



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 4.00 p.m. – 7.54 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 23rd June 2015

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 4.00 p.m.

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

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

Order of the Day

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Appropriation Bill 2015 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi):

5 Mr Speaker, I have the honour to report to the House on the areas that form part of my ministerial portfolio, starting with Education.

Mr Speaker, the estimates reflect that the amount required in the year ending 31st March 2016 for salaries, wages and expenses is £44,767,000. The forecast outturn for the year ended 31st March 2015 is £42,168,000. There is therefore a proposed increase this year of £2,599,000 in the Education budget.

10 A significant part of the increase relates to personal emoluments and scholarships. Hon. Members will note a provision for 2015-16 of £15,707,000 for scholarships, compared to the forecast outturn in 2014-15 of £14,135,000; an increase of just over £1½ million.

Records confirm that 2014-15 saw 363 mandatory scholarships – this figure includes school leavers and students on Masters, PhD and other postgraduate courses – and 23 discretionary awards; a total of 386
15 additional individuals who are benefiting from higher education. As I have explained in a recent press release, nearly 900 students are now being funded to study an enormous number of courses in universities across the UK. Indeed, some are also being sponsored to study in other countries, such as Malta and Ireland.

Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to report that the Washington internship programme is now in its
20 third year. This has been a resounding success and continues to be in demand. Thirty-three internships have already been awarded over the last two years, with a further intake of 27 graduates taking up their internships in September 2015.

An additional £500,000 was also invested in training requirements for both the public and the private
25 sector. Twenty-seven Government Departments, Authorities and Agencies have benefited from courses in their field of work and all essential training bids for the public sector were met. Sixty thousand pounds was also invested in a number of distance-learning courses for Government employees. I am happy to say that a further £65,000 was spent on the provision of training for, primarily, staff at the Government's Human Resources Department, who were able to obtain an industry-standard qualification from the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD). The primary demand for funding for courses from
30 individuals from the private sector continues to be in relation to accountancy qualifications, AAT and ACCA, as well as maritime and port operations such as safety training. The Department of Education also continues to support the Gibraltar Insurance Association with provision for training with their professional Chartered Insurance Institute examinations and continues to fund IT courses for senior citizens.

Mr Speaker, the financial year 2014-15 saw a number of refurbishment projects undertaken to extend
35 and preserve the life of several of the older buildings servicing educational needs. These include: (1) the installation of a high-quality waterproof membrane to the flat roof of the original old building at St Anne's

School to prevent water ingress, at a total cost of £112,000; (2) waterproofing works and internal and external repairs were carried out at St Bernard's Nursery at a total cost of £64,000; (3) the south-west sea-facing facade and fire escape of Bleak House was refurbished at a total cost of £76,000 – the works undertaken include a full window replacement, which is sympathetic to the building's heritage and suited to the exposure of inclement weather; (4) waterproofing works were also undertaken on the roof of the assembly hall at Bishop Fitzgerald School whilst repairs were also carried out on the elevated fire-escape routes of both Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald School at a total cost of £119,000; (5) the construction of steel staircase to create a new fire escape at St Mary's School that exits via Prince Edwards Road for the total cost of £25,000; (6) a covered walkway to protect children when travelling from the main building to the lunch hall annexe at St Joseph's First School, for a total cost of £52,000; (7) the replacement of the drama studio flooring and painting works at Bayside School, for a total of £96,000; (8) resurfacing the playground at St Martin's School to rubber crumb flooring at a cost of £75,000; (9) maintenance and refurbishment works to all exposed timber supports at St Paul's School plus additional refurbishment works to the lunch hall and the installation of fencing in the perimeter wall for the sum of £62,000; (10) £10,000 was also invested in the purchasing of new drinking fountains for all schools.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, a further £50,000 was expended in response to emergencies arising from extreme weather conditions, including St Mary's School, St Joseph's School and John Mackintosh Hall Annexe, which suffered from severe flooding due to rainwater ingress during the severe rainstorm in February, whilst the roof and façade of Bishop Fitzgerald School was also damaged during the high winds and repaired.

The minor works programme for the current financial year will include: (1) the reconfiguration and refurbishment of multiple rooms within St Martin's School to create an extra classroom with the corresponding sanitary facilities; (2) internal refurbishment at Varyl Begg Nursery and the installation of mechanical ventilation and extraction systems to improve airflow and prevent recurrent damp issues; (3) shading canopies will be installed over the rubber crumb playgrounds at both Varyl Begg Nursery and St Mary's School to protect children from direct exposure to the sun and the excessive heat caused by the black surfaces; (4) replacement of the assembly/sports hall flooring at Notre Dame School; (5) general overhaul of the workshop facilities and extraction system at Bayside School; (6) replacement of old and malfunctioning freshwater mains supply pipes at Westside School; (7) the replacement of non-slip linoleum in schools, which is part of an ongoing programme of works.

Mr Speaker, in respect of major works I am happy to report that the building of the new St Bernard's First and Middle Schools is on target and will be finished in time for September 2015 opening. (*Banging on desks*) As I have outlined in the past, the conversion of the old hospital site into two new schools was part of the Government's 2011 General Election manifesto, where we said we would consider relocating in particular Sacred Heart School, and it is something that we are very proud of. The schools will also provide facilities for community sports and activities and will go a long way towards providing much needed facilities in the upper-town area. Worthy of mention is the central hall in the Middle School, which has a glass roof atrium and will be available for students and teachers to carry out social and educational activities. Both schools will also boast cutting-edge technology for teaching and learning, with several educational technology initiatives being piloted at the site as from September.

Mr Speaker, I am equally proud to be able to state that the construction of our new University of Gibraltar core campus is also on time and will be ready for a September start. (*Banging on desks*) Again, the University will also boast cutting-edge technology and a robust, managed Wi-Fi system to ensure that all parts of the campus have access to broadband internet and networking facilities: a necessity if we are to embark on the collaborative, multi-site educational projects that are planned with other universities and providers.

As I have outlined elsewhere, Mr Speaker, there will be four faculties at the University: Health Studies and Sports Science; Business, which will include specialisms in Accounting and Finance, and Law as well as ICT; Life and Earth Sciences with Gibraltar and Mediterranean Studies; and Tourism and Hospitality. The four faculties will provide a series of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes in collaboration with internationally recognised universities as well as locally developed courses, including courses for qualifications in Gibraltar tax and in Gibraltar law. The University will also be a centre for research in key areas associated with Gibraltar's culture, environment and heritage. Prospective students and interested parties will be able to find out more about the full range of courses available from the University website, which was launched last week. In the first 24 hours after going live there were 6,000 visits to the website from various parts of the world.

The core administrative team has already been recruited to service the needs of faculty and students. The executive team is currently completing the process to procure furniture and all the necessary equipment for the University.

