am sure he can recall from his days in Government as being the norm. The Departments always argue that they need more people and I have yet to see a Department that comes and offers to release staff to another one.

But as a general rule, in my view, the correct approach to take is that to accept that by the very nature of things there will be changes in the requirements of the Government service which make it necessary to increase in some areas and as far as possible those increases should be compensated by reductions in other areas, where the need may not have been as much in the present as it was in the past.

So we should try as far as we can to ensure that there is no net increase, even though there may be increases in some professions or some grades where an expert is required but which can be compensated by not replacing some people that we lose in other areas.

That would be, in my view, something that we should all aim to achieve but easier said than done.

Hon. D A Feetham: Yes, Mr Speaker, easier said than done. When I was in Government, I only had a PA and a secretary. Probably because as I told him last month, I am rather averse to increasing the recurrent expenditure bill for the Government.

But, Mr Speaker, does he have any figures in terms of what the additions to the recurrent expenditure bill, there is going to be with these additions that he has provided this House in answer to the question that I have asked him at all. Does he have those calculations there?

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, no because in some cases, it means that if the people have come in during the course of the last six months, they may have been provided for in the estimates we have approved in this House, but that money is not being paid from 1st April so you have a situation where I mean, between now and the end of March, nothing much is going to change.

I think the reflection of additional costs in personal emoluments will be seen once the estimates are closed and brought to the House. But I can tell him that at this stage, not all the Departments have put in their requests so we have not yet got a global figure that I could give him an indication of whether we are going to be facing a much bigger increase than in other years or the same model as other years.

But I can assure him that the efficient use of manpower is a fundamental element in any sensible policy in terms of the public service and therefore I would not disagree with that.

Q170/2015

Government projects –

Costs and contracts awarded to GJBS and Bizzy Bee Ltd

Clerk: Question 170, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, how much has the Government paid GJBS in respect of Government projects since it took office, divided by financial years?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 171.

Clerk: Question 171, the Hon. D A Feetham.

260 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, please provide details of all contracts that have been awarded to Bizzy Bee Ltd by the Government, any Government-owned company or public authority or entity?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB.

265 **Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, the amount paid by the Government to GJBS in respect of Government projects by financial year was as follows: 2011-12, pro rata for the fourth quarter given that he is asking since we were elected, was £7.691 million; 2012-13 – £13.165 million; 2013-14 – £31.436 million; and 2014-15, the first three quarters, that is until December – £38.525 million.

270 The details in respect of the contracts awarded to Bizzy Bee are contained in the schedule which I now hand to the hon. Member.

Schedule to PQ 171 of 2015

Scud Hill Steps	£160.00
Hargraves Parade	£540.00
Town Range	£1,600.00
Town Range	£300.00
Town Range	£100.00
Red Sands House	£335.00
Sheffield House	£87.00
Town Range	£400.00
Town Range	£450.00
Town Range	£130.00
Town Range	£1,750.00
Wilson's Ramp	£600.00
St Jago's	£160.00
St Jago's	£475.00
St Jago's	£318.00
Stanley Building	£600.00
Gavino's Dwellings	£1,100.00
St Jago's	£700.00
St Jago's	£2,100.00
Flat Bastion Road	£163.00
Key House Moorish Castle	£212.00
Causeway House	£340.00
Willis's Road	£496.00
North Pavillion	£280.00
Flat Bastion Road	£375.00
Alameda House	£200.00
Vineyard House	£135.00
Prince Edward's Road	£100.00
Town Range	£600.00
Town Range	£1,100.00
Town Range	£700.00
Town Range	£1,100.00
Alameda House	£800.00
Victoria House	£300.00
Canton House	£400.00
Hargraves Parade	£108.00
Brother O'Brien	£108.00
Warspite House	£108.00
Kestrel House	£108.00
Hood House	£500.00
Goole House	£410.00
St John's Court	£130.00
Ramillies House	£81.00
Tarik House	£392.00
Archbishop Amigo House	£90.00
Rodney House	£100.00
Hood House	£245.00
St Jago's	£80.00

Medview Terrace	£80.00
Ince House	£100.00
Arengo's Palace	£80.00
Gavino's Dwellings	£80.00
Devil's Tower Road	£3,000.00
Light House	£550.00
Governor's Meadow Promenade	£300.00
Stanley Building	£2,700.00
Town Range	£1,200.00
Stanley Building	£3,340.00
Canton House	£420.00
St John's Court	£300.00
Hermes House	£250.00
Victoria House	£340.00
Flat Bastion Road	£350.00
Victoria House	£1,400.00
Stanley Building	£12,789.95
Anderson House	£1,300.00
South Barrack Ramp	£450.00
St Josephs	£320.00
Kingsway House	£400.00
Alameda House	£150.00
Shamrock House	£300.00
Alameda House	£130.00
St John's Court	£1,240.00
North Pavillion	£300.00
Churchill House	£416.00
St Josephs	£570.00
Stanley Building	£21,732.00
Town Range Car Park	£200.00
Arengo's House	£588.54
St John's Court	£300.00
Ballymena House, Laguna Estate	£600.00
Somerset Court	£260.00
Oronsay House	£225.00
Scud Hill House, Scud Hill	£7,097.50
Stanley Building, North Façade	£25,583.64
Coelho House	£1,280.00
Knights Court	£600.00
Prince Edwards Road	£970.00
Valiant House	£100.00
Orsova House	£761.00
Stanley Building, North East	£10,128.46
Scud Hill House, Scud Hill	£6,492.32
Ironside House, Glacis Estate.	£25.00
Cathay House, VBE	£60.00
Goole House	£191.00
Fearless House, Laguna Estate	£855.00
Aquitania House, VBE	£1,766.00
Portmore House, Glacis Estate	£324.00

275 **Mr Speaker:** Are there any supplementaries?

280 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, if I can draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the schedule that he very kindly sent across the floor of the House in relation to Bizzy Bee Limited, the hon. Gentleman will see a final entry which is the Varyl Begg Estate entry for £97,000. Bearing in mind that my question was details of all contracts that have been awarded to Bizzy Bee by the Government and effectively the public sector, it says £97,000 but my understanding is – and indeed I think it has been confirmed in communiques from the Government in answer to communiques from us in relation to this particular company – that the Varyl Begg tender was for £1.5 million.

285 Why the discrepancy between the £97,000 in relation to Varyl Begg and the £1.5 million which we know is roughly the figure in terms of the award for the total works of the Varyl Begg Estate?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, because I assumed that what he wanted to know was what had been paid to date, given that the answer to the question that he is now putting to me he already has and by the Rules of the House he is not supposed to ask me questions to which he already has the answer.

290 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, Mr Speaker, I think the question is very clear. It is: please provide details of all contracts that have been awarded to Bizzy Bee. What he has given me then is a schedule of payments made to Bizzy Bee. So effectively in terms of the quantity, the size of the contracts and the money that is going to be paid at some future date is obviously going to be significantly higher. Indeed it is probably going to be more than double what we see here, probably more than quadruple what we see here, because
295 the Varyl Begg contract in itself was £1.5 million and only £97,000 is accounted for.

Does he have the figures there of the actual contract, and it is a question that I have asked, the details of all the contracts awarded in terms of the price, the contract price awarded to Bizzy Bee rather than what has been paid?

Perhaps in terms of some of these I suppose, some of the smaller jobs, the figures here are the contract award because perhaps some of these smaller awards Town Range £1,600 that is what has been paid in respect of this particular project, I mean I do not know. But what I am interested in is really the contract award and the price that has been awarded to Bizzy Bee for contracts awarded by the Government.

300 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, the contract for Varyl Begg the answer is that he had the information before he put the question so he knows that and in respect of the others, those are jobs that have all been completed and the figure there is the full price for each job.

305 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Just to be clear, all the way up to Ramillies House for £1,286, all of that includes the sum paid and the contract price awarded to Bizzy Bee, I want to be absolutely clear about that, that is the money paid, plus the price agreed with the Government for these jobs, right up to Varyl Begg Estate.

Hon. J J Bossano: It is what I have told him, Mr Speaker.

310 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, in relation to the question on GJBS the £7 million, £13 million, £31 million and £38 million, does he have any breakdown in relation to how this is broken down in relation to projects at all there, by way of supplementary information that his civil servants may have provided?

315 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, this is not something that they can produce at the drop of a hat. It would take a lot of time to go back and check. This is all money that has been paid on projects that have been approved by this Parliament in the Improvement and Development Fund.

320 I cannot tell him... the money in any one year is not necessarily all in a project that started and ended in that same year. As he knows, most of the capital projects overlap one year and the next so there will be jobs that started maybe in their time which finished after 2011-12 and some maybe carrying on.

325 There are things that involve going back and putting work right that goes back to the time of OEM and the estates that were left in the lurch and had to be put right and are still having work done to them. So the answer is, I can get it for him but it will take some time to do it and it will probably mean that there will be the same projects appearing in more than one year and it will be matched by the amount that the House has approved. This is money approved and paid for the projects in question.

330 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that GJBS are undertaking some very major projects for the Government, they are undertaking the £24 million project in respect of the small boats marina and they are also undertaking the project in respect of the cladding to the three estates, Glacis, Laguna and Moorish Castle and also they are undertaking the construction of the affordable homes in the Aerial Farm near Eastern Beach, we are talking about some very substantial projects undertaken by GJBS
335 on my calculation, roughly nearly £200 million.

Is it safe to say, and does he agree, that these figures do not take into account the major outlay that is to come from the Government in respect of those major projects totalling nearly £200 million?

340 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, I do not think I am qualified to judge him on the fairness of the things that he says (*Interjection and laughter*) but whether it is fair or not, it is not accurate because he needs to understand that I am giving him the answer to the question that he asked, which is on the Government's projects. He knows that when he was in Government, the Government was paying some things as Government projects and some things were not being paid as Government projects, and it is the same still today.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, can he elaborate on that answer? What does he mean, the Government paid some projects as Government projects and some projects not as Government projects in the light of that £200 million outlay by the Government towards GJBS for the completion of those three construction projects that I mentioned in my question earlier?

Hon. J J Bossano: What I mean, Mr Speaker, is that as was the case before December 2011 when GJBS was being paid, for example £40 million or £50 million from the I&D Fund and other things were being paid because the car parks were being done by the car park company. So the car park company was paying for the car parks and that is something that was happening, so the system continues to be as he did it.

Whether there is still £200 million more or less to meet, I cannot confirm because that is speculative. I have not done the numbers and I only use numbers when I am sure they are accurate.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I cannot, with respect to the hon. Gentleman, think for one moment that he has not looked at these figures and that he has not calculated what is outstanding and what is to be paid either via a Government-owned company or directly from the Government or wherever, to GJBS in respect of £200 million which he knows that GJBS has got to be paid in respect of all these projects. I just cannot fathom that, I know the hon. Gentleman well and quite frankly I cannot see that he has not made that calculation.

But let me ask him this. Does he accept that the Government does not have the money at this present moment, in order to pay – ?

Mr Speaker: No, sorry, it does not arise from the original question.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, Mr Speaker, if Mr Speaker rules the question out, then obviously I am going to have to sit down because that –

Mr Speaker: If the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition in respect of GJBS has asked a very simple question, how much has the Government paid GJBS in respect of Government projects since it took office, divided by financial years. It has been answered in the manner in which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition asked the question. It has been answered.

Now he is expecting the Government to look into the future and give an answer to an all embracing supplementary that does not arise from the original question. It is as simple as that.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, may I provide Mr Speaker with my views in the most respectful manner that I can, but they are my views. (*Laughter*)

Mr Speaker, the whole purpose of this question is to look at how much money has been paid to GJBS in respect of those very substantial projects and to then determine how far the Government has the cash flow to pay for those projects. Because if the Government has still an outlay of for example £160 million in respect of these projects, bearing in mind that this is the Government that says it is going to complete its manifesto commitments within this term, that is another £160 million that it has to pay and of course our contention is, that the Government does not have the money to pay.

But of course, if Mr Speaker rules the question as inadmissible, then I obviously respect that decision but I think that he knew where we were coming from in the same way as obviously, because my intention in asking this question is pretty clear to anybody that has thought about this particular issue.

Mr Speaker: It is perfectly admissible for the Leader of the Opposition to seek further information in respect of the information that has been given of the expenditure for all these financial years that is perfectly admissible. But the supplementary that he is asking goes far way beyond that and if what he wanted was an answer in respect of future cash flow, he could have asked a specific question in the first place. He can still do so for the future at the next meeting.

Q172-179/2015
Government finances –
Update

Clerk: Question 172, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister please state what the Government cash reserves were as at 31st January 2015?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, I will answer this with Questions 173 to 179.

Clerk: Question 173, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister please provide a breakdown by bank and amount of that part of the aggregate public debt which comprises public debt as at 31st January 2015?

Clerk: Question 174, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Chief Minister please provide this House with a breakdown by debenture issue of that part of the aggregate public debt which comprises Government debentures as at 31st January 2015?

Clerk: Question 175, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Chief Minister please provide details of the value of Gibraltar Savings Bank debentures or other debt security as at 31st January 2015?

Clerk: Question 176, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Chief Minister please provide a breakdown of where and how all the monies deposited in the Gibraltar Savings Bank have been invested and the rate of return on each of these investments as at 31st January 2015?

Clerk: Question 177, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Please explain why the Government is not able to provide details of all investments and transfers of monies made out of Gibraltar Investment (Holdings) Ltd over the last calendar year, including the identity of the recipient.

Clerk: Question 178, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Government please explain why it is not prepared to provide details of all monies deposited or investments made by the Government, in Gibraltar Investment (Holdings) Ltd over the last calendar year, together with the dates and details of the bank and bank accounts into which the money was deposited?

Clerk: Question 179, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Government please explain why it is not prepared to provide details of the terms in which Credit Finance Company Limited has deposited the sum of £347 million in Gibraltar Investment (Holdings) Ltd and whether all the directors of Credit Finance approved that transaction?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Mr Speaker: I say to the Leader of the Opposition to assist him that he does not have to take notes in respect of the answers to these eight questions, because I am going to provide him with the whole answer immediately after the Minister has given the answer, alright? Because it is long and complex and it is eight questions and it is difficult to follow.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Very generous of you, Mr Speaker. *(Laughter)*

As at 31st January, the aggregate Public Debt consisting of bank debt was: Barclays Bank Plc £150 million; NatWest Offshore Limited £50 million.

Government debentures by maturity date were as follows: 2017 debentures £30,142,200; one month's notice £238,989,700.

The value of Gibraltar Savings Bank debentures and other debt security by maturity date was: one month £30,741,400; 2015 debentures £10,960,900; 2016 debentures £22,935,600; 2017 debentures

465 £95,853,900; 2018 debentures £163,895,100; 2019 debentures £137,271,000; other debentures
£135,010,346; bonds £104,854,712; deposit accounts £237,463,243.

The average yield of the different categories of investments vehicles held by the Savings Bank for the month of January are as follows:

470 On-call accounts with the Bank of England, the Crown Agents and Gibraltar Banks had an average yield of around 0.55%. The Gibraltar banks were the Royal Bank of Scotland, Barclays Bank, National Westminster, Jyske Bank and Lloyds Bank.

475 Floating Rates Notes quoted on the London Stock Exchange had an average yield of 0.98%, the Floating Rates Notes were issued by the following: European Investment Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Neder Waterschapsbank, KfW, Republic of Finland, Volkswagen Financial Services, Dexia, GE Capital UK, Westpac Securities, Australia & New Zealand Banking Group, Centrica Plc, ASB Financial Services, Royal Bank of Canada, BG Energy Capital Plc, Suncorp Metway Limited, BMW Finance and National Grid Gas Plc.

480 Monthly income debentures with a 6% return and preference shares in Credit Finance with an average dividend of 5.6% were held. As previously explained, quoted stocks and call accounts fluctuate marginally on a daily basis, these fluctuations are not significant.

I shall now hand over the Savings Bank Fund Statement listing the investments for January 2015. The Government Cash Reserves for January were £52.79 million.

As stated in the previous answer, in respect of the investments of the Gibraltar Savings Bank and of Credit Finance, I am not prepared to provide any further information than has been previously provided.