I also wish to emphasise the fact that the University is designed to serve the needs of the community and the Gibraltar economy. With this in mind, we have created the Institute of Professional Development

and Continuing Education. This will provide courses leading to professional qualifications, public and private sector continuing professional development and courses developed to meet industry needs in Gibraltar. The Institute will be a proactive and forward-looking enterprise and the aim is to provide wide-ranging professional training opportunities in Gibraltar.

A further component of the University will be a language centre for the teaching of English as a professional language. Ever more, English is being seen not only as a useful everyday language but as the international language of business. There is a huge demand for this and the University of Gibraltar and its Institute of Professional Development and Continuing Education are ideally placed to service these needs and, indeed, become a centre of excellence.

Mr Speaker, interactive whiteboards continue to be the most widely used hardware for teaching and learning through technology. Over the years our teachers have become adept at using interactive whiteboards and these are now predominant in all our schools. This technology was first introduced locally some eight years ago and numbers have steadily risen to over 300 units. It is expected that they will continue to serve this purpose for several more years. As with everything, however, constant technological development in the field of education means that there are now newer devices coming onto the market and the Department of Education is looking into all possible options.

During the course of the year a team, composed of the Director of Education, a headteacher and a senior teacher, visited several schools in England. These schools have received nationwide recognition of their excellent use of technology and the Department of Education hopes that some of the very exciting uses of technology they witnessed can be adapted for use in our schools, particularly given that emphasis now seems to be moving towards the development of interactive hand-held devices for use by teachers and children. In looking to develop the use of interactive hand-held devices, such as tablets, a group of science teachers from the middle and secondary sectors attended workshops in the UK to look further into the potential of these devices.

Mr Speaker, There is a strong emphasis on developing the coding and programming skills of our pupils, and some schools have introduced coding as early as reception year. First and middle schools have used web-based programmes such as Tynker, Code.org and Scratch to introduce the coding elements of the computer science curriculum. A working group, composed of teachers leading this subject area, has continued to meet regularly and host workshops with a view to sharing good practice. A subject specialist from the secondary sector also attended a conference in London to receive advice on how to incorporate the changes and transition from ICT to computer science in this sector.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Education continues to work in conjunction with the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority, the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. These bodies have fed into a 'Control Your Privacy' campaign, directed at both teachers and pupils. Presentations with question-and-answer sessions have been held at Bayside School for years 9 and 11, Westside School for year 11, the Gibraltar College with two presentations for different cohorts, and for children in year 7. This year's campaign has more than doubled the number of pupils being addressed.

Applications for nursery placements are slightly higher in comparison to last year. There will, however, again be a nursery place available for every application should parents wish to take up the offer they receive.

Mr Speaker, the new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice in the UK now includes mental health for the first time. This is as a result of the recognition that there has been an increase in the number of children and young people being diagnosed with mental health issues. To keep abreast with such issues, the Department of Education sent two senior secondary teachers to a conference in the UK concentrating on 'Promoting Positive Mental Health in Schools' in November. They had an opportunity to attend some of the following workshops which were on offer. These included self-harm, body image, depression, exam stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and behaviour.

In March, a small number of teachers attended a conference organised by Childline on the issue of self-harm. The aims of the conference were to increase awareness about the topic and how to deal with a disclosure and to explore ways of supporting young people in our community.

In January, the occupational therapists from the GHA delivered a presentation of a fine motor skills programme to a group of first school teachers, which could be used to support pupils who were experiencing difficulties in this area.

In April, the educational psychologists offered an 'Early Birds Plus' course for parents of children aged five to eight diagnosed as falling within the autistic spectrum. The programme consists of eight group sessions and a series of home visits by the psychologists. The course aims to provide training, insight and, where necessary, reassurance to parents and carers with a view to building adult confidence, encouraging joint working with professionals across all relevant agencies, as well as establishing sound working relationships. This is a new course and in the future the Educational Psychology department will offer this course at least twice a year.

Mr Speaker, the Advisory Service has facilitated in-service courses in the following areas.

160 (1) Safeguarding Children Tier 1 training. This multi-agency team has continued to offer training. Individuals from different schools attend along with others from other agencies. In addition, two of our schools have set aside a whole school in-service day and invited individual teachers from other schools to attend.

165 (2) Dignified Care and Responsibility training. Restraining children should always be a last resort strategy. DCRT is commended for its focus on de-escalation techniques and serves to reduce the need to physically restrain children. This course includes both the theoretical aspects as well as understanding aggression and aggression cycles, triggers, self-awareness and risk assessments, as well as the practical skills needed to safely restrain children.

170 (3) Train the Trainer. In previous years this training has been offered by an outside agency to our schools in the form of an in-service day. This year the Department offered a three-day Train the Trainer course. Eleven teachers were trained and they are now in a position to offer one-day training to our schools. Three schools have already received training.

175 (4) Assessment and Reporting. In a response to recent changes in the National Curriculum, the Advisory Service is working on an assessment and reporting policy for schools. The National Curriculum working groups for the core subjects at primary level are also meeting in relation to the changes in assessment and reporting.

(5) Literacy. A small number of teachers have been on courses for literacy in the UK, in areas related to changes or increased emphasis within the new National Curriculum. The focus has been on guided reading, which gives pupils the chance to apply strategies they already know to new texts, and 'Talk for Writing' which enables children to imitate the key language they need for a particular topic orally before they try reading and analysing it.

(6) Language, Learning and Play. In-service on Language, Learning and Play through core texts in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Power of the Picture book for teaching mathematics is also being given by one of our teachers to the early years co-ordinators.

185 (7) First Aid Courses in schools. This is part of a rolling programme facilitated by the Advisory Service. This year the Advisory Service has started delivering twilight sessions to schools on self-evaluation. The underlying concept is that schools must think and learn for themselves as organisations. Therefore, teachers have been encouraged to tell us what they think, where their priorities lie, what things they do well and where they need help to improve. Furthermore, we have also started delivering a new revised code of conduct to teachers. This is a document designed to assist teachers to better understand what is expected from them and serves as a guide and code of ethics for teachers.

190 We have also taken on board the changes occurring within the primary and secondary sectors in the UK, such as the abolition of the National Curriculum levels, increased allocated time for school subjects, as well as new content. As such, we are distilling new assessment protocols to be used to track children's progress and ensure a value-added approach to teaching and learning. The new breadth and depth of the changed GCSE and A-level curricula and specifications has meant that our schools, under guidance from the Department, are working hard to recognise the curriculum and the time allocated to subjects: this is an on-going exercise.

200 The Department of Education will this year be introducing Spanish lessons earlier in the curriculum. This follows a number of requests from parents as well as from professionals. Spanish will now be delivered in first schools, with introductory programmes starting as from September of this year. (*Banging on desks*) A final decision as to the actual programmes of study, format and mode of delivery will be taken during the course of that academic year.