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Answer to Question 179 - Schedule to Question 176 / 2015

SAVINGS BANK FUNDSTATEMENT OF INVESTMENTS ON 31 JANUARY 2015

DESCRIPTION OF STOCK	NOMINAL VALUE	MARKET PRICE ACCRUED INTEREST %	MARKET VALUE ACCRUED INTEREST	TOTAL MARKET VALUE ON 31/01/2015
EIB FLOATING RATE NOTE 22/02/17	£20,000,000.00	100.306 0.141	£20,061,227.20 £28,140.82	£20,089,368.02
EIB FLOATING RATE NOTE 05/01/16	£20,000,000.00	99.980 0.045	£19,995,947.40 £9,023.50	£20,004,970.90
INTERNATIONAL BK RECON & DEV FRN 19/01/16	£4,235,000.00	100.002 0.018	£4,235,068.01 £782.45	£4,235,850.46
NEDER WATERSCHAPSBANK FRN 09/04/18	£12,200,000.00	100.000 0.045	£12,200,000.00 £5,441.09	£12,205,441.09
KFW FRN 09/03/15	£17,000,000.00	99.998 0.095	£16,999,611.38 £16,159.50	£17,015,770.88
REPUBLIC OF FINLAND FRN 25/2/16	£5,000,000.00	100.025 0.111	£5,001,252.95 £5,555.03	£5,006,807.98
VOLKSWAGEN FIN SERV NV FRN 12/10/15	£5,000,000.00	99.995 0.045	£4,999,749.05 £2,239.81	£5,001,988.86
DEXIA CREDIT LOCAL FRN 15/4/16	£4,000,000.00	100.023 0.035	£4,000,919.80 £1,385.64	£4,002,305.44
GE CAPITAL UK FUNDING FRN 20/3/17	£2,000,000.00	99.776 0.078	£1,995,528.14 £1,555.35	£1,997,083.49
WESTPAC SECURITIES NZ LT FRN 2/10/17	£5,000,000.00	100.000 0.073	£5,000,000.00 £3,644.92	£5,003,644.92
AUST & NZ BANKING GROUP FRN 4/2/16	£5,000,000.00	100.195 0.197	£5,009,760.80 £9,872.47	£5,019,633.27
CENTRICA PLC 5.5% 24/10/16	£6,000,000.00	106.931 1.492	£6,415,885.32 £89,506.85	£6,505,392.17
ASB FINANCE LTD LONDON FRN 13/03/17	£5,000,000.00	100.264 0.147	£5,013,184.70 £7,341.34	£5,020,526.04
ROYAL BANK OF CANADA FRN 4/6/19	£5,000,000.00	100.081 0.151	£5,004,026.75 £7,569.79	£5,011,596.54
BG ENERGY CAPITAL PLC 5.125% 07/12/17	£5,000,000.00	109.351	£5,467,559.55 £38,613.01	£5,506,172.56
VOLKSWAGEN FIN SERV NV 2.375% 13/11/18	£3,000,000.00	102.768 0.514	£3,083,037.36 £15,421.23	£3,098,458.59
SUNCORP-METWAY LTD FRN 06/10/17	£5,000,000.00	100.134 0.080	£5,006,718.60 £3,987.36	£5,010,705.96
CANADIAN IMPERIAL BANK FRN 15/1/18	£5,000,000.00	100.000 0.033	£5,000,000.00 £1,643.16	£5,001,643.16
GE CAPITAL UK FUNDING FRN 16/1/18	£3,000,000.00	100.000 0.041	£3,000,000.00 £1,221.24	£3,001,221.24
GOVERNMENT DEBENTURES	£218,000,000.00	100.000	£218,000,000.00	£218,000,000.00
BANK OF ENGLAND	£22,404,330.15	100.000	£22,404,330.15	£22,404,330.15
CFC SHARES	£400,000,000.00	100.000	£400,000,000.00	£400,000,000.00
GSBA	£5,000,000.00	100.000	£5,000,000.00	£5,000,000.00
GIBTELECOM	£37,798,895.33	100.000	£37,798,895.33	£37,798,895.33
ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND GBP CALL A/C	£5,553,361.56	100.000	£5,553,361.56 £15.22	£5,553,376.78
LLOYDS BANK GBP CALL A/C	£406,365.46	100.000	£406,365.46 £1,672.30	£408,037.76
BARCLAYS BANK	£77,984,439.90	100.000	£77,984,439.90	£77,984,439.90
NATIONAL WESTMINSTER OFFSHORE LTD	£29,855,599.00	100.000	£29,855,599.00	£29,855,599.00
JYSKE BANK	£20,226,720.83	100.000	£20,226,720.83	£20,226,720.83
	£953,664,712.23		£954,969,981.32	£954,969,981.32
CASH	£4,000,000.00	100.000	£4,000,000.00	£4,000,000.00

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, it is a disappointing answer in respect of Questions 177 and 178, I have to say.

Mr Speaker, does he not realise that if the Government as we know has caused £347 million to be transferred from Credit Finance into Gibraltar Investment Holdings Ltd, which is the holding company for all Government-owned companies, and he himself last time round told me that this money was being used ‘for Government Companies’ cash flow requirements’ – that is a direct quote from the answer that he gave me last time round – that this House is entitled to know how that money is being spent in respect of all those Government-owned companies?

Otherwise, it is impossible for this House, and then of course for the community at large through this House, but certainly Her Majesty’s Opposition in this House, to scrutinise how large parts of the public finances of this community are being handled and how the people’s money, savers’ money in this case is being spent. Does he not recognise that effectively what the Government is doing, or the actions the Government is taking are unprecedented in drawing the shutters on the Opposition’s ability to scrutinise large parts of the public finances of this community?

A Member: Hear, hear.

Hon. J J Bossano: I do not agree with him, Mr Speaker.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, Mr Speaker, let me link this to the previous supplementary questions that I was asking, and this time they are legitimate because they arise from these questions.

Does he not accept that if what has happened – which we know has happened because this is what he told me last time round, £347 million has gone from Credit Finance to Gibraltar Investment Holdings Limited, in order to fund the cash flow requirements of all Government-owned companies – £347 million – that money is bound to be used in order to fund some of those very same projects that I asked him about a few moments ago – the £24 million in respect of the small boats marina, the cladding at the three estates and the affordable homes? The reason why the Government is doing this is because it does not have the money to do it directly itself, because cash reserves are now down from the last time that I asked the question, from £60 million to £52 million and the Government cannot borrow more than £51 million. Last time round he said £51 million, I suspect that with cash reserves at £52 million, that figure has also gone down.

Effectively, what the Government is doing is using savers’ money, through Credit Finance and the Gibraltar Investment Holdings now, as an unaccountable credit card. It is like going to the bank and applying for a credit card to the bank, without declaring the fact that you already have credit cards with other banks and with the credit limits all the way up to the hilt. That is what the Government is doing.

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, I do not agree with what he says that the Government is doing, but I can tell him that I know exactly what he is doing. What he is doing is what he has been doing ever since 9th December 2011 when we announced the expansion of the Savings Bank, which is to do everything possible to undermine the success of the Savings Bank. And now, he starts off by saying ‘Well, what has the Savings Bank invested in?’

Well look, no institution anywhere, state owned or private, who operates by taking savers’ money, produces a monthly list of all the investments that it makes. It produces it once a year when it closes the year and has audited accounts. He wants it every month, he gets it every month but then getting it every month he says, ‘Ah yes, but you put the money in Credit Finance so who did Credit Finance give it to? GIH and who did GIH give it to?’ Eventually I suppose he will want me to tell him that somebody got paid on a building site and went out and spent the money in Morrison’s so he can track down the last penny. *(Laughter)*

Since the whole purpose of the exercise is not to protect the credit cards of anybody but in fact to undermine the success of the Savings Bank which belongs to the people of Gibraltar, I am not in the business of helping him to achieve that and therefore I am not prepared to tell him what is done with the money that is part of the cash reserves. All I can tell him is that the pool of merging the cash reserves of all the companies and the Government together and using it as a single pool was not invented by me; it was invented by them in their time and we have continued with the same system.

And I can tell him, if he thinks I am going to give him information in this House so that somebody writes an opinion in the *Chronicle* who describes himself as a GSD executive member and former Gibraltar Government tax adviser, which is true, he used to be my tax adviser because I imported him *(Laughter)* and having imported him to ensure that we collected more tax, he eventually left the Government and devoted himself to advising people how to reduce their tax bills, a metamorphosis which is unusual in that this is a case of a gamekeeper turning poacher, instead of a poacher turning gamekeeper. *(Laughter)*

This member of the GSD Executive presumably wants to remind people that he was my tax adviser in order to lend credibility to the nonsense that he writes and says that the Government has failed to make clear what is the level of funds deposited in the GSB by non-local. Well I am not sure what a non-local is, whether it is a non-resident or a non-Gibraltarian. He happens to be a non-local if it is the second.
(Laughter)

But he then goes on to say that the information which has been provided has not been provided, it has been provided on two occasions, and therefore he deduces that the whole of the £1 billion belongs to the non-local rich so that they can get richer with the Taxpayer guaranteeing the payments. Well, given that no local saver according to a member of his executive has any money in the Savings Bank, I would not worry too much about what happens to the non-local rich.

Hon. Sir P R Caruana: Mr Speaker, having enjoyed for more than 16 years, the considerable intellectual pleasure and challenge of being the hon. Member's immediate and direct political opponent, I recognise in his answer to that supplementary, every characteristic of 'Bossanesque' parliamentary technique (Laughter) that I recall during those hugely pleasurable 16 years.

Mr Speaker, the issue is not whether the Government... I had better convert this into a question: does the hon. Member not acknowledge that in parliamentary terms, the issue is not whether the Government is in fact spending the money wisely or unwisely; it is not whether it is doing things with the money that the Opposition would not have done, or perhaps spending the money on things that the Opposition would have done differently or different things to the things that the Opposition would have done but still done; it is nothing to do with that?

The essence of the Opposition's position is that by the device that they have used to fund the Government holding companies, and we used to do projects through Government company structures too, but the alternative to giving a statement in Parliament through the budget estimate debates, by including in the debate about what you are going to spend the money on and where it is coming from, is that if you do it through companies, you give Parliament through answers to Opposition questions, information about that expenditure as if you had done it through the Consolidated Fund, so that Parliament is not reduced in its capacity, through the medium of the Government choosing to do things through companies, in a way that disables Parliament from keeping the Government under scrutiny.

Parliament's right and this is why I rise, because the hon. Member knows that I no longer participate in front-line political debates, except where I think it raises something fundamental to this Parliament and fundamental to the interests of Gibraltar – which is that for good or for bad, Parliament must have the right at least to keep tabs of what the Government is doing for its own sake, without that being a comment about whether what the Government is doing is good, bad or indifferent and to the extent that the Opposition by not getting the whole picture through Government's refusal to provide company information, as we used to provide it, means that the Government, that the Opposition cannot do that job.

Is the hon. Member at least willing to distinguish between the question whether we want the information to be able to put out a press release that somebody has used Government funds to do his shopping in Morrison's, if I could just borrow his smoke screen example, willing to distinguish between that on the one hand and the Government's, the Opposition's right to know that if that was happening, the Opposition, the Parliament has a right to know it.

It may be an entirely justified spending of money in Morrison's because he may be buying the tea for the worker's canteen, but that does not mean that Parliament is not entitled to be aware of it. And I would ask him to acknowledge and accept that Parliament's wish to defend through the Opposition its right to scrutinise the public finances is not a comment on the propriety of that expenditure, or the desirability of that expenditure; it is an objective and a virtue in its own right for its own sake because it is a keystone of our parliamentary system of governance. Will he acknowledge that? (*Banging on desks*) [Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker] Ah!, you do not acknowledge that, then we are in deep trouble.

Hon. J J Bossano: I must say that in reference to his opening remarks, I had not realised during the 16 years how much the hon. Member was enjoying himself. I am sorry he did not show the enjoyment at the time that it was happening. (Laughter)

The hon. Member is talking as if Parliament had voted money to do something and we were refusing to tell him what the money voted on was being spent.

This is the Gibraltar Savings Bank investing in an entity. If the legitimacy of the concept is if the Gibraltar Savings Bank invests in an entity which is using the money in Gibraltar, you can ask down to the last penny who is the last person who got some money out, but if it is in the Bank of Finland then there are no questions as to what the Bank of Finland does with the money when they get it from the Savings Bank, well, it is a distinction that I do not draw because if the concern is the safety of that money it is considerably safer in Gibraltar administered by civil servants than invested in the Bank of Finland and administered by people we do not know.

If the concern is what is the pool of the liquidity being used for, well look, it is being used for short-term cash needs the same as it was being used before and it is being repaid as the figures that he has every month shows. Every month it shows that the amount in GIH is going down and the amount in the other elements of the portfolio of Credit Finance is going up and that is what will continue to happen,

Hon. Sir P R Caruana: Mr Speaker, does he acknowledge that if that is the answer to my supplementary question – and I am grateful to Mr Speaker for his indulgence in allowing me to technically convert it into a question – that if that is his answer to my supplementary, does he not acknowledge that he is not addressing my point?

Mr Speaker, when the Government invests public funds in the Bank of Finland, the Bank of Finland I suppose then re-invests it and remains liable to the Gibraltar Government for repayment to it, providing it does not fail financially and goes itself into bankruptcy, is responsible for repaying that. But does he not acknowledge that if he seeks to compare what I am talking about with that, he is at best paying lip service to the principle of parliamentary scrutiny and at worst, obfuscating the reality?

What is happening here is that money starts, a little bit of it public but most of it in the Savings Bank, depositors' money, the Government then procures that the Savings Bank invests that money in a Government-owned company. That Government-owned company then puts it in the Governments company that sits at the top of the structure of companies through which the Government often spends money as we used to do.

Does he not realise that it is a sort of washing job that the money starts in a place where the Government guarantees its repayment to Taxpayers, goes through two companies and comes back into Ministers' hands to decide how it should be spent and that is not a comparable situation to his example about the Bank of Finland?

Mr Speaker, I have often said in this House and I have not been universally popular on my side of the House for saying it, that there is no great, implicitly, there is no great objection, because all governments do it round the world, of borrowing money from depositors, even savers, to spend. That is why governments borrow money; governments do not normally borrow money to just leave it sitting in a current account. I am not objecting to that. I have never objected to the fact, I have said that I want the Government to tell the depositors that that is what they are doing just for the sake of transparency but there is nothing intrinsically wrong in the Government borrowing money from depositors of the Savings Bank to spend on building a block of flats, if that is what the Government thinks it wants to spend the borrowed money on.

I am not complaining about that. What I am complaining about is that having done that and shunted the money through to a corporate structure, it then will not account in this House for what that corporate structure, owned by the Government and controlled by Ministers, is spending the money on so that the Opposition and through the Opposition, Parliament... which in our context is a little bit of a nonsense because Parliament is divided only into the Government front bench and the Opposition front bench now with one exception, and that therefore Parliament cannot keep tabs, even through the medium of asking questions, as they used to keep tabs when I was doing the same thing of spending public money through companies, of how much is being spent, on what it is being spent except obviously what we can see going up.

Does he not realise that there is a distinction? He may not want to agree with it but there is a distinction between the criticism of the borrowing of money from depositors for public purposes, which I make no comment on, subject to quantum, and a simple plea for that not to result in opacity to Parliament about what that money is being used for and when. They are two wholly different things and I am speaking only to the second one of the two.

Hon. J J Bossano: They are only two wholly different things because he chooses to formulate it that way. As far as I am concerned Mr Speaker, the Savings Bank has got a £1 billion deposited in it and £600 million of that is reinvested outside and £400 million is invested here. The money that is not invested in the long term, that it is deposited in, is the money that is in cash in the Credit Finance and forms part of the cash resources of the Government and the companies as a single pot and that money will come back and is coming back every month to Credit Finance and then being reinvested.

That does not mean that they are entitled to say, 'Well look, I want to know how much of each pound went into GIH.' It is a pool of money as he knows, because he was the one who devised it, which is fluctuating on a daily basis as money comes in and out of the Government or money comes in and out of the companies or contractors putting in more invoices or not but the final financing of everything is not a matter that will be done by the Savings Bank or Credit Finance.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I gave way to the Hon. the Backbencher but I do have a number of more supplementaries on what is an important issue where the Government has decided to bunch a number of questions together.

Mr Speaker, does he accept at least this, a very short question that if the Government had not caused Credit Finance to pay over £347 million to the Gibraltar Investment Holdings Limited in order to fund the cash flow requirements of Government-owned companies, that the Government itself would have had to pay that £347 million and that therefore it is a saving to the consolidated fund of £347 million?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker, I do not accept it.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, Mr Speaker, I do not understand how on earth he can disagree with that and what the Government is doing you see – it is even worse than the Hon. the Backbencher has put it – and I agree and associate myself with most of the comments that he has made in relation to the transparency issue, but of course if you have – and I am asking whether he agrees with me, if you have a net debt of £392 million and the Government can only spend out of the amounts that it has borrowed another £51 million, then it stands to reason that what the Government is doing by injecting £347 million from the Gibraltar Savings Bank into Government-owned companies, in order to fund those Government-owned companies which would otherwise have been funded by the Government either through reserves or through borrowing, that the Government is effectively using this as a device to circumvent the legal borrowing limits.

That is what the Government is doing and that is obnoxious to this Parliament. Not only is it obnoxious to this Parliament for all the reasons that the Hon. the Backbencher has mentioned and that I have added to, but because those borrowing limits are there to ensure that Governments do not borrow in a manner that becomes unaffordable. And the debt that this community faces is both the £392 million direct debt and then the £400 million in Credit Finance £347 million of which is being used to fund Government-owned companies. It is nearly £800 million of debt.

Now, does he not agree with me on that?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker, I do not agree with anything that he has said and I accept that what I say on this side of the House is obnoxious to him and I can tell him that the feeling is reciprocated.

Hon. D A Feetham: But, Mr Speaker, if the Government had not caused this £347 million to be paid into Gibraltar Investment Holdings which is now being used in order to fund all Government-owned companies, where would the money have come from, a very simple answer, a very simple question. Where would those £347 million have come from if the Government had not caused Credit Finance to pay that money over to Gibraltar Investment Holdings?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, as I understand it that is an entirely and self-evidently a speculative question to which I do not have to give an answer. But I presume that the Government might have done what his Government did over many, many years which is to get supplier credit from other people, none of which was brought to this House including the occasion when I discovered £20 million in one of the tables I was given for which there was no explanation and I asked the then Chief Minister what it was and he said he could not remember. Eventually he remembered that it was £20 million that he had obtained at the bank in order to buy shares in a private development of the place where the parking is now going up.

Well look, if being so accountable is so important, many of the mechanisms that are now considered to be unaccountable were invented by them, so it is simply a case of, if I do it then it is okay but if you do it, it is wrong.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, again, the hon. Gentleman is trying to obfuscate the issues in his classic and traditional way.