205 Mr Speaker, I am particularly proud of the fact that the Department of Education and a group of teachers are working in collaboration with the Heritage Trust, other stakeholders and experts to produce materials that will be used for the formal introduction of a programme on local history in our schools. Initially, the first core textbook along with its online materials and web-based content will cover the Great Siege. This again covers many requests we have had across the community for the formal introduction of local history in the curriculum in our schools.

210 I am happy to say that the Advisory Service has set up a flourishing homework club at the John Macintosh Hall with the invaluable help and support from a group of dedicated teachers from the Gibraltar College assisting students with GCSE and A-level study. Students are given the opportunity to attend and be able to work in a calm and controlled environment and be supported by monitoring teachers. These clubs have been taking place for the better part of this academic year and comprise of three two-hour sessions a week. The popularity was such that although the club started off with two teachers a third had to be recruited to assist in January as well as extra rooms having to be made available. This initiative, which was also a manifesto commitment, has been a resounding success. (*Banging on desk*)

215 The Advisory Service is actively involved in the push to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and to awaken in children a love of reading. It further wants to make mathematics relevant to their lives, to link the teaching and learning of mathematics to situations where children can see the relevance in sports, the arts,

220 music and economics. We want children to enjoy their learning and we want teachers to make their lessons
addictive so that children want to learn and find out more. Throughout this year the Department will be
delivering a series of master classes to teachers with a view to improving the delivery of quality lessons.

Mr Speaker, we must not forget those children who struggle, or who perhaps have not done as well as
they should have done. I am happy to report that the repeat provision afforded at both Bayside and Westside
225 Schools has given these students a second opportunity. Furthermore, both our secondary schools are now
firmly committed to offering an alternative vocational provision. The ASDAN, (Award Scheme
Development & Accreditation Network) which offers a more vocational, life-skills-based pathway, has
worked extremely well in Bayside School and is now being taken up in Westside. These alternative
230 programmes and qualifications are well established in the UK and offer flexible ways to accredit skills for
learning, skills for employment and skills for life. Key staff at Westside and Bayside are studying other
alternative programmes. The schools will shortly receive in-service training from an established
qualifications provider and awarding body, with a view to introducing an alternative BTEC (Business and
Technology Educational Council) pathway into our two secondary schools. BTECs offer work-related
235 qualifications for learners who are taking their first steps into employment, progressing through their
careers, or planning to enter university. They are a highly valued qualification to help to build core
employability and life skills in young people who may prefer a more practical, competency-based approach
to learning.

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

Furthermore, the Young Enterprise scheme continues to thrive and clearly enjoys the support of the
business community and is now firmly rooted in both secondary schools. I would add, Mr Speaker, that
yesterday was the final of the Young Enterprise company scheme, which I attended. The winners yesterday
245 will take place in the UK finals, which take place next week – that is on 1st and 2nd July. The winner was a
company called Biodiversity, producing a book, which I think has enormous promise and has already
shown that they can sell it as far afield as Canada and Australia through the internet and Facebook. They
are having enormous success and I wish them, on behalf of the Government, every success in competing in
the national finals next week. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, I turn to Justice. HM Government of Gibraltar again congratulates Michael Llamas QC on
his appointment as Attorney General for Gibraltar. *(Banging on desks)* Mr Llamas is the first Gibraltarian
Attorney General of modern times. Since he was appointed Chief Legal Adviser to the Government by the
previous administration, Mr Llamas has been shouldering the burden of much of the advisory work done for
the Government in civil matters. This appointment is appropriate recognition of his legal talent and hard
250 work. There can be no doubt that he will be an excellent Attorney General for Gibraltar who takes over
from Ricky Rhoda CBE QC.

In the same breath, Mr Speaker, HM Government of Gibraltar would like to thank Mr Rhoda, who has
served for 20 years, making him the longest-serving Attorney General in Gibraltar, *(Banging on desks)* for
the excellent and important work he has done over many years. His time in office has seen considerable
260 change, especially since the 2006 Constitution. I am very glad that Mr Rhoda, although stepping down as
Attorney General, has nevertheless agreed to stay on to assist with the work of the Attorney General's
Chambers. Chambers therefore continues to benefit from the vast experience and expertise which Mr Rhoda
has.

Mr Speaker, I turn to matters regarding legislation and I highlight some of the issues we have dealt with
and are currently working on. Mr Speaker, following the UK's so-called 'opt-in', 2014 proved to be a
particularly busy year with regard to implementing legislation in the area of European police and judicial
co-operation, also known as Justice and Home Affairs. As a result of this, a raft of legislation was
commenced on 1st December 2014, including measures in areas which until that date had not applied to
Gibraltar. The transposition of this legislation provides new and further opportunities for enhancing the
270 participation of our police and judicial authorities in tackling cross-border crime and serves to once again
demonstrate Gibraltar's positive approach and commitment to the implementation of EU measures and full
transparency with all of our EU partners.

The measures cover a wide ambit, from strengthening our legislation on the European Arrest Warrant
and combatting child pornography to allowing for formal co-operation between law-enforcement agencies.
275 Other measures include asset recovery, exchange of intelligence and information, the mutual recognition of
criminal freezing orders, confiscation orders, financial penalties, previous convictions and bail conditions.
These new important measures are already being used and tie into other administrative changes that have
been negotiated with the UK. As an example, only last month Gibraltar was able to effect the surrender of a
person subject to an European Arrest Warrant to Poland by transiting the prisoner via the UK.

280 In January of this year, the Government implemented new legislation in order to ensure EU-wide
protection for victims of violence. These regulations, which cater for both criminal and civil orders, mean
that persons who have been the victims of violence, and particularly those who have suffered domestic
violence or stalking, can be assured that orders made in one member state for their protection can and will
be recognisable and effective in other EU member states. This not only implements an important EU
285 obligation but also builds upon the work reported on in my address last year to strengthen domestic
legislation by creating new offences – for example, like we did with stalking.

Mr Speaker, the Government included in its manifesto a commitment in relation to legal aid and
assistance. On 25th September 2014 the Government published the Legal Aid (Fees and Expenses) Rules
2014, which replaced the previous 2012 Rules. This was completed following extensive consultations with
290 the Bar Council, the Registrar of the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice. The 2014 Rules (a) substantially
increase the rates payable under legal aid across the board, (b) allow, where a case is of exceptional
difficulty or complexity, regardless of whether it is a fraud case or any other form of criminal case, for it to
be certified so as to increase the remuneration payable and (c) ensures that outside counsel are paid no more
for their work under the scheme than local counsel would be paid. This new system properly balances the
295 need to ensure that persons receive adequate representation before the criminal courts and the need to
provide value for money for the taxpayer.