Does he not accept this – and it is my final supplementary, Mr Speaker, and I am very grateful for Mr Speaker's indulgence – does he not accept this the Government with the level of direct borrowing that it has, which is the highest in the political history or the history of this community at £392 million with £51 million away from that borrowing limit in terms of spending it can only spend another £51 million, it did not have the money to capitalise, to effectively fund these Government-owned companies to the tune of an extra £347 million? Does he at least not accept that?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, I do not accept that anything has been capitalised. I told him that these are the cash holdings that are held in a pot together with the Government's own cash reserves and the companies, all of which are handled together and I do not consider that to be capitalisation.

Capitalisation is what has happened with the Savings Bank buying shares in Credit Finance – *(Interjection)* Well, he can ask another question, I do not have to give way.

Hon. D A Feetham: Yes, well Mr Speaker, I use the word capitalisation and it is not capitalisation; it is funding. Does he not recognise that with the borrowing limits as they are, with the Governments direct debt at £392 million, the Government could not have funded Government-owned companies to the tune of £347 million and to that extent, effectively what the Government is doing is, it is saving that money from direct expense from the consolidated fund and indeed an increase in the public debt of £347 million which it could not have incurred by law in accordance with the laws on how much a Government can spend?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member knows that if the Government wanted to exceed the limit laid on the net debt which is not something that the Government set as a target, he knows that the target was bringing down the gross debt but I know they do not attach importance to the gross debt, only to the net. But if the Government wanted to do it, all it had to do on 9th December 2011 was proceed with the motion that was already in preparation, suspending the limit that there was if that was what the Government wanted to do.

Hon. Sir P R Caruana: And that would have been the transparency that I am calling, does the hon. Member acknowledge that?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well it might be the transparency or might not be the transparency, but the hon. Member is asking me if it was impossible to do anything else and I am telling him that it was not.

Hon. D A Feetham: But, Mr Speaker, it is not only a transparency point and that is the main point in relation to this particular issue that he has now raised, but how on earth can this Government lambast...and the Chief Minister lambast his predecessor, Sir Peter Caruana, for having an intention, indeed there, for having an intention to come to this House to raise the legal borrowing limits when this Government does not come to this House to raise the legal borrowing limit but covertly borrows £347 million, which it would not have been able to do under the law as it stands at the moment? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) And does he not accept that that is a contradiction in terms – indeed a very dangerous non-transparent opaque contradiction in terms?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker, I do not accept either his analysis or the whole list of adjectives that he has added to them.

Mr Speaker: We will now move on. The question of transparency and opacity has been totally and fully ventilated.

BUSINESS & TRAINING

Q80/2015

Employment Service – Changes made to address complaints

Clerk: We now move to Question 80, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Employment state if there have been any changes in his Department which have resulted in less complaints in connection with the service being provided?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business and Employment.

Minister for Business & Training (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, whereas perhaps I thought that the drafting of the answer would have raised the temperatures too early in the morning, sadly by the time that I have given the answer, I see that temperatures are already quite inflamed and so the tenor will not, I hope, increase the temperature.

Mr Speaker, yes sir. The result of the General Election in late 2011 resulted in a change of Government, which meant that instead of the relevant Minister trying to avoid seeing people as he presided over growing numbers of unemployed peaking at 1,200 as the now Leader of the Opposition identified during the election campaign, the now GSLP/Liberal Minister dramatically changed style and approach. As a result, working hard in implementation of the Future Jobs Strategy, Minister Bossano achieved a record-breaking reduction in unemployment which was at a record low in December, since records began, of 228. As a result, Mr Speaker, we have had many less complaints.

Hon. D J Bossino: This House does not accept, as we ever accepted, that unemployment was at the level that he has indicated in his reply and I must say, it really reeks through in his answers that it is clearly not the Hon. Minister's style. I am sure his answer has been drafted by somebody else who is on his left-hand side.

Mr Speaker, the question arises in relation to a very specific point that I made during the course of my budget speech and that related to the comments made by the Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman in his report of 2013, when he said very clearly –

Mr Speaker: I am sorry –

Hon. D J Bossino: Oh my goodness, what – ?

Mr Speaker: There is a very clear Rule which says a supplementary question must not introduce matter not included in the original question. You are now introducing the question of the Ombudsman's Report. That is matter not in the original question.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, it very much arises. The matter that I am dealing with here, Mr Speaker, if I had been allowed to pose the question, relates specifically to the service being provided and the question relates to the service being provided by the Employment Service, so therefore it is particularly apposite that I should be referring to the comments made by the Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman in relation to the service being provided by this particular Department.

So therefore, Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect, I think I am more than entitled to make a reference because this is not extraneous to the question.

Mr Speaker: You could have included a reference to the Ombudsman's report in your main question.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I could have but I chose not to, with the greatest respect.

Mr Speaker: You chose not to. I choose to tell you that you are introducing new matter. It is as simple as that. Now, let him try to rephrase his supplementary in another way and we might be able to make progress. Let us see.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, the question arose as a result of comments made by the Public Services Ombudsman, so I really cannot think of any other way of asking this supplementary question.

The Public Services Ombudsman made highly critical comments as to the service being provided by the Employment Service, to the point that he said – and I can read where he said it – that he will be meeting with senior management in order to address these issues because he made the point that there had been a tremendous – a significant, using his adjective – increase in the number of complaints from 2010 to when he wrote this report. In my respectful view, Mr Speaker, I think the question in the Order Paper and the supplementary are both highly relevant to each other.

Mr Speaker: I am going to allow the supplementary, but I insist that what the hon. mover of the question should have done was to have made a reference in respect of matters raised in the Ombudsman's report. He should have made a reference in the main question. And it is a very simple matter to do; I do not know why he did not if he then proposed to... or is it just to catch the Minister off-guard?

Question Time is also about getting information. If you want information, put it in the original question otherwise you run the risk of it being ruled inadmissible because of the Standing Rules and Orders. It is nothing to do with me; it is the Standing Rules and Orders.

Now, is the Hon. Minister prepared to answer that supplementary?

Hon. N F Costa: Well, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman knows that had I read the report, I would have been happy to comment on it, unfortunately I have not had sight of that report which goes back to 2013. Perhaps my hon. colleague the former Minister for Employment is aware of the report; and may be able to comment on the substance because I have not read the report.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, if I may, given that you have allowed – and I will take the Chair's comments in relation to this on board for future reference – but given that the Speaker has allowed the question to proceed, perhaps if I can assist by simply reading one particular sentence which arises from the report – and I must insist that I said it during the course of when I first articulated my supplementary question, that I did make a reference to this particular quote during the course of my budget intervention where he said, and it is very simple, he says the 'average complaints'. He talks about a significant increase

in complaints during this year, the average complaints for the years 2010 to 2012 were six per annum whereas during 2013 we have recorded a total of 23 complaints. He refers to things ‘apparently they are varied’ and he talks about ranging from lack of replies when seeking information to alleged unprofessional treatment and dissatisfaction regarding claims for payments under the insolvency funds.

So just to assist the Hon. Minister, given that he is going to rise and provide the answer.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Well, Mr Speaker, given that the question to my colleague has been based on whether there has been a decline in the number of complaints since he took over from me, it appears to suggest that what the Ombudsman was saying was that everybody was complaining about me and now that I am no longer there, they are no longer complaining. (*Laughter*)

The answer to his question is that neither the present Minister nor the previous Minister gets to hear of these complaints. The first time I knew that there had been complaints to the Ombudsman was when he pointed it out to me, just like the first time I knew that there was supposed to be something about some works being done in the Department because in my view incorrectly, the Head of the Department chose to deal or fail to deal with the issue without bringing the matter to my notice when I was there.

I can tell him that when I investigated as a result of him raising it, most of the complaints dealt with people who felt that their claims under the insolvency were not being dealt with, with the speed with which they should be, over which there have been some problems, particularly in relation to the construction industry where there was an issue which arose previously, when the previous Government was in office, over the correct interpretation as to whether the CATA terms apply in the industry or the statutory terms apply in the industry. Where there is an anomaly that what was agreed under CATA is actually something that gives better redundancy to some people and much, much worse to others and that the people who get better redundancy are the people who have been working for a very short time who would get nothing under the statutory scheme, which requires that you are there for at least one year – or maybe two years, I cannot remember whether it is one or two – but all the people who were left out of the statutory were given compensation under CATA, which was based on a sum of money per week that they had worked. So somebody who had been working one week would get something.

But the way that it was interpreted was that then the people who would get many thousands of pounds under the statutory scheme would actually finish up getting considerably less. That has been an issue, that is how it was interpreted before and is still being interpreted in the same way and there are still people complaining that it is wrong that CATA should be providing less redundancy payments than the law says is the minimum because then there is not a minimum.

I can tell the hon. Member that if any of this had been brought to my attention at the time, I would probably have been able to deal with the issue myself, but since the people who were there at the time that these complaints were being made, were not the people who had been there before our years because there had been changes in the Heads of Department, after the person that had been there, Ernesto Gracia had been there for a very long time and therefore he was very conversant with these things, but the people who came in later clearly did not answer the points with the speed with which they should have been answered.

Now, the fact that there were more complaints than ever, in my view is totally unacceptable that it should be happening without the matter being raised at a political level to get to the root of the problem. I hope that now that he has raised it, and I am saying this in public, the same thing will not happen to my colleague as happened to me when I was there, which is that I got to find out about it after the event.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for the answer he has just given and I must say in relation to his comments in connection with CATA and the statutory position, I just find it very strange from a legal perspective that you can almost contract out of the minimum statutory requirements but I am happy to look at it for him, for a fee that is.

Mr Speaker, I think he expresses a hope that the matter will have been resolved and in relation to that, does he know because the point is also made expressly by the Ombudsman in the report, that he intends to meet with – as he describes it – senior management, if there has not been an improvement within a period and I think he cites of about a few months.

Does he know whether that meeting has, either of the Ministers, ever took place during his time when he was discharging his responsibilities or indeed whether Mr Costa is now since he took over these responsibilities, whether that meeting has in fact taken place?

Hon. J J Bossano: Yes, I found out that the meeting had taken place when I started asking questions as a result of him raising it, so this has all happened in the past. By the time it got into the Ombudsman’s Report, some of the complaints were discarded by the Ombudsman as not having substance, but many of the complaints were not about the substance but about the failure to provide answers. The fact that people were waiting to be given answers to issues that they were raising in matters of labour rights and in some

cases, the answer was very simple, the rights that were being raised were not rights that existed in law, however big a grievance a person might have had.

We have had one particular recent case which actually I know went to the Ombudsman and there were meetings with the Labour Inspectors and there were meetings with the Heads of Department, where there was one particular lady who was a Frontier Worker who worked in the private sector, who had serious medical problems and she wanted to be sacked in order to be able to claim unemployment benefit in Spain.

But the employer was being advised by the lawyers that he should not sack her because then he could be facing an unfair dismissal claim. Well, the Labour Inspectors are not, as far as I can tell, employed to go round advising people to sack employees. They explained to her that perhaps what she could do was draft a letter, which they helped her with, saying that she would give up her right to go to an unfair dismissal because her argument was that if she resigned, she would not qualify for the unemployment benefit. The last I heard of it was, it had not been resolved because she insisted not only on being sacked but also of being given a guarantee that the job would be kept for her when she finished with the unemployment benefit in Spain which as everybody knows can be as much as a year and a half.

I think that was one of the cases that either went that year to the Ombudsman or went to the Ombudsman in a subsequent year but I happen to know about this particular case because it was brought to my attention. There were others that I only found out when the whole thing was long dead and buried and only because the hon. Member took the trouble, for which I am grateful of bringing it to my attention. As a result of his intervention and then I did the only thing I could do, go back and ask the Department, why is it that I do not know anything about this?

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q81/2015
Government website –
Table EMP.7 update

Clerk: Question 81, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Employment provide updated details on the information contained in Table EMP.7 of the Gibraltar Government Website.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Employment, Skills & Training.

Minister for Business & Training (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the schedule that I now hand to him.

SCHEDULE TO QUESTION NO 81/2015

Table EMP.7													
Employers registered with the Employment Service by industry group		As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end
Industry group		Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13
A	Electricity Supply	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
B	Water Supply	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
C	Shipbuilding etc.	28	28	28	29	29	29	30	30	31	31	32	32
D	Other Manufacture	65	65	65	65	66	67	67	67	67	67	67	66
E	Construction	567	576	596	599	609	618	623	628	635	646	662	672
F	Wholesale	99	99	98	98	100	100	100	100	99	99	99	99
G	Retail Trade	476	481	482	484	488	490	490	490	493	495	499	503
H	Hotel Trade	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	10	10	10
I	Restaurants, Bars, etc	201	203	206	207	207	208	208	208	212	213	216	217
J	Repairs to Consumer Goods	63	64	64	65	65	65	66	66	66	67	68	68
K	Sea Transport & Related Services	83	84	86	88	89	90	91	91	91	91	91	92
L	Air Transport & Related Services	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
M	Road Transport & Related Services	205	209	212	214	215	215	214	216	215	214	214	213
N	Post and Communication	18	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	18	18	18	18
O	Banking, Finance and Insurance	1059	1067	1074	1086	1096	1113	1126	1130	1143	1156	1165	1167
P	Public Admin and National Defence	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Q	Police and Fire Service	23	23	23	22	22	22	22	22	23	23	24	24
R	Sanitary Services	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7
S	Education	38	38	38	38	39	39	39	39	39	40	40	40
T	Medical and Health Services	137	137	139	140	143	144	147	146	147	148	147	149
U	Other Services	705	709	715	723	727	739	759	773	785	800	811	819

CONT. SCHEDULE TO QUESTION TO NO 81/2015

Employers registered with the Employment Service by industry group													
		As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end
Industry group		Jan- 14	Feb- 14	Mar- 14	Apr- 14	May- 14	Jun- 14	Jul-14	Aug- 14	Sep-14	Oct- 14	Nov-14	Dec-14
A	Electricity Supply	5	5	5	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
B	Water Supply	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
C	Shipbuilding etc.	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	33	35	34	34
D	Other Manufacture	67	66	66	66	66	66	68	71	71	71	71	71
E	Construction	682	693	695	704	711	712	723	728	739	754	776	784
F	Wholesale	102	102	101	101	101	101	101	102	104	104	105	105
G	Retail Trade	504	503	506	507	509	514	518	519	520	520	522	525
H	Hotel Trade	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	11
I	Restaurants, Bars, etc	217	219	223	222	224	225	227	228	229	230	231	233
J	Repairs to Consumer Goods	68	68	68	69	70	71	71	72	72	72	72	71
K	Sea Transport & Related Services	91	91	86	86	87	88	88	89	89	90	90	91
L	Air Transport & Related Services	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
M	Road Transport & Related Services	215	218	220	219	219	219	220	220	221	222	227	230
N	Post and Communication	19	19	19	19	19	19	20	20	20	20	20	20
O	Banking, Finance and Insurance	1171	1178	1187	1191	1196	1203	1215	1226	1233	1251	1257	1263
P	Public Admin and National Defence	9	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Q	Police and Fire Service	24	24	24	24	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
R	Sanitary Services	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
S	Education	40	40	41	41	41	41	42	43	44	44	44	45
T	Medical and Health Services	150	154	161	162	165	166	166	167	171	173	173	174
U	Other Services	835	847	824	837	859	878	900	912	930	950	964	981

CONT. SCHEDULE TO QUESTION TO NO 81/2015

Employers registered with the Employment Service by industry group														
		As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end	As at end
Industry group		Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	
A	Electricity Supply	9												
B	Water Supply	2												
C	Shipbuilding etc.	34												
D	Other Manufacture	70												
E	Construction	795												
F	Wholesale	105												
G	Retail Trade	524												
H	Hotel Trade	11												
I	Restaurants, Bars, etc	235												
J	Repairs to Consumer Goods	71												
K	Sea Transport & Related Services	94												
L	Air Transport & Related Services	9												
M	Road Transport & Related Services	230												
N	Post and Communication	20												
O	Banking, Finance and Insurance	1276												
P	Public Admin and National Defence	10												
Q	Police and Fire Service	25												
R	Sanitary Services	7												
S	Education	45												
T	Medical and Health Services	177												
U	Other Services	1004												

Mr Speaker: It is a very lengthy and detailed schedule, so we are going to move on to the next question and we will come back if necessary, if the hon. Member wishes to ask any supplementaries.
Next question.

SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND YOUTH

Q82/2015

**Monument to women of Gibraltar –
Commissioning and location**

940

Clerk: Question 82, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Equality say when the winning design for the monument to the women of Gibraltar, selected nearly two years ago, will be commissioned and where the monument will be placed when completed?

945

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

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, HM Government is currently working closely with the winner of the design competition for the monument to the women. This is to see how best her design can be fulfilled. A number of locations are currently being considered.

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Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr Speaker, can the Hon. Minister say which sites are being considered?

955

Hon. S E Linares: Not specifically, Mr Speaker, because like I said there are a few of them that we are looking at and we are working with the designer so that it has the best impact that it should have because that is what it deserves.

Q83/2015

**Sports Injury Clinic –
How to be set up and run**

960

Clerk: Question 83, the Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond.

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Sport say when the Sports Injury Clinic outlined in the Government's manifesto will be set up and how it will be run?

965

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

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, HM Government is still working with stakeholders on how best to run the Sports Injury Clinic. We are considering a number of options.

970

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr Speaker, that is exactly the same answer the Hon. Minister gave me, I think it was six or eight months ago.