Further legislation in the area of the local legal system is being introduced in this session as the Supreme
Court (Amendment) Bill 2015. The Bill will amend the Supreme Court Act so as to set new training
requirements for barristers and solicitors who wish to commence practice in Gibraltar after 1st July 2015.
300 This regime follows consultations with the Bar Council and the Chief Justice and will ensure that persons
who wish to practise law in Gibraltar as barristers or solicitors are on an equal footing. Barristers and
solicitors will have to complete a practical training requirement at a local firm for a period of no less than
12 months, a part-time academic course in Gibraltar law that will be taught at the University of Gibraltar by
senior local practitioners, and a professional skills course.

305 Mr Speaker, on 1st November 2014 saw the commencement of the new Companies Act and the new
Insolvency Act, together with related regulations. These pieces of legislation are enormously important to
the sector and their commencement completes the Government's manifesto commitment in this area.

Mr Speaker, the Government is in the process of introducing proceeds of crime legislation, which
among other things will allow for the forfeiture or confiscation of assets arising from criminal conduct even
310 in the absence of a criminal conviction. This important piece of legislation also seeks to prevent the abuse
of our financial system and terrorist financing.

A Bill to consolidate Gibraltar's money-laundering laws and provide for the confiscation of the
proceeds of criminal conduct, its value and the civil recovery of the proceeds of unlawful conduct together
with the necessary investigatory powers was published on 4th June of this year. It is expected that the
315 legislation should be enacted by July of this year.

Mr Speaker, I turn to matters related to the Gibraltar Law Courts. In April this year and on advice of the
Public Service Commission, Ms Hazel Cumbo was appointed Chief Executive of the Gibraltar Courts
Service after having been substituting for the post since 2013 following the departure of her predecessor,
Mr Alan Davies. (*Banging on desks*) Mr Speaker, this is a welcomed appointment and I wish Ms Cumbo
320 every success in her role, and I know all Members of this House do as well.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Courts Service is constantly looking at ways in which to improve their
services, especially through the ongoing training and professional development of all staff members. In
addition, the management team and staff work hard to establish a solid administrative structure through
which the public can have access to the judicial system. In June last year the first meeting of the Court
325 Users Committee, chaired by Mrs Justice Prescott, took place. The Committee provides a very useful
interface between the various stakeholders involved in the administration of justice. Its role is to discuss
matters of mutual interest in order to improve the use of the courts and the service provided to its users. The
Gibraltar Courts Service fully supports this initiative.

330 During the past year the Gibraltar Law Courts have continued to maintain a high level of performance
and the services they provide have been further enhanced.

The Magistrates' Court continues to hold Second Court sittings on at least two days per week, resulting
in dates being offered for hearings that are six to eight weeks from the date of request.

335 Mr Speaker, in the Supreme Court the judicial complement of the Chief Justice and three Puisne Judges
has proved to be a great success. As reported last year, the vast majority of applications received at the
Supreme Court continue to receive notice of first hearing dates within five days of application and there
continues to be no backlog of civil and family applications waiting for first hearing dates. Furthermore, the
dates of those first hearings in respect of non-urgent applications are now typically within two months of
the date of the application to the court.

340 In respect of criminal trials I am happy to report that the small backlog created during October 2013 and July 2014 was dealt with and the court dates provided for criminal trials are now within two to four months of a request for a trial date.

345 In October last year the electronic diary system for the Supreme Court became fully operational. In addition to the formal listing notice, the new system assists court staff in dealing with enquiries relating to pending hearings as well as providing law firms with quick notification e-mails with dates set down for court appearances.

350 The Gibraltar Courts Service website continues to be updated and developed. General forms for both the Magistrates' and Supreme Courts, which previously could only be obtained at the Law Courts counters, are now available for download in pdf format from the website. Lists of legal practitioners, commissioners for oaths and public notaries are also available. Judgments for both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal from 2012 to 2015 inclusive are now available for download. Divorce, dissolution and matrimonial jurisdiction judgments are not uploaded unless they raise matters of general principle and have been anonymised. Furthermore, in order to make the website more user friendly, a search facility has been incorporated enabling users to conduct searches of the contents of the website, including judgments by case name. All reported judgments for the period 1812 to 2012 inclusive are now available from the judgments website and future reported judgments will be uploaded subsequent to their publication in the Gibraltar Law Reports volumes.

360 During last year the courts recording facilities were improved with the total replacement and installation of new software and some additional hardware. This new system has proved to be much more reliable and has greater functionality than the previous one.

All in all, Mr Speaker, the modern, responsive and up-to-date service provided by the Gibraltar Courts Service is a far cry from the system we inherited in 2011. (*Banging on desks*) I wish to thank everyone at the Courts Service, in particular the new Chief Executive, Hazel Cumbo, and the Registrar, Liam Yeats for their efforts and leadership in making this possible.

365 Mr Speaker, I turn to matters related to HM Prison. I am glad to report that generally it has been an uneventful year for the Prison Service. The Prison Board has characterised life in prison as 'relaxed and positive'.

370 In respect of population figures, the first four months of 2015 show similar figures when compared to 2014. Daily average inmate population figures for January 2015 stood at 48 prisoners, down from 50 prisoners in January 2014. April 2015 saw an average of 64 prisoners, up from 58 in April 2014. The average population for the last financial year stood at 53 prisoners, just up from 49 in 2013-14.

Between June 2014 and May 2015 there have been a total of 16 female admissions and 12 juvenile admissions.

375 This year, there have been, on average, 2.5 cases of indiscipline reported per month. Most of these are in respect of minor disciplinary offences, such as disobeying instructions from prison officers or using abusive or improper language.

This year has seen further improvements to the rehabilitation and vocational programmes on offer to prisoners. A new woodwork instructor offers classes in the afternoons. There is also a new drug addiction counsellor who attends several times each week and offers the '12 Step' programme. These additions complement what is now a comprehensive array of services that aid in the rehabilitation of offenders.

380 In April and May 2014 His Excellency the Governor presented a number of prison officers with Overseas Territories Long Service and Good Conduct medals and clasps. These are very deserving awards and I congratulate and thank these officers for providing many years of loyal and exemplary public service.

385 I turn to policing matters. Mr Speaker, the Government has outlined a number of strategic priorities, which have been taken into account by the Gibraltar Police Authority in the annual policing plan, namely to agree fresh targets in the efficient use of resources and additional road-safety measures; continually review its strategies to combat drugs-related crime; review how it delivers its services to the community, with continued emphasis on public communication and neighbourhood policing; and maintain Gibraltar's reputation as a secure and safe place for its inhabitants, workforce and visitors.

390 Mr Speaker, last year I informed this House that the Gibraltar Police Authority had approved the re-establishment of the post of Chief Superintendent, a position which has now been filled by Richard Mifsud. This has led to further promotions, the most notable of which are Richard Ullger and Cathal Yeats, who have achieved the rank of superintendent.

395 Mr Speaker, we are fortunate to have an exceedingly high-calibre officers in the RGP. They do excellent work for our community, dealing with both major and minor crime and security matters. This can be evidenced not only in Gibraltar. Our current Commissioner, Mr Eddie Yome, is presently the President of the European Association of Airports and Seaports Police and Vice President of the International Association of Airports and Seaports Police. We should be very proud and thankful to have a professional like Mr Yome not only managing our policing affairs locally but also at the helm of these important and influential international associations. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

400 Mr Speaker, to the Government there is no doubt that the RGP are worthy of esteemed recognition. The RGP, like other emergency services, ensure that we are protected day and night. The RGP are often on the front line of matters affecting the security of our community. In very many respects they are our protectors, keeping us safe and well at all times. The Chief Minister has announced that we will start a process of recognition and of bestowing honour on our emergency services, starting with the Royal Gibraltar Police, for which the RGP is grateful and which we thank the RGP for all their efforts, and they are certainly very
405 deserving of that honour.

In police work no two days are the same and the RGP has to be extremely versatile in order to cope with the different challenges that our officers have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Just to highlight a few examples, Mr Speaker, on Sunday, 6th April an RGP marine crew, whilst out on patrol in the area off
410 Europa Point, overheard a report by Spanish Maritime Rescue Service concerning a search-and-rescue operation in progress. The report concerned a white 6-metre vessel with two persons on board which was drifting five miles east of Europa Point. The RGP vessel, with the assistance of Windmill Hill signal station, located the vessel approximately six miles south-west of Europa Point and proceeded to ensure that the crew, consisting of two Spanish nationals, were safe and sound. The Spanish Maritime Service was
415 contacted and the vessel was then towed by them to the port of Algeciras.

A generator caught fire and exploded, as we have heard during the course of today, at Waterport power station on 19th April 2015. Although there was no need to evacuate residents in the area and no-one was injured, the RGP were very active in speaking to, advising and reassuring residents, as thick black smoke was billowing from the power station.

420 On 15th July 2014 a local man was arrested for the offence of stalking. A search warrant was executed at his residence, where a number of electronic devices and computer equipment were seized. During the course of the search a piece of cannabis resin weighing approximately 1.9 grams was also seized, for which he was further arrested. This was the first time that someone was arrested under the new offence of stalking.

On Sunday, 23rd November 2014, following numerous calls from members of the public, RGP officers
425 responded to a road traffic collision by the multi-storey car park on Devil's Tower Road. Two local males, aged 23 and 24, believed to have been travelling in the vehicle, were conveyed to St Bernard's Hospital suffering from serious injuries. A 27-year-old local man, the driver of a second vehicle also in the area at the time and believed to be travelling in the same direction, was arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving.

On the European Arrest Warrant, Mr Speaker, a 59-year-old Spanish national was extradited to Spain
430 following the execution of a European Arrest Warrant. This followed a request for extradition by Spanish judicial authorities who sought to prosecute the man in relation to an allegation of rape and sexual assault on a minor. The alleged offences took place in early December 2014 in Spain. Shortly after midday on 2nd January 2015 he was handed over to officers of the Spanish Policía Nacional at the Frontier.

In the early hours of Thursday, 12th March 2015, following an extensive investigation by officers of the
435 RGP Safeguarding Unit in conjunction with Interpol USA, a British national was arrested by RGP officers on suspicion of the offences of possession of indecent photographs of children, distribution of indecent photographs of children, taking and publishing indecent photographs of children, and voyeurism. He was subsequently charged with being in possession of indecent photographs of children and voyeurism.

I am thankful, Mr Speaker, to the RGP for the work that they do day in and day out. To them it is just
440 another day at work. To me, I am truly glad that they have the courage, dedication and professionalism to be there in the front line, doing the things they do to keep our children, friends, family and visitors safe all year around.

To do this, Mr Speaker, the RGP is required to have strategies, resources and the necessary assets in place. Her Majesties Government has made available to the RGP new premises at Watergate House in
445 Casemates. This will house a new RGP substation in the heart of town. The existing RGP office at City Hall will relocate to Casemates during the course of this summer.

The RGP relocated from its marine base at Coaling Island to a new purpose-built facility at Gun Wharf. The new Gibraltar Government Marine Section provides berthing facilities for all RGP vessels and a crane to service the fleet. Mr Speaker, the assets of the RGP at sea have been considerably increased during our
450 time in office with the addition of two interceptor vessels, two large patrol boats and several jet-skis. The RGP's new 26-metre patrol vessel *Sir Adrian Johns* was named and became operational in November 2014. The vessel, which was constructed in Croatia, has substantially increased the RGP's marine capability.

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

Two new general-purpose police dogs have been acquired by the RGP. Funding was also made available for the continued dog handler training required in order to properly deploy the dogs.

Following the request by officers for the issue and use of police body-armour vests the RGP has
460 invested considerably in the purchase of this specialist protective equipment, which is now being used by most frontline officers.

The RGP will this year be launching a pilot scheme in the use of body-worn video cameras with the aim of fighting crime whilst demonstrating transparency and accountability. The pilot scheme will allow for the RGP to establish the benefit of the cameras, which are already widely used by many forces in the UK. All footage recorded will be subject to legal safeguards and adhere to RGP internal policies and guidelines for the proper use of the cameras.

The Government will this financial year be making available funding for the acquisition of a LiveScan digital fingerprint scanning system. The system allows for the capturing of fingerprints electronically, therefore removing the need for cards and paper forms and making the current process faster, cleaner and more accurate.

Mr Speaker, as can be seen, this Government, when necessary and appropriate, continues to invest responsibly every financial year on all fronts, and the RGP is no exception.

Mr Speaker, the work of the Probation Service is to protect the public by the effective rehabilitation of offenders. This is achieved by tackling the causes of offending and enabling offenders to turn their lives around. To this end the Probation Service will be seeking to further develop its links with other stakeholders such as the Police, Prison and Courts Service. The intention is to create a more responsive, integrated and seamless service that will manage offenders in a more effective way to reduce serious crime. Probation officers provide a crucial service in assisting the various courts in determining the risk that offenders pose and how these can best be dealt with at the time of sentencing. In this respect, during 2014 the Probation Service, at the request of the courts, was asked to provide presentence reports in 134 of the more serious criminal cases. The vast majority of these were completed within the three weeks agreed with Courts Service.