Can the Hon. Minister say if the leaning is more towards providing the service from the GHA or from the private sector?

975

Hon. S E Linares : Yes, Mr Speaker. First of all on the comment about eight months ago: this is a four-year Parliament and therefore we will fulfil this before our term of office. (*Banging on desk*)

Mr Speaker, on her specific question of whether we are looking at inclining towards the GHA or the private sector, both are being considered and it could be a combination of both. It depends on the treatment that the sports person might have. If the injury – and again we are looking at it generically – is one that can be done within the GHA then it will be done. As the hon. Lady might know, there are osteopaths and there are physios and the GHA does not employ osteopaths and all these issues are the ones we are considering.

980

Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: And finally, Mr Speaker, can the Hon. Minister say when he thinks the service will be set up? Is it just about to happen within the next couple of months?

985

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, definitely before the election.

Q84/2015
GSLA school swimming classes –
Cancellations

990

Clerk: Question 84, the Hon. E J Reyes.

995

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, can Government provide details as to how many, and why some swimming classes at the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority's facilities have been cancelled by schools in 2015?

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

1000

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, a total of nine school classes at the pool for the elderly, disabled and teaching have been cancelled in 2015. This has been due to a problem with the air treatment system, which has now been addressed.

The pool has been fully operational since 26th January 2015.

1005

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, this treatment system which seems to have caused a problem, is this the new one that was installed recently or is it a recurring problem which has been there in the system from its original construction time?

1010

Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker, it is definitely not the new one, the new one is working perfectly. There are two pools as he knows, there is what we used to call the GASA pool, the 25-metre pool, and there is the pool for the elderly, disabled and teaching. It is the one for the elderly, disabled and teaching which is not incorporated into the system of which is in the 25-metre pool.

1015

Therefore what we are looking at now is to incorporate the system that is working perfectly with the solar panels. I am happy to say that it is a system that is making a tremendous saving to the pool running costs, where we do not even have to buy diesel so it is even better for the environment and it is being used in many places as an example as to how we should be moving towards zero carbon emissions.

1020

Therefore, what we are looking at now is that the air treatment of the second pool which has been historic has been there for since it was built and there were loads of problems, we are now looking at how we are going to solve that for the long term. But as I said, at least in the short term it has been addressed and it is now working, not as we wish it to be working, it will be working much better when we fix it properly and do the whole system again overall.

Therefore what I am saying is we are hoping that all the system will be up and running soon with all the new systems that we need to put in place.

1025

Hon. J J Netto: Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister in his contribution just now said that thanks to the solar panel which has been installed there are huge savings which have been made in expenditure. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with some figures in terms of what the figure for savings is?

1030

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, I believe the hon. Member already has in the Order Paper a question to the Minister for the Environment asking about how much the savings – last night reading all the questions that he was asking – I do not have figures as such but I can tell you –

Mr Speaker: Not only do you not have figures but it does not arise from the original – again new matter being introduced which is not covered in the original question.

Q85/2015
Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority –
Vacancies

1035

Clerk: Question 85, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1040

Hon. E J Reyes: Further to the answer provided to Question 728/2014, can the Minister for Sports provide details of any vacancies within the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority, as well as indicating by when it is estimated these will be filled?

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

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, we are currently in discussions with the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority regarding improvements to management structures. Discussions are at an advanced stage and these changes should take place in the near future.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Mr Speaker, I note the Minister said that they should take place in the near future at the tail end of 2014 in a question there the Minister led me to believe that he hoped to have made a decision in respect of whether to keep or otherwise reorganise the post of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and so on and he said that he hoped to have this completed by the end of the Financial Year which is next month.

Are we still on target, Mr Speaker, for the end of the Financial Year?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Q84/2015 continued
GSLA school swimming classes –
Supplementary question

Mr Speaker: Before we deal with the next question, perhaps I should clarify one matter. I apologise to hon. Members that I did miss out that I think the Minister... It is very difficult for me to hear everything and catch everything that is being said. I think the Minister himself introduced the question of savings.

Where that happens, where a Minister in providing an answer widens the ambit of a question, then it is legitimate to ask a supplementary – and if I make a mistake, please draw my attention to it. (*Interjection*)

Where it is not legitimate is of course, if the hon. questioner himself should have introduced it and did not. I apologise to the hon. Member if I misled him.

Hon. J J Netto: No, obviously Mr Speaker, I bow to your rulings whenever you make them.

Mr Speaker: But it is not easy to be here, hour after hour, trying to pay attention all the times and sometimes there are matters which escape the Speaker's attention. I am only human.

Hon. J J Netto: It just caught my attention, given that I follow this type of issues and of course one is glad to hear that as a result of the installation of the solar panels whether in that particular location or any other particular part of the public service, there are savings to be made in relation to expenditure arising from that.

Having said it, the Minister... obviously I want to try and get to the bottom of it. Now the Hon. Minister in his reply did say that I have a question on the Order Paper which... not quite, it is a separate type of question because later on, presumably this afternoon, when I have the opportunity to ask the Minister of the Environment, it is basically where is that the Government at the moment is obtaining renewable energy to the tune of 3.1% arising from the statement in the ERDF Operational Report 2014 to 2020? It is a separate question, it only arises as a result of that.

If the hon. Member has the information, fine; if not, I will simply ask the question next month.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, I do not have the exact savings because it was not asked. The relationship between the questions that he is asking and the financial savings is that he will realise by the answer to the questions why the GASA pool is being used as an example of how much we are producing in kilowatts or how much we are saving from the power station because the kilowatts have been produced by the solar panels. So it is not a quantity as in financial quantity; it is to do with kilowatts and all the technical issues that are to do with electricity and energy.

But from the top of my head, I can tell him that the GASA pool used to spend an average of nearly £3,000 per month on diesel, buying diesel for the pumps and for the workings of the pool and that is not being spent now.

There is hardly any and there is a reserve there just in case it needs to be put into the system, should the system break down, as a last resort. But I can tell him and I was looking at the actual Vote Book and the expenditure is not there anymore, so that is only but one of the savings that I can just mention as I stand on my feet.

Hon. J J Netto: Mr Speaker, I am very grateful for that answer.

Q86/2015

**Gibraltar Rugby Football Union and Gibraltar Cricket Association –
Provision of alternative facilities**

Clerk: Question 86, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1100 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer to Questions 9 and 10/2015, can the Minister for Sports say if any potential alternative facilities have been identified for use by the Gibraltar Rugby Football Union and the Gibraltar Cricket Association in respect of provision of facilities for the playing, teaching and development of their respective sports in Gibraltar?

1105 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the answer remains the same as my answer to Question 9 and 10/2015 in the previous session of Parliament.

1110 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister in answer to Questions 9 and 10 said that no identification had been made as he has done previously throughout 2014, yet I can assure Mr Speaker, that the representatives of both the Gibraltar Rugby Football Union and Gibraltar Cricket Association have been able to mention that there seems to be an area that has been identified, which is what I am asking.

I have not asked if there has been a final agreement or settlement or whatever, my question has always been have alternative facilities been identified.

1115 Can the Minister please enlighten us as to what sort of areas have been identified as potential use by these two Associations?

1120 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker, I cannot specifically say because as he rightly says, this is a discussion we are having with them in order to ascertain whether some areas or a big area we can give to them to see if there is a potential of, so therefore this is what I have been saying all the time, that we have been in discussion with them. The question does not ask whether I have had a meeting with them, but I had a meeting with them only last week where we were discussing issues of how we can improve.

1125 I cannot specifically say to the hon. Member which is the area where we are looking at. There are many areas – he can look at the map of Gibraltar and try and identify areas we could use for the development and teaching of these two sports – but it is not only these two sports that we are looking at areas. We are looking at areas for all other sports and any area that I can identify and I can go to the Deputy Chief Minister and the Lands Management Committee in order to get for sports, then I will do so. This is what we are doing constantly. All the time we are doing that, so it is not a question of saying, ‘Oh, we have identified this for cricket or this for rugby.’

1130 I mentioned to him last time that in relation to the Cricket Association, we have been able to get the Garrison Gym to be shared with the basketball, so that is an area where we can expand on the development of the teaching of cricket. And in the rugby, like I also said to the hon. Member last time, we have been able to sit down with the MOD in order that the Devil’s Tower Camp (DTC) can be used for free for the rugby more often than it used to, obviously because before they used to have to pay and now they do not.

1135 So these are the issues that we are constantly all the time trying to develop, so if that is an answer to the question has there been any advance or any – that is as far as – but there has not been any advance from the last question only three weeks ago in the last session of Parliament.

1140 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Well I have to accept it is a pity, Mr Speaker, that these Associations tell me that the Government does seem to sort of have more advanced planning and so on in a particular area and the Minister has chosen at this particular stage not to make that public and since I am sat on this side of the House, I am going to have to put up with that.

1145 However, Mr Speaker, arising from the information that the Minister has just provided back, he said and in many ways I even welcome, that they have eased the use of the facilities at Devil’s Tower Camp by the Gibraltar Rugby Union and so on.

1150 Can the Minister confirm that the additional use of these facilities is because it is the Gibraltar Sports Authority or some other Government entity that has taken over the locations and then administers them to the Gibraltar Rugby Union; or does the Gibraltar Rugby Football Union have to deal directly with the MOD and with the Sports and Leisure Authority not even getting themselves involved in helping with the development of this sport?

Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member knows, the DTC has had issues and still has issues of security on how you go in, how you come out, who goes in, and all these issues. The other issue was that the MOD was charging different entities for the usage of the Devil's Tower Camp.

1155 What we have done is sat with the MOD, we have got a Memorandum of Understanding with them that we will – and he is right there – through the GSLA, we could have a system and in this case it was football and rugby who were the ones that were mainly using the astroturf in the Devil's Tower Camp, that we would have a system where people will have a type of ID card specifically given so that they can go in and out in a safe manner fulfilling all the security issues that the MOD have.

1160 So these are the sort of things that we have tried to clear up because those were the problematic things when the rugby people could not even – well, still cannot – go. A parent cannot come in to see the child who is playing inside the DTC because of security reasons, they have to just wait outside. But then the team manager can take the whole team in because they have a specific security card which they already know at the door, yes okay, these children can come in.

1165 So all these things we have ironed out with the MOD and this is what I am saying that we have got a memorandum of understanding and rugby is a great beneficiary of that system because they have been using that place quite a lot for the rugby. And the hon. Member is right: it is done through the GSLA but it is sort of, like slots are given to rugby and then rugby handles, with the MOD, all these issues that I have just explained.

**Q87-88/2015
Cultural grants –
Awards for 2014-15**

1170 **Clerk:** Question 87, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Minister for Culture provide updated details, since the answer provided to Question 12/2015, of any cultural grants awarded so far pertaining to the financial year 2014-15?

1175 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 88/2015.

1180 **Clerk:** Question 88, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Is the Minister for Culture now in a position to provide this House with a revised schedule showing details of cultural grants awarded so far pertaining to financial year 2014-15, explaining the queries raised through supplementary questions in reply to Question 12/2015?

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

1190 **Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, due to the fact that only three weeks has passed since the last Parliament session I have been unable to write to the hon. Member – and I think he got a call from my office anyway – as promised.

Therefore I now hand over to the hon. Member opposite, updated details of all cultural grants awarded so far, appertaining to the financial year 2014-15.

This information is now the correct one and is now recorded in *Hansard*.

1195 **Mr Speaker:** Strictly speaking, the schedule is not recorded in *Hansard*. The schedule that he is now providing is not recorded in *Hansard*, if he is just handing it over. If he does not incorporate it in the main answer, I do not think it will be recorded in *Hansard*. Is that the case, Mr Clerk?

1200 Yes, because we are making the schedule part of the answer, it will be recorded; normally a schedule is not recorded, okay.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, I just wanted... because last time there was a mistake in the schedule that I gave him and I promised him that I would write to him with the correct one, but if I had written to him directly, it would not be now in *Hansard*. That is what I am on about.

Schedule to Question No. 88/2015

Gibraltar Productions - Sponsorship for Gibraltar World Music Festival 2014	£15,000.00
Dragonfly Arts Ltd - Performing a solo comedy show/ 11th July 2014	£5,750.00
Jonathan Lutwyche – Travel assistance re: Summer school in New York	£3000.00
GNDO	£8,700.00
Gib Photographic Society	£1,800.00
Gibraltar Sea Scouts Band	£600.00
MO Productions	£6,700.00
Stylos Dance Studio	£6,000.00
Allegro Music Productions	£6,411.00
Kings Chapel Singers	£1,340.36
Santos Productions	£7,000.00
Gibraltar Philharmonic Society	£10,000.00
Gibraltar National Choir	£500.00
Andrew Felices on behalf of Janice Felices – Dance Academy	£3,000.00
Gib Re-Enactment Society	£350.00
Gib Face & Body Paint Association	£2,882.50
Gibraltar Arts & Crafts	£1,750.00
1st/ 4th Scout Group	£1,334.00
Manuel Ruiz – book grant	£929.00
Group 2000 - Poetry recital grant	£576.45
Fringe Festival Sponsorship (Its 3 o'clock Somewhere Entertainment Ltd)	£5,000.00
Gibraltar Re-Enactment Society	£350.00
Gibraltar Interfaith Group – Support for Interfaith Calendar	£996.50
Andrew Felices - Cultural Grants on behalf of Janice Felices - Dance Academy	£12,000.00
GFSB - Sponsorship for Rock Chef prize money	£2,000.00
Sonia Golt - Book grant	£1,600.00
Tracy Lee - Book grant	£ 9,650.00
M Olivera – Participation at the World Beauty Fitness & Fashion London	£ 350.00
Danza Academy	£ 5,850.00

Contd. Schedule to Question No. 88/2015

Adolfo Canepa- book grant 'Serving my Gibraltar'	£ 9,500.00
Gibraltar Productions Ltd (GWMF) - Sponsorship for Gibraltar World Music Festival	£ 20,000.00
Re-Enactment Society	£ 2,088.00
Humbert Hernandez - Book grant –'Conscript or Convict'	£ 2407.00
Sunborn Gibraltar - Reception for Gibraltar World Music Festival	£ 5,000.00
Masonic Institute - Assistance, reception for book launch	£ 150.30
Re-Enactment Society grant	£ 11,000.00
Patricia Lutwyche - Cultural Grant for Mr Jonathan Lutwyche to attend Britain Got Talent	£ 400.00

Mr Speaker: I have been in touch with the hon. questioner and he has kept me *au courant* with this particular answer, thank you.

1210 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, thank you. What my communication Mr Speaker was that after the deadline for submission of questions, the Minister's office did give me in fact from what I received, an exact copy of this schedule but I still wanted to maintain the question so that it is recorded in *Hansard* and also so that I am within the Rules and Mr Speaker should therefore allow me to make a supplementary question in this respect.

1215 Mr Speaker, if I may start with the third item down, there is a young performing dancer who has been granted £3,000 and it says 'travel assistance'. By that nomenclature it means that he seems to have travelled either first class or whatever to New York because £3,000 does take you a hell of a long way further than just New York. Or does that £3,000 incorporate some sort of tuition fees and so on?

1220 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, it is both.

Hon. E J Reyes: Right, so if it is for everything then travel assistance can be a bit misleading. Mr Speaker, can I take him further down, to a certain extent I am referring a little bit as well to help facilitate matters to the previous schedule I have been given last month, although there has been a great amendment to that and so on.

1225 Can I ask the Minister to clarify where it says 'Gibraltar Sea Scouts Band'? The last time it was in respect of the purchase of instruments and so on for the band. Am I therefore also correct in deducing that just beyond half way down where it says '1st/4th Scout Group £1,334.00' that it is also in respect of musical instruments? Because the Sea Scouts does specify the band and for the 1st/4th it does not. I know that these sort of Scout groups receive some money from youth grants and other places, so can he confirm to me that it is actually to do with the band, the 1st/4th contribution?

1230 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, as he rightly says, the Scouts themselves get grants through the youth grants and therefore it is the right assumption that this should be for the band.

1235 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Great, that helps tremendously, Mr Speaker. We had raised it last time and the Minister was going to look into it, when a payment is given to the parent to Andrew Felices in respect of tuition fees and so on for the Dance Academy for his daughter Janice Felices, it says here now, £12,000.

1240 The Minister was going to try and find out whether that is related to just one academic year or does it spread out over two years because of the way that payments are made? Has the Minister been able to get any information?

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, this is appertaining to her annual... so it is a yearly thing and therefore it might roll over the £12,000. We might pay £6,000 and then £6,000 or £3,000 and £9,000 but the annual amount is £12,000 because this includes all her travel expenses, all her maintenance expenses, so therefore it is, if the hon. Member thinks about for example a student and I think again in the Order Paper, there is a question of how much a student on tuition fees, they are usually for example in the UK £9,000 which is the average, so this would be like if it were the £9,000 plus another £3,000 for maintenance which, as the hon. Member knows the Department of Education pays maintenance. So the £12,000 is inclusive of all that and it is an annual thing.

1245 **Hon. E J Reyes:** That clarifies it a bit. And Mr Speaker, may I round up by asking: the Gibraltar Re-Enactment Society appears four times in the schedule. The very last payment, the penultimate entry Re-Enactment Society Grant, I think that is an annual grant basis of £11,000 but then there are other payments not huge amounts but £350 on one side, then £350 again, then £2,088.

1250 Given that this is over and above the grant am I right (1) in assuming this is a one-off payment and not just simply an increase due to inflation on the grant and (2) may I ask the Minister for some enlightenment on why beyond the £11,000 per annum grant, these three separate payments were given in respect of the Re-Enactment Society?