Following sentencing, some of these offenders are placed by the courts on Unpaid Work Requirements, formerly known as Community Service Orders, and are required to undertake work under the direction of the Community Service Officer, who is an integral part of the Probation Service. During 2014 the Court made a total of 22 such orders, and so far this year we have already surpassed that figure. The tasks these offenders have undertaken enable them to make a positive contribution back to society and bolster their rehabilitation. They currently work with various community groups and public services on a wide range of projects. One such venture has been the complete refurbishment of the Garrison Library, in particular its grounds and gardens, which have seen a complete transformation.

In April of this year all of the probation officers undertook a two-week course in connection with the assessment and management of sex offenders. They are now fully qualified and accredited to UK standards to undertake these tasks. This work is undertaken jointly with the Royal Gibraltar Police.

The Probation Service also works closely with the Prison Service and provides the Parole Board with assessments for inmates eligible to be considered for parole. During 2014 the service provided 56 such reports, which resulted in 24 inmates being released on parole under licence, all of whom remained under the supervision of the Probation Service.

Mr Speaker, turning to civil contingency, in Gibraltar we need to be ready and able to deal with potential emergencies and disruptive events. These can range from an epidemic to deliberate attack or acts. Crises can happen suddenly – for example, an explosion or a plane crash – or develop gradually, such as a flu epidemic or a large fire. Over the last 12 months the Civil Contingencies department has engaged with frontline emergency and essential services in order to ensure that in a major incident they are not only able to communicate and co-ordinate effectively between them but, where necessary and appropriate, under the management of the Civil Contingency Committee – that is the C3.

Gibraltar is not immune from the rest of the world. The recent threat of the Ebola virus spreading to Gibraltar was real, and steps were taken to ensure that we were able to meet this threat by being prepared. The work of the Civil Contingency department is based on three main actions: risk assessment, preparation and planning, response and recovery. Using the Ebola threat as an example, the Pandemic Plan was put into action. The Civil Contingency department co-ordinated the departments and organisations that had direct responsibility under the Plan. This involved continued assessment of the threat, updating preparedness and the provision of equipment that would enable St Bernard's Hospital to manage any possible case of Ebola. This process was monitored throughout the threat period, during which the C3 met twice to monitor the situation and act as necessary.

In March this year, as we have already heard from the Deputy Chief Minister, we had an air crash disaster exercise, which went extremely well with all its aims and objectives being met. The new inter-agency major incident command support unit vehicle was utilised for the first time at this exercise. The exercise followed from lessons learnt during a previous exercise which was held in December 2014. I highlight this issue because I think it is important to carry out regular exercises in order to ensure that when mistakes are made they happen during an exercise and not during a real event.

Civil Contingency staff members are currently engaged in commissioning the telecommunication systems within the new co-ordinating complex at No.6 Convent Place, colloquially known as 'the bunker'.

This modern and state-of-the-art facility will allow Ministers and senior officers to effectively manage any incident using the latest technology and operating from an excellent working environment.

Mr Speaker, I am also happy to report that the Government has provided funds this financial year, under the Improvement and Development Fund, for the purchase of emergency equipment to be used within evacuation centres. This is the first phase of a three-year programme aimed at building up stocks of essential equipment and resources to be used if it were necessary to deploy a large number of people to areas of safety during a major incident.

I turn, Mr Speaker, to the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service. Mr Speaker, this is an important year for the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service, as it celebrates the 150th anniversary of the formation of a fire service in Gibraltar. It was on 20th November 1865 that an Order in Council established the Sanitary Commissioners of Gibraltar, the forerunners of the City Council, whose responsibility was to ensure that adequate resources to prevent and fight fires were provided in Gibraltar. On 16th June 1976 the Fire Service Ordinance was passed in the Gibraltar House of Assembly. The Ordinance set out the constitution, duties and powers of the Gibraltar Fire Service. On 20th November 2014 the City Fire Brigade was renamed the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service, a change that truly represents the modern and progressive role carried out by the Service.

The start of the celebrations commenced with the launch of the 150th anniversary stamps on 18th February this year. This was followed by group photos on 23rd March, a talk at the John Mackintosh Hall on 9th April entitled 'Bucket To Pumps (History of the Fire Service)', and 23rd July will see the launch of the book 'A Tradition of Service'. Other functions are expected to follow during the course of this year.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service does a truly fantastic job for the community. It is an organisation composed of people who dedicate their lives to protecting others and we are all very proud of the work and level of service that they provide. Their training and professionalism really does make the difference between life and death in situations where those precious few moments, the first minutes are vital for measured success.

During the financial year 2014-15 various officers attended a number of courses in the UK, mainly at the Fire Service College and other UK institutions, and in Gibraltar at various institutions and venues as required by the course in question, ranging from management to coxswain courses.

Furthermore, with regard to operational incidents as a whole, the GFRS responded to 1,403 calls, of which 116 were actual fires and 714 were other forms of emergencies. The balance was comprised of other requests, including 180 false alarms but with good intent.

In addition to call-outs that appertain solely and directly to GFRS resources, the Fire Control Operators have also mobilised the GHA ambulances on 4,655 occasions.

The GFRS is also involved in numerous statutory processes that require the issue of licences, such as building applications, certificate of fitness, petroleum licences etc. A total of 872 licences were processed in 2014-15.

The Service is involved in many other processes focusing on fire safety at home, work and in the community. This is comprised of talks, courses, drills, investigations and the distribution of booklets and leaflets.

Much is owed to our brave firemen who deal with high-risk situations; and when they are not, they are constantly training for it. Thankfully, in Gibraltar we do not have many major incidences of fire. Our firemen nevertheless need to be trained to the highest standards, because in any major fire the danger to loss of life is potentially high and there is usually a real need to make quick and informed decisions.

On 3rd December 2014 and 18th March 2015 the GFRS was involved and played a major role in the two major exercises, which I have already described, at the Gibraltar Airport, and has contributed significantly to the creation of the Gibraltar Air Crash Response Plan.

Throughout the year the GFRS has attended numerous incidents of varying nature, some placing considerable demands on the Department's resources. On 28th December 2014, a fire broke out within a storage compartment adjacent to and owned by the Sunborn Hotel. Given the operational requirements of such an incident, a recall of eight firefighters was implemented in order to cover for any other eventuality. In order to guarantee the safety of persons in close proximity to the incident, an evacuation of the Sunborn Hotel and surrounding structures was carried out. Thankfully, the blaze was brought under control without incident or further disruption.

On 8th May 2015 the GFRS was requested to attend a cave rescue at Lower St. Michael's Cave. Even though the incident did not escalate in terms of resource requirements, it was nevertheless prolonged due to the difficulties encountered by our rescuers in the extrication process and the environment in which they had to work.

Mr Speaker, a project management team has been established, composed of senior and sub-officers from the GFRS and a Government representative to plan – and are working on the plan – for the construction of the new fire station. A separate training area suitable for conducting fire and rescue simulations has also

been identified. The project management team has carried out a familiarisation visit to a number of UK Fire and Rescue Service stations and training facilities as well as bringing back invaluable information in respect of different hosing and breathing-apparatus equipment. The visit has proved invaluable as it provided first-hand experience of what is required from a purpose-built training facility – its design and layout, quality of construction – together with an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages and lessons learnt on building and operating a training facility as well as a new fire station.