1260 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, these payments, as I understand it, were that for example the £350: they came to us to ask – 'us' as in the committee that actually decides this, which is the Cultural Grants Committee – and they asked for £350 for a specific capital expenditure sort of thing. They wanted to buy a gun or a cannon or some uniforms, which are not part and parcel really of the grant that they get. The grant is for running costs as opposed to buying something specific, so all these items are specific.

1265

We give them the grant of £11,000 in order to maintain and do things during the year but then in these cases they have come to ask for something specific. It could well be something like fixing lockers within their premises. These are the sort of things that are the smaller amounts.

1270 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, my understanding always was that the big sum of the grant, £11,000 included recurring costs and certain maintenance and upkeep of uniforms and so on. I can to a certain extent understand what the Minister is trying to say that there are two payments of £350. One takes it that it is two separate payments and not a clerical error again, could be a one-off – perhaps if one had seen from the press that they helped to create an old gun and so on. But there is one that is a slightly bigger figure, it is £2,088 –

1275 that is an additional 20% to the annual grant.

Can the Minister provide some information at least in respect of the bigger figure, £2,088, which is the third line down on the second page of the schedule?

1280 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I cannot specifically say what it is, that amount, I do not think it is a vast amount, some of these uniforms and equipment cost quite a lot of money. Therefore I would assume that these are like buying ten new uniforms, which is the amount that they cost. They cost quite a lot of money these uniforms, but what I am saying is that I do not specifically have the information but it should be something that they have asked for and it has been paid. I mean, that is what it is.

1285 **Hon. E J Reyes:** The Minister does not have that information but, Mr Speaker, that is precisely what I am asking, what is it? Exactly £2,088, given the cost of the upkeep of uniforms and so on, £11,000 per annum is quite a substantial sum of money. To require an additional 20% of additional supplementary funding, I do not think I am out of order, Mr Speaker in asking, as I would like to know what the £2,088 is for, if the £11,000 already includes the upkeep of uniforms and so on.

1290 If he does not have it now, could he at least commit himself to trying to provide that information to the House when possible? Your guidance is appreciated, Mr Speaker.

Hon. S E Linares: It does not need the guidance of the Speaker. I will do that.

Q89/2015
Sports Development Projects –
Details of grants

1295 **Clerk:** Question 89, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Further to the answer provided to Written Question W5/2015, can the Minister for Sports provide a breakdown with detailed information showing what Sports Development Projects the grants for £8,037.07 and £6,000 given to the Gibraltar Shooting Federation were for?

1300 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the breakdown of payments given to the Gibraltar Shooting Federation from Sports Development projects are as follows:

1305 (1) a payment of £7,000 towards electronic targets for the Gibraltar Target Shooting Association and £1,038.07 for financial assistance towards the Gibraltar Pistol Association's attendance at the IPSC General Assembly in Florida, October 2014, so it's a total of £8,038.07.

(2) £6,000 second and final payment towards electronic targets for the Gibraltar Target Shooting Association.

1310 Mr Speaker, if the hon. Member wishes, I can pass him the answers so that he does not have to note it down.

Q90/2015
Gibraltar Philharmonic Society –
Grants awarded 2014-15

Clerk: Question 90, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1315 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Culture provide details of any grants awarded to the Gibraltar Philharmonic Society in the Financial Year 2014-15, indicating the amounts awarded as well as the Head and Subhead to which this has been debited; showing the purpose or purposes for which the grant was awarded?

1320 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Philharmonic Society receives an annual cultural grant of £10,000 and it comes from the Head that he asked the question before, which is the Cultural Grants Head.

1325 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the reason why I had to pose this question before the deadline is that in the previous schedule that we can now more or less call obsolete, in answer to Question 12, the Minister had put down that there was £10,000 given to the Gibraltar Philharmonic Orchestra.

1330 So part one of my supplementary is that it raised a concern so that the Society was not receiving any money. I accept that we have kept to that £10,000 well spent in being one of the sponsors, it is nice to see Mr Speaker, when we do go to the concert that among the list of sponsors of individual companies and so on that the Government of Gibraltar is a sponsor and I think that is right and fitting and therefore there is no query in respect of that £10,000.

1335 The schedule given to me just a few minutes ago clarifies that. But then, Mr Speaker, can the Minister sort of confirm or deny whatever that no additional money has been given to anybody, be it the Gibraltar Philharmonic Orchestra or whoever, in respect of purchasing woodwind instruments to develop the Gibraltar Youth Orchestra. Have we made any contributions towards an orchestra or is that just a simple human clerical error, I would say?

1340 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, if he got that information from the previous schedule, it was an error. This now updates and corrects all the errors that is why we are having this discussion and I have given him the new one.

Q91/2015
Heritage sites –
Details and costs of works

Clerk: Question 91, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1345 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Heritage provide details of all works, together with a breakdown of the respective costs undertaken at any heritage related site, since the answer provided to Question 13/2015 as well as stating by whom these works were carried out?

1350 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, further to the answer to Question 13/2015, further works undertaken at heritage sites inclusive of costs and works carried out are:

- 1355
- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| (a) Site | Europa Pass |
| Works: | Emergency Works |
| Constructor: | Koala Construction |
| Amount: | £1,534.32 |
- 1360
- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| (b) Site: | South Port Gates |
| Works: | Repairs to wooden door |
| Contractor: | Gibraltar Cultural Services Limited |
| Amount: | £300 |
- 1365
- | | |
|-------------|--|
| (c) Site: | Montagu Bastion Bunker |
| Works: | Removal of loose concrete blocks |
| Contractor: | Construction and Maintenance Company Limited |
| Amount | £1,680 |

1370 (d) Site: Trafalgar Cemetery and St Jago's Stone Block
Works: Fixing of gate posts, balustrade and painting works
Contractor: Straits Overseas Limited
Amount: £1,620.

1375 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, fair enough Mr Speaker, but he did say that the Europa Pass was sort of emergency works, but he has not said whether it was the gate, the painting or so on. What type of emergency work, does the Minister have any pertinent information?

1380 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, because I remember the day that it happened. If he knows where the Europa path is, there were some rocks that were falling off the actual wall and there is a house just beside a property and if any accident had happened... It is also to do with the buildings that are at the top, if the hon. Member knows where I am talking about, there must have been probably some works happening at the top and part of the wall was falling down, some of the rocks had fallen down so these are emergency works.

1385 What we did was, we sent the contractor there, they put scaffolding up, in these cases they are stone blocks that might move and therefore what you do is you put them back in and you make them safe. So that is exactly the type of work it was.

1390 **Hon. E J Reyes:** No, Mr Speaker, let me just double-check. The repair works carried out at South Port Gates, am I correct – my note says Gibraltar Construction Services Limited, no? Then can the Minister enlighten me?

1395 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, this was another emergency work of which one of the doors was flapping and it was dangerous and it is Gibraltar Cultural Services. Gibraltar Cultural Services is the company that runs the Mackintosh Hall, that runs the Ince's Hall and all this has replaced the agency.

1400 What happens is that these works and the maintenance team had to go out, which is a heritage job, but because it was such an emergency works, we could not get anybody I think it was a Saturday evening, so when I called the Cultural Services because they were the ones who reported it to me, I said, 'Why don't you go out and do the work yourselves?' and they did. So that is exactly what they did. They just made it safe so that at a later date we will do the whole works again.

Q92/2015

Liberator Bomber AM911 – Progress on removing and exhibiting wreck

Clerk: Question 92, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1405 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Heritage provide an update on the progress made so far in respect of Government's intentions as stated by the Chief Minister at the National Press Club on Tuesday, 8th October 2013, 'to work with the Museum in order to bring Liberator Bomber AM, or Alpha Mike, AM911 out of the sea and placed on permanent exhibition in Gibraltar'?

1410 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Sport, Culture Heritage and Youth.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the HM Government of Gibraltar is still exploring the feasibility and technical aspects of removing the wreck from the bottom of the sea in conjunction with the Gibraltar Museum.

TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

Q123-132/2015

Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – Cycling

1415 **Clerk:** We now move to Question 123, and the questioner is the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Yes, Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say on what basis the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan states that cycling is not currently seen as a viable form of transport?

1420 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 124 to 132/2015.

1425 **Clerk:** Question 124, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say when a comprehensive cycle strategy will be formulated for Gibraltar and explain why one has not been devised in the last three years?

1430 **Clerk:** Question 125, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport detail the strategy/strategies the Government has developed to ensure the safety of cyclists in Gibraltar?

1435 **Clerk:** Question 126, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say when a comprehensive programme of cycle facilities will be delivered by this Government?

1440 **Clerk:** Question 127, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say whether cycling will be allowed as part of the Core Cycle Network between Convent Place and Casemates along the pedestrianised areas of Main Street?

1445 **Clerk:** Question 128, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say whether cycling will be allowed along Irish Town?

1450 **Clerk:** Question 129, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say whether he has identified potential locations for the establishment of Toucan crossings and advanced stop lines for cyclists?

1455 **Clerk:** Question 130, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say how soon work will begin on the introduction of cycle safety routes as set out in the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan and provide details of the features of these cycle safety routes?

1460 **Clerk:** Question 131, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say whether the Government will be introducing 'Ride to Work' schemes in the nature of similar schemes available from time to time in the UK?

1465 **Clerk:** Question 132, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say what the total amount of expenditure being budgeted for by his Department for investment in cycling infrastructure is?

1470 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan includes proposed indicative routes for cycle and pedestrian priority.

1475 At the current consultation stage, feedback is being sought on the principles of the route network and the policies to promote cycling and walking. The deadline for feedback to be provided is tomorrow

20th February 2015 and I very much look forward to reading the input provided by the public and if he is to be positive about this in any way, the hon. Member opposite.

1480 **Once the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan consultation is complete and account has been taken of the responses, further work will be required to develop and design the routes as part of the implementation stage. If adopted, these routes are expected to incorporate a range of measures, such as Toucan crossings and advanced stop lines.**

1485 **Cycle routes are not meant to replace pedestrian routes but be complementary to them as part of the wider modal shift in forms of transport being proposed. However, the compatibility of pedestrian and cycle movements need to be taken into account and to this end, Main Street and Irish Town are not included as cycle routes at present.**

1490 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I have asked a significant number of questions which the Minister has asked be bunched together, but there really are a significant number of issues that he has not dealt with.

I start with the first question, which is the one I asked the Minister for Transport to say on what basis the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan states that cycling is not currently seen as a viable form of transport.

1495 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, we must remember that this is a draft plan; it does not necessarily mean that everything in that plan is what the Government's view of entirely what the plan should be. Remember, Mott MacDonald Consultants who were engaged in this were tasked to actually give the Government their proposals and their views independently of what I thought, or we thought or anybody else thought for that matter.

1500 **Hence the perception that they have received when they have been interviewing individuals, people who could possibly use cycling as a form of transport and the main problem or issue raised was that people who were questioned felt that at this point in time, cycling was not currently seen as a viable form of transport. They perceived that they did not feel safe or secure.**

1505 **So it is not why the Minister for Transport says that it is not considered viable, it is not the Government's opinion; it is what has come about from public consultation.**

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, a number of points on that answer.

1510 **The summary published not last week but the week before, is a summary of the plan itself. Therefore when I asked the question about why it is that the summary of the plan says certain things, I enquire as to why it is that it says such things.**

Now the Hon. Minister tells us that this is about Mott MacDonald's independent view and it is also as a result of the responses received.

1515 **But, Mr Speaker, would it not be in fact the case, or is it not the case, that given the likely preponderance of responses to the survey having come from people who want cycling, given the disproportionate bias to other forms of transport other than cycling, that this was a likely outcome; and that in fact, Mr Speaker, as has become clear in cities around the world, it is through political leadership and a genuine commitment to the idea of cycling that cycling in fact flourishes?**

1520 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member's view of the plan is intrinsically flawed. This is not a draft; this is a draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan and as I said earlier, it is the views of the consultants and is also partly the view of the Government. We chose to publish the whole lot, the whole findings of the plan and not hide anything or say and there are things here which are contentious but everything is here now.

1525 **Having said that this is not the plan, this is a very abridged version of the plan. The plan itself when it is printed in due course will be a very, very thorough document which will have things and contingents which are not within this plan or may at least have only been slightly touched upon within the plan and they will be elaborated upon and built upon. So those people who are interested in seeing the reasons for certain proposals or want to go into further detail can do so. But the plan itself will be a very, very detailed and large document.**

1530 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, before I go on to labour the point which I consider is a very important one about political leadership in this context, I would hasten to add to the Minister that in fact, my description of the document, for clarification sake, was that it is a summary of the plan because that is what it is, that is what I have called it, that is what they have called it and yes, it is in draft to the extent that it is still subject to more consultation, still subject to the kind of consultation that means that he does not give answers in this House to questions that I ask.

1535 **Now in his original answer, Mr Speaker, he invites me to make a positive contribution to this debate by participating in the consultation process. Well, Mr Speaker, you really do not get more positive than having**

come to this House practically every month since we were elected to Opposition to talk about solutions, to talk about possibilities which surely the Minister will have taken note of and will constitute my participation in the process which I think is significant enough.

However, to labour the point about the political leadership, Mr Speaker, my concern and the reason why I raise this, is because a plan that identifies cycling and walking as alternatives that should be explored as alternatives, that should be developed as alternatives that people should be made aware of, as being good alternatives of transport to the car and to the motorcycle as they have been for a very, very long time, cannot in my view do well by departing from the premise that cycling in Gibraltar is dangerous, which is the view that the Hon. Minister for Transport, the previous Hon. Minister for Transport expressed in this House the first time we met in January 2012 and the view that is expressed in the plan.

Does the Minister not agree that by expressing the view that it is not safe, that it is not a viable form of transport in Gibraltar, without saying more, Mr Speaker, without saying it will be because we will invest *x* amount or we will do this and that to make it so, is not the basis upon which to depart on trying to make this a cycling community, as I know and I am sure he knows, this community can become.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, personally I do not have a death wish so I do not go out on my bicycle to get run over or killed or maimed in any way, and I am sure he does not do so either. But that does not mean that the perception of the general public out there, and the reason why there are no more people joining us when we cycle out there, is because they feel that it is perfectly safe.

I mean these are exactly the views that came out of the public consultation. People do not think like we do. And one of the things that the hon. Member did ask me to look at – because he was very concerned because he himself had actually been hit in the rear while he was riding his bicycle – (*Interjections and laughter*) One of the things that he highlighted because he had actually been hit by a car, was the possibility of a zebra crossing or a pelican crossing outside Portland House. So it is clear... That was just his brush with danger in that respect. (*Interjection*) Well, it might have been a motorcycle, but anyway...

People's perception of whether cycling is safe is not what we feel and I find that cycling is safe enough for me to actually take to the road but that is not the perception of the people that were questioned.

Hon. S M Figueras: Which brings me to another point I would make in relation to a number of questions that he has not actually answered.

The second question I asked, number 124, asked when a comprehensive cycle strategy will be formulated for Gibraltar and to explain why one has not been devised during the last three years. You see, Mr Speaker, the comprehensive cycle strategy is one that is mentioned in the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – I hope I got its label right – and I was simply asking the Minister to elucidate upon the details of what that comprehensive cycle strategy will be and when we can expect it to be devised.

And again, Mr Speaker, I have made no secret over the last three years in this House of my disappointment at the fact that nothing has been done in terms of increasing cycling safety awareness by having advertising campaigns or anything of the sort, an initiative which the plan itself identifies as being necessary to promoting the safe use and adoption of cycling as an alternative form of transport and the Minister insists in telling me that because it is going through another process of consultation, he is not going to give me any more details.

Mr Speaker, the question is asked in this House and I believe that this is information that he now has, because the plan has been in the making for the last three years. So will the Minister, and this is not my last supplementary because, Mr Speaker, he has not answered many of the questions, will the Minister tell us when that comprehensive cycle strategy will be formulated for Gibraltar and tell us why no advance, no progress has been made in the development of one in the last three years, when surely he will have been appraised of the information and the likely recommendations that the consultants, who we hope have not brainwashed him, will have brought to his attention during the course of the last three years. (*Banging on desks*)

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, it is incredible that the hon. Member who had 16 years to set up a safety for cyclists (**Several Members:** Hear, hear) –

Mr Speaker: No, no, now we are beginning to debate and this is not the time to debate. If you want to debate, then let us have a motion on the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan and you can debate it under the rules of debate. So get to the point.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, as I was saying I think the comments made by the hon. Member are extremely unfair. Now the traffic plan is in a stage of development, it is still in the stage of development and the Government will announce all these measures when it feels fit to do so.

1600 The only reason why I think the hon. Member has been pushing for a traffic plan, traffic plan, traffic plan, is to have an opportunity just to look at it with a fine tooth comb and just criticise it like they criticise all other Government projects to the hilt. That is exactly the impression of what is happening here.

1605 So whether there is a comprehensive cycle strategy he will have to wait and see, but it is the intention of this Government to help promote other forms of transport, other sustainable forms of transport and cycling is one of them in question, as is walking.

So as and when the Government is prepared to make mention of these initiatives and as the final traffic plan comes into the public, he will then be furnished with the information he requires.

Several Members: Hear, hear. (*Banging on desks*)

1610

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, the hon. Members applaud a lack of a plan because there is nothing yet concrete. Which brings me to the next question and that is Question 125 which is asking for the Minister to detail the strategy or strategies the Government has developed to ensure the safety of cyclists in Gibraltar. At first glance, Mr Speaker, I have to say none from my own personal experience.