Mr Speaker, I turn to end my contribution on international exchange of information. Mr Speaker we have Tax Information Exchange Agreements signed with 27 partner countries, 13 of which have been actively requesting information. All agreements have entered into force with the exception of Greece, Italy and Turkey. Italy has now ratified the TIEA with Gibraltar and we are expecting reciprocal notification for entry into force at any moment. Three further TIEAs are in the final stages of being conducted, concluded and signed.

Over 100 requests have been received and fulfilled by the Exchange of Information on Request Unit (EOIR) of Gibraltar Finance to date, with a further 50 or so received and processed by the Income Tax Office, the latter relating only to requests from Spain.

The processes put in place by the Exchange of Information Unit were reviewed by the OECD Global Forum and published in the phase 2 report ‘Implementation of the OECD standard in practice’ in October 2014. The 120-page phase 2 report examined 10 essential elements of Gibraltar’s record in exchange of information on request and individually rated Gibraltar as compliant in seven of the elements and largely compliant in the remaining three. Importantly, Gibraltar was not judged to be partially compliant or non-compliant in any of the essential elements reviewed.

No requests for information have been received under the multi-lateral convention.

Gibraltar has established a network of over 130 tax information exchange mechanisms to the OECD standard with some 77 countries, of which around 100 have entered into force. These comprise bilateral tax information exchange agreements; Directive 2011/16/EU on Administrative Co-operation in the Field of Taxation; and the OECD and Council of Europe Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance on Tax Matters.

Council Directive 2011/16/EU on Administrative Co-operation in the Field of Taxation is due to be amended by the end of this year by a new directive to provide for mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation. This will implement the Common Reporting Standard, or so-called ‘Global FATCA’, enabling automatic exchange of information with EU member states and extending coverage worldwide to over 100 signatories of the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement on Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information. The MCAA was signed by the Chief Minister on behalf of Gibraltar in Berlin in October 2014. (A Member: Hear, hear.)

As a consequence of the above efforts, Gibraltar continues its progress of removal from the so-called ‘tax haven’ lists. Poland has become the latest jurisdiction to update its schedule of countries and territories that it considers to be non-co-operative and thus discriminates against. Over the last six months or so, Canada, Estonia and Italy have also removed Gibraltar from similar lists.

Mr Speaker, before I end my address I would like to refer briefly to a matter for which I also have ministerial responsibility, and that is the small boats marina. Last year I informed the House that works on the marina had started. This year I am happy to report that works on the marina are well advanced, with an estimated project completion date towards the end of the summer. The project encompasses a 700-berth facility, a promenade for public use, as well as an outer wharf of around 600 metres for commercial use principally aimed at the super and mega-yacht market. This is a much-awaited and anticipated project which we are nearing completion on.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank my staff and all those who work in the various departments which form part of my ministerial responsibilities. Much has been accomplished in these past four years and I am grateful to all of them for their support, hard work and dedication, but in particular for rising up to the many challenges that we have all faced together.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Albert Isola.

Minister for Financial Services and Gaming (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to present my second Budget address in relation to the areas that form part of my ministerial responsibilities in what is our Government’s fourth Budget since the General Election of December 2011.

Mr Speaker, before starting, I think I would like to just make an observation or two in respect of what we have heard this far from the Members opposite, and in particular, Mr Speaker, in relation to the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution, where he put, it appears, political trust as a central plank of his Budget contributions; a surprise to me and, I am sure, to many other people, Mr Speaker, when you consider that in an election year you would have thought there would be maybe a proposal, an alternative programme, an

idea, a suggestion or something – but not in this case, Mr Speaker. Not even, I regret, to congratulate us on having got unemployment down to 190 people or having achieved corporate tax rates increasing in financial services and gaming since 2011 to 2015 by over 300%, or even on the new houses that have been announced or the park, or any of the different issues that have been done. But no, Mr Speaker, it seems and it is indeed ironic that the man who puts political trust as his bandwagon seems to be the only politician that I can recall having carried out as many political summersaults as he has, and it would be more akin to a political circus than a parliament. Nevertheless, Mr Speaker –

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A Member: And he is not here to hear it!

Hon. A J Isola: And he's not here to... I am sure he is listening carefully outside, behind the Chamber. **(A Member:** Shame!)

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Mr Speaker, I think it is also appropriate to thank Mrs Isobel Ellul-Hammond and indeed Jaime Netto for their many years of service, and particularly Mr Netto for his many years of service, to this Parliament in their final Budget session. *(Banging on desks)*

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And I think, although Mrs Ellul-Hammond will continue to serve the community in a new capacity with the GHA, I have no doubt that Members opposite from this side will be relieved to hear that Mr Netto won't! *(Laughter and banging on desks)* His contribution, Mr Speaker, in rewriting history *à la Jaime* is really quite incredible! *(Laughter)* I did not understand much of what he said – but that is normal – but the one bit that I did recall was his description of the Botanical Gardens as having been left into ruin and a ramshackle and a shadow of its former self.

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A Member: Like the Opposition benches!

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Hon. A J Isola: Well, Mr Speaker, I happen to have hosted an event last night at the Alameda Gardens, adjacent to the Lion's Pond, and I have to say, together with the former Undersecretary of State for the United States, who was with us, we were all blown away by the magnificence and beauty of the Botanical Gardens. **(Several Members:** Hear, hear.) *(Banging on desks)* And so, other than deride my good friend the Minister with responsibility, Mr Cortes, I congratulate you, sir, for what is an absolutely spectacular Botanical Gardens, despite what our friend Mr Netto may have to say. **(A Member:** Hear, hear.) *(Banging on desks)* Indeed, Mr Speaker, having heard him, I wonder where he has been these past three and a half years, because it seems he may well have been in hibernation. *(Laughter)* None of the areas that he touched upon had any regard or the slightest regard for the different areas that Members opposite on this side of the House have been dealing with, Mr Speaker. It is absolutely staggering!

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But finally, Mr Speaker, before I move on I must also thank Sir Peter – who unfortunately is also not here, but I am sure listening carefully from his radio in his office – for his many years of service to the community, sir. I find that whether you like, dislike, enjoy or do not enjoy his contributions, the one thing that you must have for him so, is respect. **(Two Members:** Hear, hear.) *(Banging on desks)* And Mr Speaker, I consider Sir Peter to be a personal and professional friend and I am grateful, as I am sure every Gibraltarian is, for the many years of service he has devoted to our community. And, I look forward to continuing to work with him in different capacities in the coming months and years, Mr Speaker. *(Banging on desks)*

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Mr Speaker, all Governments face challenges, *(Interjection)* and there is no doubt in my mind that the announcement by Barclays in October 2013 of their exit from retail banking in Gibraltar was one of the larger challenges that we have faced. The inability, through a lack of supply of people and businesses, to bank is a huge threat to any community and especially so to one like ours, which is essentially a service community.