1615 However, the reason why I was asking the question is because as an example in the UK and elsewhere, construction vehicles of which there are many in Gibraltar these days, many carrying scaffolding or empty scaffolding lorries, represent a clear and present danger to cyclists in those communities.

1620 Now I asked the question because I am interested to understand what the plan has unearthed in terms of cycling safety measures that this Government will be taking and I would ask the Minister to articulate a few of those for our benefit.

Hon. P J Balban: Let me see what the previous plan actually said about those things to see whether we can gain any insight.

1625 **Mr Speaker:** Let me give a little bit of guidance. Please sit down.

I think there is an alternative procedure that I would commend to hon. Members generally and particularly to Members of the Opposition. If you want to discuss, if you want to debate something like the traffic plan, all you have to do is to introduce a neutral motion: 'This House notes the recommendations, the contents of the traffic plan.'

1630 You can then debate the matter, raise all the points that you want. It is not as if you are introducing a motion which you might lose by Government majority. It is a totally neutral device which was adopted very often during the years when I was a Member of the House. It can be done with the traffic plan, it can be done with the report of the Ombudsman, it can be done with the report of the Principal Auditor and either the Government or the Opposition can introduce a very short motion. 'This House takes note of the...' and then the rules of debate apply.

1635 It is a far better method of procedure in my view than the present one, where you are constrained by the rules applying to questions.

1640 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the Chair's intervention and I take on board the recommendation as we have on a number of occasions in the past, but if the Chair will indulge me, Mr Speaker, I have been nothing but positive about the plan since it was published. I said so publicly on *Newswatch* last week when the plan was published.

All I want to do, Mr Speaker, is to elucidate information from the Minister and that is all I am seeking to do. I do not wish to debate the plan today; I wish to elucidate information, Mr Speaker.

1645

Mr Speaker: What I do not want hon. Members to do is to keep on going back over what happened over the last 16 or 20 years and both sides do that. Both sides of the House do that. That is what I do not want them to do.

1650 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, granted, but today during this question and answer session, Mr Speaker, I have only asked about the Government's performance in respect of this very particular project and nothing else. I have not alluded to the last 16 years and neither do I want to. I only want information, Mr Speaker. (*Interjection and Laughter*) No, and Mr Speaker I am perfectly happy to talk about the last 16 years if it is in fact what we are going to do here today, but it is not.

1655 What I want to do, is to elucidate information from the Minister which he is hesitant to give me and he betrays his nervousness by so very quickly alluding to the last 16 years of GSD Government, because of course, Mr Speaker, he is nervous about the fact that in the 16 years of the GSD Government, so much was achieved that they cannot hope to emulate in four, eight or even 20 years.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has gone back to the past 16 years once again and I feel that it is only... Why can't I go back to the last 16 years?

I totally disagree with what the hon. Member is saying, the Government has brought out a very positive plan, a very thorough plan, a plan which has been generally very well received even by the hon. Member as he rightly says. But when we look at cycle safety which is something which the hon. Member is raising, and I unfortunately have to see where we are today and what we have inherited along the years and what we did was a scheme which we will talk about later because it is part of...there are questions related to this later on, a scheme which failed, which was the GibiBike scheme.

Now the Government, as I said, is very, very keen and is going to be pushing to help encourage people to sustainable forms of transport, cycling being one of them and the Government will be looking at – as you can see in the plan – the possibility of cycle lanes, which we have been very clear about, with Wellington Front and the walls being used as a segregated cycle lane, so people are not in contact with vehicles. We are looking at every single road in Gibraltar to see whether there is a possibility of having segregated bicycle lanes, which appears to be extremely difficult because of Gibraltar's roads and Gibraltar is too small in size to be able to merit and have this sort of infrastructural changes.

Obviously the Government, like any other Government, will be keen on ensuring the safety of cyclists by use of protective gear if necessary and the Government will most certainly be looking at a scheme for bicycle rental which works, because unfortunately the one – and I am sorry, Mr Speaker, having to go back to that – because what we took over in 2011 was a system which was rushed, which did not work, spares were not available, many of them got stolen and we inherited a lump of bicycles that were unusable.

The Government will take its time, do things properly, because we think that in most modern urban cities around the world, there are schemes which work better or worse, but there are schemes where people can borrow bikes or rent bikes or whatever, and the Government is keen to look at all these schemes but we will do things correctly. We are not rushed to do it and we will make sure that when we have them, that they work.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for that reply, inasmuch as he provides at least a glimpse of a variety of initiatives that the Government might be able to adopt for itself in terms of enhancing cycling safety. It is lamentable, however, that they have had three years to embark on a programme of awareness on television or in the press, which did not require external consultants at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds to brainwash the Minister into agreeing to, but I will now continue and ask a further supplementary arising from specific questions that I have already asked.

In relation to the GibiBike scheme, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister will know that there are two or three questions in the Order Paper on that subject and I will therefore not deal with those suggestions, wrong as they are, at this juncture.

I asked the Minister whether he could say when a comprehensive programme of cycle facilities will be delivered by the Government. Again, the answer to the question, Mr Speaker, was a very general one where everything is being looked at. But I would be grateful if the Minister could give me particular attention to that and tell me when it is in fact, that we can expect this comprehensive programme of cycle facilities.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, before the actual question was asked, the prelude to the question is that obviously he is begging me to go back to the 16 years. I will refrain from doing so because you have said that we should not, but he keeps on saying what have we done in the three years that we have had.

Well, we have a traffic plan which we have said will be a thorough investigation which will give us a very good idea of what we want to do. If he is saying what have we done in the past three years, well if we had inherited something better we would have continued with that, but we did not unfortunately. Again he keeps on asking me to go back and I will try to refrain from doing so.

Again, the hon. Member expects me from the plan to start giving him dates, when am I going to do this, when am I going to do that and when is the Government going to embark on the other? He will learn in due course when the Government is ready to have a timeframe if the Government sees that system to be fit, he will have it. But what he cannot expect is a document which has gone out for public consultation which is almost towards the end of that public consultation, for me to give him details of what he is asking.

He is asking for costs, he is asking for timeframes, he is asking for specifics and unfortunately, those specifics are not available to the hon. Member. This work is still being developed and once we are ready to give him more specific information, we will be happy to do so.

Hon. S M Figueras: Well, Mr Speaker, that is just inaction hiding behind consultation, but we will leave that there.

Moving on to Question 127 which he did answer, remarkably, in saying no cycling will not be allowed along the pedestrianised areas of Main Street or Irish Town. I would ask, Mr Speaker, is the Minister content that it is okay, it is legal, it is in fact allowed for goods vehicles to be in the area of Main Street and

Irish Town before 10.00 a.m., or 11.00 a.m. I think it is, in the morning; but yet an eco-friendly, quiet, inoffensive form of transport as cycling is not allowed in that area? Is that something that has the potential of being revisited in that context?

1725 **Hon. P J Balban:** Once again, Mr Speaker, this is what we have had. There have never been bicycles allowed to cycle through Main Street or Irish Town. Why is it all of a sudden so important that bicycles should cycle down there? If you want my opinion – (*Interjection*) But the Government – we could have been briefed by them, but if you want my opinion on whether cycling through Main Street and Irish Town is safe, well I have my doubts.

1730 Bicycles are quiet methods of transport. They can travel in one direction or they can travel in others whereas goods vehicles will travel in one direction, their engines make noise, they travel at slow speeds, whereas the bicycle can whisk silently south, west, east, north and people are coming through tributaries, pedestrians are walking. Take Irish Town for example, we have pedestrians coming through all the tributaries to Irish Town and if you are going to make walking dangerous as a result of encouraging bicycles, then I do not think that is convenient.

1735 I think pedestrians, who are the majority of persons, should be encouraged and should not be having to look behind their backs. We have problems with mobility scooters who run people over in Main Street and there are all sorts of issues. So I think these things have to be thought about very carefully.

1740 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful that he has confirmed that it is of his own initiative that he does not want to pursue the idea of allowing cycling on Main Street before 11.00 a.m. like the heavy goods vehicles and to explore the possibility of restricting cycle traffic to those hours and in the direction of the flow of traffic as they exist today. But I can move on, Mr Speaker, because I have my answer.

In relation to –

1745 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, if I may, would the hon. Member give way? I have given the hon. Gentleman –

1750 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am not going to give way unless it is a Point of Order. (*Interjections by Mr Speaker and other Members*) No, no, thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, I am happy to give way for a Point of Order though. There is not one? Oh good. (*Interjections*)

Mr Speaker, Question 131 – we got to 132, is that right? (**A Member:** Yes.) Again, there was no mention of the Hon. Minister in his replies to the questions of whether the Government is looking to introduce something like a ‘ride to work scheme’ as has existed in the UK from time to time and it is not something that from my review of the plan, was present in it, or rather the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan.

1755 Could the Minister please enlighten us as to whether this is something that the Government is looking at but is not in the plan?

1760 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, just to answer a question or comment that the hon. Member made earlier, I gave a reply to a question which was my opinion of cycle riding in Irish Town and along Main Street. That does not necessarily mean... I said it was my opinion, that does not necessarily reflect the Government’s opinion. What will happen is, all these things have been looked at and will be taken into account. Just because I think that this should be done, or I think that should be done, this is not my plan and any way this has not been my brain child; this has been something that has come across – no I will not –

Hon. S M Figueras: On a Point of Order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Yes, what is the Point of Order.

1770 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Yes, I wanted to refer to the Hon. Minister’s original answer in relation to that particular question and the answer was no. Not that it was up for consultation; that the answer was no. That was the Point of Order, Mr Speaker.

1775 **Hon. P J Balban:** I do not know what that was all about, Mr Speaker, but what I am saying is whether in future bicycles will be seen riding along Irish Town or on Main Street, that is something which the plan will develop further and we will see what will happen. (*Interjection*)

1780 **Mr Speaker:** Now you have had... I think we can now leave the question of Main Street and Irish Town. You have been asked about Question... [*Inaudible*].

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, all these things are being looked at as part of the plan, the consultants are UK consultants and they are very up to date on all sorts of plans, including the 'ride to work' scheme which is in fact the 'cycle to work' scheme. I do not know whether, it is official, in order to... – it is 'cycle to work' scheme and not the ride. I do not know where he has got the term 'ride' from, he has probably heard it somewhere. But our UK consultants are providing us with all these similar schemes to try to incentivise and if the Government decides to adopt some of these we will make an announcement when necessary.

Hon. S M Figueras: Finally, Mr Speaker in relation to these questions specifically on cycling, I asked what I thought was a valid question certainly, and one which I think the Minister will agree is important in the grand scheme of this debate.

That is to enquire as to what the extent of the investment planned by his budget entitling infrastructure is. You see, Mr Speaker, I asked the question because in countries on the continent such as the Netherlands where investment is very significant, the modal share of commuting trips or journeys carried out on bicycles is much, much higher than in other places in Europe. In the Netherlands for example it is 27% and in Denmark it is 19% and the UK languishes behind at about 2% in terms of the modal share.

But it is evident from the report of the All Parliamentary Cycling Group in the UK that cities that invest in infrastructure see a significant increase in the modal share of cycling, such as Oxford and Cambridge who respectively have a rate of 17% and 30%. So my question to the Minister would be twofold. One, what is the current modal share of cycling as a form of transport in Gibraltar and have those findings been provided to him and his Department by the plan, or by Messrs Mott MacDonald; and secondly, how much money is budgeted by his Department – and I am talking about looking forward not back, in terms of investment in cycling infrastructure.

Hon. P J Balban: A very clever bit of reading there on the part of the hon. Member, coming up with 'modal shares of cycling' and all these things which he is very up on.

Mr Speaker, the Government will be – what we cannot do is compare little Gibraltar to Oxford and Cambridge or places in Holland as to what we invest in cycling infrastructure. We are very limited in Gibraltar, which means to say that no matter how much we invest in trying to encourage people to cycle in Gibraltar, there is so much we can do. So what we are looking at is a possibility of including some cycle lanes, which is the most we can do and encouraging people to use this form of transport.

So as I said, the full report, when the report is published... What the hon. Gentleman wants is for the Government to say, 'We want more and more information, because that gives me more and more fuel to be able to attack and criticise and whatever.' No, unfortunately we are not ready to provide you with all this information, and I do think at this stage, which is a draft *public* document, that people really want to know what the Government is going to be budgeting or what the modal share or any fancy term in that respect.

The Government obviously will be budgeting for the traffic plan, the Government will be investing considerably in the traffic plan and the hon. Member will have to wait and see how that is shared throughout all the different aspects of the plan itself.

Hon. S M Figueras: Well, Mr Speaker, I rise only to disagree with the Hon. Minister's assessment of the terms that I have used as fancy language. It is what it is, a modal share of use and I also disagree with his assessment of my approach to these questions this morning, Mr Speaker.

I have been doing nothing but seeking information from him to try and understand the reach of this plan and the extent to which we can all expect that in years to come, because this is not going to happen overnight and I acknowledge that, how we are going to see cycling develop as a form of transport in Gibraltar.

Of course the plan is not limited to that, it has many other aspects, many of which we touch upon in further questions in the Order Paper but, Mr Speaker, I suppose what is most regrettable is that whilst he perhaps to a certain extent, rightly identifies that Gibraltar has certain limitations – not that we are limited because we are certainly limited only by our imagination and that of our political leadership – I would ask the Minister to say what he considers are the series of measures that he can take, starting today, to try and encourage the use of cycling as an alternative form of transport in Gibraltar?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, it is not what I think. When the Government is ready to provide him with information of what the Government thinks, I will do that.

Now, no matter how much forward planning: I have not planned ahead because eventually in the future I suppose we will see cars that fly! *(Laughter)* But we are not going to go down that route in that respect. As I said, when the Government is ready to provide the hon. Member with that sort of information, then we will do but we are not ready yet.

Q133-135/2015
Bicycle rental scheme –
Plans for delivery

Clerk: Question 133, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport provide full specifications of the urban bike rental scheme contemplated by the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – that should read ‘the summary of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan’ (A Member: Draft.) ‘draft’ – including information as to when such a scheme will be available?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 134 and 135.

Clerk: Question 134, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say whether the Government has now formulated plans for the delivery of an urban bicycle rental scheme or whether they will be resurrecting the GibiBikes?

Clerk: Question 135, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say if Members of the original GibiBike scheme will automatically be registered as members of a new urban bicycle rental scheme, whatever shape that may take, in the future?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the Government has no plans to resurrect the ill-thought out and so badly rushed GibiBike scheme, which has been a huge GSD waste of money for our community.

However, the Government is looking into the possibility of introducing a new, well-thought out, unrushed and value-for-money bicycle rental scheme. We are therefore looking at all the commercial options that are available in that respect.

At this point, I am not in a position to provide any further details. If such a scheme will be introduced, we would welcome back all the members of the original and ill-fated GibiBike scheme. However, a decision as to whether registration will be automatic cannot be taken at this stage.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I welcome the answer by the Minister inasmuch as he says that there will at some point – nobody knows when – be a GibiBike equivalent urban bicycle rental scheme.

I do, however, have to disagree with the premise that it was a GSD failure that the GibiBike scheme became as problematic as it did. At the time there were many questions and answers across this floor –

Mr Speaker: Now you have made your point. You said and that you disagree, but we are not going to debate that.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker –

Mr Speaker: We are not going to go into detail in debating – you have refuted the point –

Hon. S M Figueras: Grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: – that has been made about a waste of money, so leave it at that and now you go on.

Hon. S M Figueras: Grateful, Mr Speaker. Yes, happy to, Mr Speaker. I am grateful for the guidance. In relation to the urban bicycle rental scheme that the Government is looking at, I note that he says that the automatic registration of members will not be possible.

Is there any indication at this stage of whether the integration of that urban bicycle rental scheme in terms of locating it close to bus stops, which is something I saw in one of the images in the draft, in the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic and Transport Plan, will be more or less *a la* GibiBikes in terms of

having it close to bus stops, as they were intended to be when the scheme rolled out to the South District and other areas, which in the event it never did?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I think I heard the hon. Member say that I had said that it will not be possible to automatically register persons – if that is what he said then I need to correct his view because I said that at this moment in time, a decision as to whether registration would be automatic cannot be taken at this stage. So just to correct that point in case I misheard.

Now again, Mr Speaker would not wish me to go back and debate why the bikes were so good or so bad or whatever. Clearly the public at large knows whether they were good or bad and why they did not survive.

Anyway, in order to be able to – which is part of the question – in order to be able to, resurrect the GibiBikes you would need nothing close to a miracle really, because in order to resurrect these bicycles is just not possible. The bicycles had serious issues with the locking mechanisms, they had issues with bikes which were stolen as a result of their faulty locking mechanisms, which would have been fine as long as the locking mechanisms could have been repaired or spares could be bought or they could be upgraded. But then, the company was not there to be able to deliver on spares, on service and so the bicycles just died a natural death. So unfortunately that is GibiBikes and many of these bikes are lying in the bus depot as a carcass of rotted metal, which is a shame, because it was a huge expense to the Taxpayer at the time.

Now the Government's idea is that Government is looking into potential schemes because as I said earlier, in most modern urban cities, bicycle sharing systems do work. They are not profit making schemes as the hon. Members knows, so care has to be taken that at least if we are going to invest money in a scheme that it stands the test of time, which unfortunately the others did not. So that is imperative.

Whether the racks will be close to the bus stops or not, well if you think about the size of Gibraltar, there are bus stops very close to each other so these racks will be close enough to bus stops. They will be very much within walking distance or a stone's throw away from buses. Whether they will appear like the picture shows which is the bus stop which has a rack right beside it, whether it will be that configuration or slightly apart, well again these are just ideas.

The idea of the document was to charge people's views on the plan and they can come back to us with ideas. It was meant to be a plan, a document which would see how people thought and get them interested and get them debating and saying well this is really bad or this is really good or this will work or this will not work. I think the plan has done that, I think... the closing date is tomorrow, I think people have been interested either way, whether they are interested because this will affect them or interested positively or whether interest because it will affect them negatively.

I think everyone loves the idea of a traffic plan as long as it does not affect their immediate vicinity and I think people have said and even NGOs have stated, we have to wait and see how things go. There has got to be a series of pilot schemes and I think the plan has done that. It has created a lot of interest, a lot of comments. Some have been negative, some have been positive; some people have written objective pieces on the plan in very much detail which Government really appreciates. I have actually gone through it section by section, so I think the Government has achieved what it set out to do.

Now it will be a time to look at all of these, reflect upon all the ideas and come up with a plan which is well balanced and for the good of the whole community in every respect to try and encourage people to stop using their vehicles as often, to use the excellent bus service that we have, eventually to hopefully use a bike scheme when we are able to decide on how to proceed on that, encourage walking and all the other methods which include sustainability to.

So as I said, this plan is a plan in progress. I know it has taken time and the hon. Member has been really enthusiastic, he has been positive – so much so that he did say publicly that if they ever took office in the future they would not bin it. Of course they would not because I truly think it is a great plan.

So as I said, if the hon. Member just gives us the gift of that extra time, we are almost there now and then all these things will be revealed in due course.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister and there is only one more question. But what I would say is that of course I understand that a certain amount of artistic licence has to be given in the production of illustrations and diagrams in the plan. There is one in the plan of a lady riding a moped on Zoca Flank in a bikini not wearing a helmet. So we are perfectly happy to allow them the artistic licence you need to give in these instances, Mr Speaker.

Also to touch upon a point that he has made which I think is very important and one which I have made publicly but which I wish to make here in this Parliament. Mr Speaker, our approach to these things will be very different to theirs. We will not, if elected to Government this year, take that plan and rubbish it just because it is not our plan. That is not how we do things and that is not how we will do things if we are entrusted with the stewardship of this community this year.

What I would ask, what I would ask the hon. Member is whether he can say whether he has any regrets that this investment that they are looking at and there is no account of how much that could be, but certainly

in the context of the very, very many and splendid investments being made by this Government in projects for the better of the community at large, whether perhaps this might not have been one of those projects which the Government could have taken under its wing at an earlier stage, as soon as it had identified that the GibiBike scheme was not going to exist for much longer, in order to continue to reap the benefits of the interest and the commitment of so many users who were coming to GibiBikes in their droves?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, yes the Government could have just as they did, got rid of the GibiBike scheme and started looking for another scheme but again, we have the main issue of public perception of cycling in Gibraltar, which we spoke about initially. For us to place a new scheme to replace the old without looking at the actual real reasons why perhaps the bicycle scheme would never be used by people... I do recall that people would use it from the frontier to 6/7 Europort and from the frontier to Waterport Place. Those were the most common routes because people who came to work who lived across the border would use them.

I know that they were popular for the short life they had within that route, but people, I do not think – I may be wrong as I was not there at the time, but I do not think that people... If they are worried about cycling in Gibraltar and the perception is that it is not entirely safe, I do not think any bicycle scheme would encourage people to just take up cycling.

As I said, but once we have segregated bicycle lanes, hopefully which is what we are looking at which is part of the Wellington Front Project then people I think will start realising that cycling can be another way of moving from A to B even if it is just through leisure, it does not have to be a form of transport but encourage people through leisure to use these bicycles, keep people fit which is another reason why people walk or cycle, not just to get cars off the street, it is also to become healthier people.

I do not think, personally, that at the time it would have been a good idea to have scrapped one scheme and replaced it with another because one did not work and this one would have. I think when we are ready and I think when people are ready, I think it is something which we definitely need to explore.

Now, when I mentioned that the hon. Member was looking at the plan with a fine tooth comb, I have got excellent vision, I have got very, very good vision, but I would need a magnifying glass to see whether the lady driving her bicycle on Zoca Flank is wearing a bikini or not. It just goes to show how in-depth the gentleman has gone into the plan just to be able to make useless comments or comments which do not really mean much in terms of, it is not a comment which is constructive in any way; it is just a little... I do not want to use a rude word, just a little... you know. So anyway it just goes to show my perception of what the hon. Gentleman has been doing with the plan.

So as I said just to round off, in essence first let us correct the perception of people, let us encourage people, let us make cycling safer in the perception of people and once we do so, once we have our segregated bicycle lanes, then let us invest in a scheme in a system of the rental bikes perhaps which would also explore, which we do need to explore, because the previous scheme only rented bicycles, but they never thought I think anyway of renting helmets because that would have been the cherry on the cake I suppose because people can use a bicycle but not wear a helmet. There is no law that says you have to use a helmet. Now whether we want to or whether we do not want to, that is a different story. Will people encourage that or will it be another thing to carry around.

But again, we need to look at everything and the Government will be looking at a scheme which works throughout.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, the Minister betrays his fragility when he touches upon once more just an amusing side comment that I made in relation to the plan in terms of artistic licence and that is where I am going to leave that point.

I am going to say, Mr Speaker, that we are going to have to agree to disagree on the popularity of the GibiBike scheme because I recall asking in this House, Mr Speaker, questions in relation to the numbers of people who were signing up to the scheme when it was already in full scale descent to detritus and the numbers of people signing up were still significant because there were a lot of people depending on that scheme.

Now, we will agree to disagree on the point of whether it was a good idea to just take one scheme and replace it with another one which was not beset by all the difficulties and problems that the first one was. But what I will ask the Minister now, Mr Speaker, is a question which I think arises from the answer and which I think needs to be answered to do away with any kind of ambiguity. That is, whether there is any question whatsoever, that an urban bike rental scheme will at some point return to Gibraltar?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, Government is looking positively at it, very positively at it. It is something which, as I said, all major cities have. I personally think it is a good idea, As the hon. Member said, there were people who signed up for the scheme but I think it is very different, I think when a new scheme comes up and something different arises, I think many people are keen to sign on. We have to really

analyse and what should have been analysed is what the use was after that. As I said when something new turns up it is a great idea, you go and you sign up. Whether you then use it or not is a different issue.

Hon. N F Costa: May I?

Hon. P J Balban: Yes, please do, yes.

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, if I may, my hon. Friend is being far too generous. He should not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's questions. The GibiBike scheme did not –

Mr Speaker: No, out of order. The hon. Member is out of order.

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, I am answering the premises of his question –

Mr Speaker: No, I will not allow it, the question –

Hon. N F Costa: – which relates to the GibiBike scheme, and I was the Minister responsible for the GibiBike scheme for three years.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, the Hon. Minister will sit down because the questions have not been addressed to him. In the last three quarters of an hour to an hour, we have been dealing with cycling, and it does not involve –

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman gave way to allow me –

Mr Speaker: To who?

Hon. N F Costa: To me, the hon. Gentleman –

Mr Speaker: He had no business to give way to you – what for?

Hon. N F Costa: Because I am answering –

Mr Speaker: He has answered the question –

Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has not answered the question because he is leaving out an important part, which is the part that I wish to address to the hon. Gentleman, which is a very simple one.

The hon. Gentleman keeps making the implied criticism in everything that he asks, that we have allowed the GibiBike scheme to deteriorate and as I explained to him, during the course of the last three years, that was not the case. There was no intentional policy of allowing the GibiBike scheme to come to nothing. The GibiBike scheme collapsed because it was a rushed through, ill-thought out, completely inadequate scheme for Gibraltar. That is the answer.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q136/2015
Adult cycling proficiency courses –
Potential introduction

Clerk: Question 136, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say, and I think I know the answer already, whether the Government is contemplating the introduction of adult cycling proficiency courses?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman knows the answer, why ask the question in the first place, but I will go ahead and answer. It is

the comments which are totally unnecessary, I think and they do not help in any way. (**Several Members:** Ooh!) (*Interjections*)

2080 Mr Speaker... (*Laughter*) Well, it adds some fun to this, otherwise it gets a bit boring.

Mr Speaker: May I call hon. Members to order. This is a serious business. Let's get on like adults, that we are responsible persons, please. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) Anyone would think that only children sat here.

2085 Now answer the question, please.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, the RGP currently conducts cycling proficiency courses for young people, particularly with children at school and numerous different social organisations. This also includes HM Government of Gibraltar GSLA summer sports programme.

2090 The RGP have offered cycling proficiency courses to adults before, but this was a programme for people with disability needs.

As part of a plan to encourage a greater take up of cycling in Gibraltar, we will continue to work closely with the RGP in this regard.

Q137-138/2015

Buses –

Full specifications of old and new

2095 **Clerk:** Question 137, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: We will be moving along a bit more swiftly now, Mr Speaker. Can the Minister for Transport provide full specifications of the old Dennis buses, including but not limited to engine type, size, number of cylinders, power output and all other technical specifications available for these vehicles?

2100

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 138.

2105

Clerk: Question 138, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport provide full specifications of the new buses, including but not limited to engine type, size, number of cylinders, service intervals, power output and all other technical specifications available for the new buses?

2110

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, in answer to Question 137, although those buses were ordered by the previous Administration when they were on this side of the House, I shall be happy to oblige.

The technical specifications of the Dennis Dart buses are as follows:

Engine type: Cummins

Make (trade name of manufacturer) Dennis Dart

2120

Cylinder capacity: 3,900 cc

Number of cylinders: 4

Propulsion: Diesel

As to the answer to Question 138, which is exactly the same answer but for the new buses, the technical specifications for the new buses are as follows:

2125

Engine type: MAN

Make (trade name of manufacturer) Man-Caetano

Cylinder capacity: 6,871 cc

Number of cylinders: 6

Maximum net power: 213 KW

2130

Propulsion: Diesel

Service intervals: The manufacturer's first vehicle maintenance interval is recommended at 4,000 kilometres. As of yet, the vehicles have not reached such mileage.

Hon. S M Figueras: I am grateful, Mr Speaker, so the new buses are diesel like the old buses were.

2135 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, the new buses are...yes, I said propulsion of both these buses were diesel.

2140 **Hon. S M Figueras:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker, can the hon. Member just very quickly – and I do not have too many supplementaries on this issue – say whether the new buses have yet required a service of any kind in terms of their maintenance, not a regular service in terms of maintenance, anything that is not routine?

2145 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, at present, as I said, the service interval has not been reached yet, at 4,000 kilometres the buses will need to undergo their first service. Apart from that, the buses have had certain things checked which are I believe the ramps had to be checked, but again, if you actually give notice of that specific question then I can get more details for him. What I have based this question on is actually the characteristics of the engines, plus the service and the oil changes, filters etc. but no more than that.

2150 **Hon. S M Figueras:** I am happy to give notice of the question but just to clarify what I was asking for, was whether anything out of routine service had needed to be done on the buses, which the Hon. Minister says in relation to the ramps, but I will give notice of that question. I believe my learned and Hon. Leader of the Opposition –

2155 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, yes. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman cannot answer this question; it arises out of his answer, the answer in relation to maintenance, and also a question that I asked the Hon. Minister Costa in December of last year about maintenance.

2160 Has the Government now concluded a contract for the maintenance of the new buses which was still pending in December of last year when I asked this question of the Hon. Minister Costa? If it has, can he identify who has been awarded the contract in relation to the maintenance? If he cannot answer it because he needs notice, I will ask it next time round.

2165 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I would rather he ask the question next time round and I will have a fuller idea of the reply plus supplementaries to that because as I said, I do not think that has been concluded yet. But I really need notice of that question because obviously it will lead to other supplementaries and I would rather be fully informed by my team before I engage in that sort of debate on that question.

Q139/2015

Bus drivers merging onto Rosia Road – Resolving difficulties at Red Sands Road

Clerk: Question 139, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2170 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say how he has dealt with the difficulties experienced by bus drivers merging onto Rosia Road from Red Sands Road at the southern end of Rosia Road?

2175 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, an application was made to the Traffic Commission for the placing of a mirror opposite the bottom of Red Sands Road. This application was approved and the traffic mirror was subsequently placed.

2180 I am glad to report that the issue has now been resolved.

Q140/2015
Safety of red buses –
Works on Europa Road

Clerk: Question 140, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2185 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport detail the works carried out to ensure that Europa Road is safe for the recently acquired red buses to travel along it?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

2190 **Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, no physical works have been carried out to Europa Road as these have not been deemed necessary at this moment in time.

2195 The whole of Europa Road has, however, been assessed by HM Government Engineers, in conjunction with a firm of specialists Geotechnical Engineers. The assessment has included detailed surveys of the road using ground penetrating radar and intrusive bore holes to allow stability analysis checks to be carried out on the existing walls.

The conclusion of the assessment is that Europa Road can safely carry the weight of the newly acquired buses and a programme of monitoring is currently in place.

Q141-143/2015
Buses–
Increasing service levels

2200 **Clerk:** Question 141, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say when the pilot scheme for an evening bus service will commence?

2205 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 142 and 143/2015.

2210 **Clerk:** Question 142, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say to what extent the bus service will be increasing the level of its service and whether or not the Government is looking to acquire more buses?

2215 **Clerk:** Question 143, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say what changes the Government is making to the layout of the buses and at what cost?

2220 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the modifications that are going to be carried out to the buses is to modify the steps to lower the height of the steps.

2225 The estimated cost of this modification is €4,912. Although the new buses conform to EU approved standards, on-site meetings with the Senior Citizens' Associations, Social Services, Disability Groups and the Occupational Therapists were undertaken to better assess their accessibility. In view of the findings it was decided to modify the steps by adding one extra step.

2230 With regard to the evening bus service, there is no definite date for the introduction of this pilot scheme. All the administrative arrangements for such a scheme are currently being studied, which includes routes, timings and pricing etc. The Government will make an announcement in due course.

As part of the STTPP there are proposals to establish new bus interchange hubs. This would create more travel opportunities aimed at co-ordinating bus timetables more efficiently and minimising waiting times between services.

2235 The Government will also be looking at the possible introduction of new ribbon routes which will run at a lower level of frequency of the normal bus routes but would provide connections to key destinations like the hospital. In addition, the Government is looking to acquire more buses to service the Upper Town area.

2240 **Hon. S M Figueras:** I am grateful for the answer, Mr Speaker. Can the Minister for Transport say whether it is this intended investment in new buses that has promoted the insertion into the plan of reference to the possibility of starting to charge for the bus service at some date in the future?

2245 **Hon. P J Balban:** No, Mr Speaker. As I said when the consultants quizzed people and they went out on their surveys, some comments came back – in fact they were surprised by the amount of people who said ‘why should people not pay for the bus?’, people said why have a free bus service? They were keen, people thought it would increase the value of the service somehow, so as part of the... This is a perfect example, as I said before, it was something which could have been omitted because it could well be contentious because it is very easy to say, ‘Well if you are going to be charging, we want whatever.’ But that is not the point, the point was to show what people’s views are and we were surprised that we found quite a few people said ‘Why not pay for buses? Why should it be free? It is costing the Taxpayer a lot of money to have these buses, why can’t people contribute when they are using them?’

2255 **Hon. S M Figueras:** And you know, Mr Speaker, this is the reason why I have raised it in such a neutral fashion because genuinely the plan has been conducted in the way that it has and this is the kind of feedback that Government and the consultants have received, then fair enough, Mr Speaker, you cannot say anything other than that.

2260 However, Mr Speaker, I would say and I would perhaps caution the Minister, that it strikes me that if I were a bus user, if I were to use the bus every day to rely on it for commuting and I found that in the mornings when, as the plan says, the buses are full to the brim and often buses will go by because they are full and there is just not enough capacity, that as a bus user answering questions about the bus service, I may well be inclined to say, ‘Actually, why don’t we charge so we have less people on the bus?’ and frankly –

Mr Speaker: Charging does not arise from any of the three questions.

2265 Look, I did allow the Minister to reply to a question when I should not have allowed it. I allowed the question, I allowed the Minister, hoping that the Minister would just say yes or no, to give a short answer, and now you are no longer dealing with the subject matter of the three questions. You are now dealing with a question of charging, which is a totally separate issue.

2270 I have been liberal, I have allowed people to ask, I have allowed the Minister to give a short answer, but for heaven’s sake, you must not elaborate now and have a debate on whether people are going to pay for the bus service or not!

2275 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the guidance and I am happy to leave the issue there and bring it up in a question next month. But only to say, Mr Speaker, that it only arose in the context of the additional cost for acquiring more buses and covering that cost. I thought it was a convenient point to bring it together. So that, Mr Speaker, was the reason why I raised it, in the context of the Minister saying we are going to acquire more buses and therefore there was a cost that was going to be covered and the Minister himself did very helpfully provide – and it arises from the plan – a very full answer to which I thought a quick supplementary was appropriate.

2280 If it is the Chair’s view that it is not appropriate, then I am certainly happy to move on.

Mr Speaker: The Chair... I allowed him to answer, conscious as I was of the fact that the supplementary did not really... I thought well fine, let the Minister... He gave a reasonable answer, short, to the point. That should be it, I would imagine. We must not elaborate and now have a debate on something that does not even arise.

2285 So on the one hand I am liberal and I allow it, and then...

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I will raise it as a separate question in next month’s meeting of Parliament, but I believe that the Hon. Leader of the –

2290 **Mr Speaker:** ‘What is the Government’s policy about people paying for the buses?’ That is the question. Why not...?

Hon. S M Figueras: But, Mr Speaker, the point that I was getting to, Mr Speaker, but unfortunately I was unable to get to the point, was that there is a concern on this side of the House that consultation, good though it is, can if not tempered by the expertise and the knowledge and experience of the consultants on board and the Minister's own Department's guidance and leadership in this context... I was giving an example of how perhaps the responses might be skewed one way or another and how we needed to guard against being guided by those in a way that might not be representative.

I am happy to leave this issue for discussion by way of further questions next month, but I do believe that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has a supplementary to ask.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, before I ask the question, I have to declare an interest, in that I live in the Upper Rock and under the Rules I need to declare that.

But it arises out of Question 142 and the increase in the levels of service and I wonder whether the Government has thought about introducing a bus service for the Upper Rock. I will tell you why I am asking, there have been a number of people in the Devil's Gap area and also further down, the Bruce's Farm area and we are talking about 20 something families up there, asking me as to whether there are any plans in relation to the introduction of a bus service there that then links with Moorish Castle and Calpe on the way down.

I just wondered whether the Minister can provide some information in relation to that if he has any?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, as far as I am aware, this is the first I hear of a proposal in that respect. It has not come across, as far as I am aware as part of the consultation period, or even as part of your comments on the traffic plan, no-one has raised that.

I would not like to speculate, as there are just a few families up there and I think we have to be very careful. I do not think we can provide a bus service everywhere in Gibraltar because there is no need or there has been no demand and obviously it is difficult but again if it is something that is popular with people in the area, Government will look at everything that is proposed for sure. Then we will weigh up on whether that decision, on what the usage is.

If the hon. Gentleman would like to make that as a proposal, we welcome that sort of thing. But again, I have not heard any comments; they have come to see you, but not me or the Government.

Q144-158/2015
City centre traffic –
Government's plans

Clerk: Question 144, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say if it is in fact the case that it plans to exclude all non-public service, non-eco-friendly traffic, from within the city walls?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 145 to 158.

Clerk: Question 145, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say whether the Government will be providing dedicated parking spaces in and around the city centre for so-called micro cars?

Clerk: Question 146, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say which areas in the city centre are now earmarked to become paid parking spaces and when?

Clerk: Question 147, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say when the Government will start charging users for parking in the city centre?

Clerk: Question 148, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2350 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say if it is in fact the case that the Government is contemplating the introduction of a congestion charge for Gibraltar?

Clerk: Question 149, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2355 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say whether it will be introducing measures to encourage, incentivise and monitor car-pooling in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Question 150, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2360 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say what he means when in the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, the Government refers to the development of car sharing networks, car clubs, etc?

Clerk: Question 151, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2365 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say whether there are any plans to license a social car sharing scheme in Gibraltar along the lines of the Uber service?

Clerk: Question 152, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2370 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say whether the Government will be reviewing arrangements implemented in the area of St Joseph's School in the days following the announcement of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan summary?

Clerk: Question 153, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2375 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say where it is proposed to create resident parking schemes as raised in the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan?

Clerk: Question 154, the Hon. S M Figueras.

2380 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Can the Minister for Transport say whether it is in fact the case that one of the ribbon routes announced as part of the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan will be around the outside of Waterport Terraces?

Clerk: Question 155, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport detail the measures it is planning to make to the area of the Trafalgar Interchange?

Clerk: Question 156, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say what measures he is discussing with the Taxi Association to improve the quality of the service available to users?

Clerk: Question 157, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Can the Minister for Transport say how the Government expects to monitor and maintain appropriate levels of enforcement of traffic laws in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Question 158, the Hon. S M Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: And finally, Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Transport say what the Government means when it refers to 'longer term plans' in the summary of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services.

Minister for Transport, Traffic and Technical Services (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan does not suggest exclusion of non-public service or non-eco-friendly vehicles within the city walls.

At present, Government has no specific plan to provide dedicated parking spaces for micro-cars in and around the city centre, but doing so in future is not necessarily discarded.

Mr Speaker, the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan identifies pilot schemes which will be introduced along Linewall Road and Waterport Road. They will operate on a pay and display basis as is already the case in a number of areas around Gibraltar. An announcement will be made in due course.

The Government is not contemplating the introduction of a congestion charge for Gibraltar at present and there is no mention of this in the draft summary document of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan.

The plan makes recommendations aimed at encouraging shared car usage to reduce the number of vehicles on our roads. These recommendations will be fully considered at the end of the public consultation period. However, there are no plans at present to license a social car-sharing scheme in Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, the traffic and parking arrangements introduced in the area of St Joseph's School are part of a pilot scheme launched under the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan. This pilot scheme and others to follow will be constantly monitored. At present, the RGP who are on site are also monitoring the scheme on the ground and will relay any concerns, or otherwise, to the Ministry as they see fit.

In moving on, Mr Speaker, the draft plan states that residential parking zones have met with support in principle from stakeholders. Further engagements with the tenants' association and residents will now ensue in order to proceed with the pilot schemes in given areas, which will help address the serious misgivings of the residential parking scheme as laid out in the integrated Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, such as the lack of provision for visitors, carers and commercial vehicles. At present it is not possible to advise on the exact extent and number of zones that might be introduced.

The plan also incorporates a number of proposals to develop a new bus network for the use of core routes supported by ribbon routes. The introduction of one such ribbon route around and outside of Waterport Terraces was shown on the plan as a possibility. Work on core routes and ribbon routes is still ongoing. This, Mr Speaker, is still very much work in progress.

With reference to the Trafalgar Interchange, micro-simulation modelling has been used to examine and review concepts and proposals for different areas of the transport network. These have been used to develop the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan and once the consultation period has been completed and responses taken into account, further work will be required to develop the actual measures. It is, however, expected that these will include the introduction of a new pelican crossing, along Ragged Staff Road as well as changes to the northern area of Alameda Estate to improve pedestrian access.

Mr Speaker, enforcement of traffic laws in Gibraltar are currently monitored by the RGP. Furthermore, there are weekly briefings for the Senior Command on Operation Roadwatch. Offences and Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by the Highways Enforcement Officers. HM Government of Gibraltar will continue to work and liaise closely with the RGP to ensure that enforcement is monitored and maintained to the appropriate levels.

Mr Speaker, in using the phrase 'long term' within the context of the draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, this is to be taken as being a period of between six to ten years and beyond.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I am happy to state that consultations with the Gibraltar Taxi Association are presently ongoing to improve the quality of the service to users and any possible changes arising out of these discussions with the GTA will be announced where necessary. The purpose of these discussions are to help improve the service already being provided.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for the very comprehensive answer that he has given. He has in fact, on this occasion answered I think most of the questions I have asked and the supplementaries will therefore arise out of the answers that he has given, that I have scribbled quickly as he gave it.

In relation to the exclusion of non-public service, non-eco-friendly traffic and congestion charging for Gibraltar, I recognise that those are nuclear options if one can describe them like that. It is perhaps quite appropriate in the sense that they would be the hardest ones for a community of our kind to stomach. However, I mention them in the context of the longer-term solutions in the plan and the reason I ask that particular question, which he has answered by saying six to ten years and beyond, is because it strikes me, Mr Speaker, and unnecessarily this will be a political point, but I give due warning of it, that any revolutionary, any genuinely ground-breaking, gain-changing initiatives contained within the plan – and there are a couple, or three – are contained in the longer term outlook.

Would the Minister agree that the plan, good as it is as I have described publicly and repeat here, does not go far enough in terms of setting out ambitions with clearly set out goals and objectives in terms of the

development within this community of alternative forms of transport such as the personal rapid transit system and ultimately solutions such as congestion charges and anything but eco-friendly traffic being excluded from the city walls, as possibilities?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, in view of the very long winded prelude, can I just have the question? With all the hon. Gentleman just said, I am lost within... what is the exact question he is trying to ask?

Hon. S M Figueras: The question I suppose, if it can be summarised – it was complex but certainly not long-winded, Mr Speaker (*Laughter*) – whether the Minister agrees with the assessment that the plan can perhaps be accused of having fallen short in respect of setting clearly defined, long-term goals and objectives and that in doing so, it has failed to seize the opportunity of this momentum that we see in this community, of establishing what perhaps some might describe as lofty goals as something realistic that this community can achieve, including but not limited to, ideas such as excluding vehicular traffic which is non-eco-friendly and non-public service from within the city walls, or a congestion charge – which is not to say that a GSD Opposition would be pursuing that, but certainly I am keen to understand what the Minister's assessment of that is.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I sincerely struggle with the length of the questions. But I cannot agree, remember as I said before, this is a draft plan and if what the hon. Member is asking for is set times and dates similar to what they had when they wrote theirs out, which was a checklist – in fact I do not recall them having timeframes but I do recall a checklist of things as and when they were being done – I do not think the draft plan which has been produced now for the public deems it necessary to have timeframes of when we are going to do this or when we are going to do that and how long are long term and short term etc. As the plan comes out, as we develop the plan, if the Government feels that there is a need to pinpoint timeframes to these things, we will do.

A lot of these things are dependent upon others so there is a domino and cascading effect and you probably want to do things slowly to give people time to react and respond, time to get used to things. If we do these game changing changes, as the hon. Member is mentioning, people are resistant to change. People worry about change. Again, I do not want to go into St Joseph's, because we have had chance to discuss that, but even minor changes do... People are concerned whatever you do. So I think we have to be very careful how we roll things out, we have to be very clear that things depend on other things and we will need to take this as they come.

So again, I do not agree that at this stage of the plan there was any need whatsoever to set dates because dates need to be adhered to. That is something which is clear and the Opposition will hold us to account if I say by 3rd April we will have this done and it is not done. So at this stage there is absolutely no need in my mind that we should have gone the other route. Again, this is a public document, tomorrow is the closing date, let us see what comes from it and then we will have – within a short period of time hopefully – we will have the full document which will not only include the non-technical part of things which is what we have seen now but will also have the technical details of the plan which some people may be interested in, in learning the statistics and all the research that came as part of the plan.

Hon. S M Figueras: I am grateful for that answer. Moving on, Mr Speaker, in relation to parking and charging for same in the city centre, much as I personally and certainly this party welcomes the initiative because it is clearly one of the strategies that can be deployed in putting – not necessarily putting people off using their cars, but incentivising them somehow to get where they are going somehow else.

Much as that aspect of the plan might be welcome, how does the Minister, if he would be so kind as to answer, juxtapose that with the commitment to free resident parking so colourfully displayed in the general election manifesto in 2011?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, they are totally different things. A residential parking scheme is where people reside and there necessarily might not be a need to... Let us analyse what the reasons for paid parking are.

I think that you want to charge people to park so that they do not stay there all day, so in areas where there should be a flow of people, there should be a circulation of vehicles like for example the city centre. So if you want to go down to do a bit of shopping or go and have a coffee or you want to meet someone, then if we do not have areas which are dedicated to pay and display for example, people would not move their vehicles so it does not give enough opportunity for everyone to benefit from going into town.

So there are clearly areas which will require some sort of method which will allow people to go in and guarantee a parking and there are other areas of Gibraltar within more residential areas and there may not be a need for pay and display for that reason.

Now, there may also be a need to have combinations of, because as I said initially one of the reason why the previous plan was put on hold, was because there were many, many complaints that emanated from the North District Plan and that was because anybody going to visit a family member or anybody going in that wanted to deliver a plate of food to someone's home could not do so because there was nowhere to park.

So there may be reasons why one may wish to combine areas of free residential parking with a small limited number of visitors parking, which could be controlled or not by way of pay and display, it could be way of signage which says no more than 30 minutes like we have in Waterport Road, there are numerous methods which can be used to encourage people, so that people do not stay with the parking for long periods of time. So that is why I say they are different issues.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. Again, it flies in the face of the expression in their own manifesto for 2011 of the very good looking but unfortunately never to pass two-tier multi-level underground car park below Commonwealth Park, where the manifesto itself had a signed 'free parking' for residents and the manifesto itself said it would be free for residents of Gibraltar, not for residents of the area.

But moving on, as I am keen to do Mr Speaker, he also mentioned in relation to the question of the St Joseph's School reorganisation pilot scheme, has he now received a significant amount of representations from neighbours in the area and are these representations and concerns being taken into account? In particular, representations from people who frequent the area and are now unable to negotiate the area because they are diverted in another direction.

Could the Hon. Minister please provide us with a flavour of how it is that he is hoping to balance the needs of residents and users alike?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, referring to our manifesto whereby the hon. Gentleman keeps referring to our underground parking scheme, I must remind the hon. Gentleman that this was always subject to a technical survey. It was something that was placed in our manifesto, but it was always subject to a technical survey.

But the manifesto commitment still holds. We said that we would provide double the amount of parking in that area and this is something which you will be pleased to know will happen. Whether the package whereby the cars are kept is underground or multi-storey or floating in space does not matter. I think that what the commitment is that we will increase, we will double – (*Interjection*) I am sorry if what I am saying sounds ridiculous, because I think the constant badgering about that, I think is dead and it is ridiculous. This is why I think it requires that little bit of a ridiculous response back just to prove a point.

Now coming to the St Joseph's parking scheme, remember one thing as I told the hon. Gentleman earlier. Yes, there have been complaints by, in fact from members of the public. You will note that there have been numerous complaints from the same people, so if we look at the amount of complaints, there have been up to five, seven complaints from the same individual on different days saying, 'Well this is my complaint for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.'

There are people who are adamant that they do not want this to work because it affects them and as I said, a traffic plan is something which we have to understand will not be popular for everyone. But it is not this Government's intention or any Government's intention for that matter, to do something which is unpopular or something which is wrong or flawed. Everyone is seeking what is right and what will help everyone in the long term. And I have used this example when we were on *Viewpoint*, when Main Street was pedestrianised originally; the complaints were incredible, I am told. It was viewed that people did not want that, nightlife in town would cease, we were losing a road, etc.

If today you tell people that we are going to introduce cars into Main Street, there would be another uproar about that. So as change comes, people I think need time to settle (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) so it is not the Government's intention, just because a pilot plan is perhaps being perceived as not working to a certain sector of the community we are now going to turn back and say let us stop that because it is not popular, let us go with this instead and that is not popular either, so let us not do anything because we are going to rock the boat whatever we do.

I think it takes a brave Government to say that we are going to give this time and if it fails in the longer term, then we will have to re-assess. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) There are many things that can be done as well because we want this, we want people to come and complain and even say positive things about it because it is only this way that we will be able to see how it works. People are good to complain but they are not very good to say well it works.

You will be surprised that there have been no positive comments from people coming from wherever to drop their kids off there. That would be expected because these people now benefit from areas to be able to drop their kids or their grandchildren off or whatever, it is just the people who are in the area. Now we may have to adapt it, where at the moment there are around 30 spaces which are there for people to come and drop off their kids, maybe we need to bring that down to 15.

2590 Everything is fluid so as I said, we really appreciate the patience of people who live in the area, we appreciate the comments coming through, we will now be able to see clearly what the views are and the Government in due course will take a decision of what will happen.

2595 **Hon. S M Figueras:** One final supplementary, Mr Speaker and I am grateful for the answer that he has given in relation to that.

Would the Minister, however though, concede that perhaps some more time might have been given to the residents of St Joseph's to assimilate the changes given that they were announced in a summary which was published and was said to go to consultation but then the scheme was effectively, to use quite an unkind word, 'foisted' on the residents within a couple of days? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) That is the only point I would make in that regard and would the Hon. Minister perhaps concur that that might be a reasonable view to take?

2605 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I mean I see what the hon. Gentleman is asking and I wonder to myself, if we take too long to do things, we take too long to do things; if we do things quickly, it is done too quickly. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) So it is very difficult to get it right. But I think the purpose of... Remember what we have not done is conducted all our pilot schemes at once throughout the whole area, we have done something quickly just to gauge a response and I think it has been extremely effective because this was the intention of this, we are going to launch the traffic plan, we are going to set this pilot scheme up quickly. Yes, you think, let us give people time to read the document. Well, they had a few days, the plan was out on a Thursday, I think it was, and this happened on a Wednesday so people had a bit of time but we wanted to just throw something out there to see what the response would be and I think in that respect it has been positive.

2610 Now as I said, if we give people more time it is a problem, if we give them less time it is a problem, so I think it is a matter of opinion. You have your opinion and we have ours.

2615 **A Member:** Hear, hear. (*Banging on desks*)

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, may I –

2620 **Mr Speaker:** A very short supplementary I hope.

Hon. E J Reyes: May I please put a short supplementary, Mr Speaker?

2625 Would the Minister for Transport commit himself in this House that he will consult closely with his colleague the Minister for Education? Because in all these arrangements at St Joseph's Schools, and there are two schools there, we are taking into account residents and we are taking into account parents or grandparents who deliver the children, but there has been no mention... and I hope this House reassures the teaching staff of both St Joseph's Schools that their needs, since they have to be in school before the arrival of any pupils to open the gate and for safety reasons, that their needs will also be taken on board in the consultation process.

2630 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, there is plenty of consultation between the Ministry for Transport and the Ministry for Education. We do discuss ideas constantly and especially when it comes to school children: ideas that I may have that I pass to the hon. Member for his opinion, he then sometimes seeks the opinion of the experts who are there at ground level. So yes, Mr Speaker, the consultation not only does it exist but it will continue existing as long as we are here.

Mr Speaker: The House will now recess until 3.00 p.m. this afternoon for Chief Minister's Questions.

The House recessed at 1.08 p.m.