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When the Cabinet agreed to launch GIB in December of 2013 we began to work through all of the objectives of what we wanted to see. We started with a blank piece of paper but with a very clear focus of where we wanted to end up: a modern innovative digital bank, independently managed on commercial terms, providing first-class retail banking services to our community. What we have today, Mr Speaker, is exactly that, although I concede our card and cheque book suppliers have let us down and we will overcome these difficulties in the coming days and week. It is, Mr Speaker, unusual for a new bank to open, let alone in the timescales that we have, and in those instances, Mr Speaker, a new bank would have some three months of testing before opening their doors; our bank, Mr Speaker, had barely three weeks because of the pressure of the impending closure of Barclays.

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We have, Mr Speaker, every confidence in Lawrence Podesta and Derek Sene and their staff at the bank, as well, of course, as the magnificent board of directors, and are extremely grateful to them for all of their complete professionalism in having achieved already what many thought was an impossible task. We are immensely proud of the launch of the bank and of course recognise and are thankful for the support and contribution of all those across the community who have worked with us in delivering this project.

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705 Mr Speaker, in the area of financial services we have continued and accelerated the push for new
 business, worked on the legal and regulatory framework to enhance and improve the business environment
 for all and introduced significant legislation to Parliament to further support this sector. I am delighted to
 say that all this has been done and made possible with the full co-operation and support of the Finance
 Centre Council, with whom we work on all of these issues. I am most grateful to the Council and the
 individual associations with whom we frequently meet and work through the many challenges we face.
 710 There is much more to be done, of course, and I look forward to continue working with them. As one of the
 members of the Council reminded me, the relationship they enjoy today with Government is a far cry from
 the begging and waiting for a meeting with the members opposite.

715 Mr Speaker, we will during this year, in partnership with the sector and the regulator, continue to deliver
 ground-breaking reform in legislation and regulation. We believe this investment will stand us in good
 stead in the years ahead, as a pragmatic, efficient and responsive approach to regulation will become ever
 important in the new world in which we all compete.

720 Our commitment to meeting international standards remains as strong as ever and has proven to be
 absolutely the right decision to take when elected back in December 2011. Our industry has always sought
 a level playing field and as we systematically challenge each and every country which blacklists Gibraltar,
 with the support of the United Kingdom government, we continue to drop from these lists as it is
 inexcusable for us to remain on them. Mr Speaker, we have not only entered into these commitments to
 exchange information but we have complied with them. As my learned friend, Mr Licudi has just
 mentioned, the OECD phase 2 report on Gibraltar published last October confirms exactly that. We are
 largely compliant in the effectiveness of our exchange systems, as are the UK and Germany – Mr Speaker,
 725 a staggering endorsement of the progress that we have made in this area.

730 In business development, Mr Speaker, I think it is fair to say that never has Gibraltar and its financial
 services sector featured in so many articles, interviews, features and positive news stories as we have done
 these past years, especially in the individual trade press and media. Never has Gibraltar been represented at
 so many events and exhibitions in this field as we have these past years. Never have we hosted flagship
 events in Bermuda, Hong Kong, London, Geneva, Zurich and Singapore, raising the profile of our
 jurisdiction still further, and in all of these with the full support of the industry in a planned and structured
 programme.

735 We have totally delivered on our promise to dedicate energy, staff, time and resources in the promotion
 of this sector, which they had all been crying out for prior to December 2011.

740 In the area of funds, under the direction of Phillip Canessa we have exhibited, sponsored and attended
 conferences in all the main jurisdictions that we are focusing on, including London, Switzerland, Hong
 Kong and Monaco, and will next week be visiting Singapore and Hong Kong once more to maintain the
 momentum on our drive to attract business from the Asian market with the sterling support and tireless
 work of our man in Hong Kong, Mr Jason Cruz. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)* All of
 these conferences and events, as well as the direct marketing by Gibraltar Finance in visiting professional
 firms in all of these jurisdictions, is carried out with the direct support and involvement of the Gibraltar
 Funds & Investment Association, for which we are of course extremely grateful. GFIA works closely with
 us both at a technical level on legislative and regulatory matters and also in our business development
 activities, and for this we are grateful and look forward to continuing this work together.

745 This year we have, for the first time ever, added a dedicated funds lunch event in London on the day
 after Gibraltar Day, at which we had close to 200 guests, the majority of whom had been invited directly by
 Gibraltar Finance to meet the local professionals attending the event. We have had excellent feedback from
 this event and hope to repeat this again next year. Further, Mr Speaker, we have, also for the first time ever,
 organised with Informa PLC a dedicated funds conference here in Gibraltar with both local and
 750 international speakers and close to 100 delegates, many of them from outside Gibraltar. We have discussed
 this for many years, the pros and cons of organising such an event, and I am pleased to say we have
 concluded that the event worked extremely well and are looking to repeat this again next year. On both
 these initiatives I am pleased to say that we worked closely with GFIA and will of course continue to do so.

755 In the field of private client work, Senior Executive Paul Astengo has driven through a series of
 legislative changes originating from a request by STEP to Government over six years ago and which have
 now come to fruition and are in fact before this House for consideration. The work to bring this legislation
 to this House has been significant and would not have been possible without the commitment of Paul and
 the private sector firms who have assisted us in the preparation, thinking and drafting of these measures. To
 each and all of them we are most grateful and I hope, as they do, that these new measures will allow our
 760 sector to continue to grow by increasing and expanding the suite of services available to our professionals.
 Gibraltar Finance has attended in this area some 24 events this past year, exhibiting and speaking at many
 of these. In addition, Paul has attended over 70 direct meetings with professional firms in the United
 Kingdom and Switzerland, often with private sector firms and presenting the Gibraltar proposition. We

765 believe that the UK and Switzerland are the main markets for this area of business and the combination of supporting events and direct meetings are the most effective way of driving new business to Gibraltar.

We are also considering our efforts in the area of Family Offices in close co-operation with the private sector, and also in the process of agreeing a closer working relationship with the Gibraltar Philanthropy Forum, who have done some superb work in the past and with whom we are keen to expand this further. Paul has also driven, with private sector professionals, the review of cryptocurrency, leading to a full consultation process and now a final definitive decision pending Cabinet approval.

770 We need to be engaging and innovative as we look for new opportunities, balanced always by our ability to regulate effectively and to preserve and protect our reputation as a leading international financial services centre.

Mr Speaker, the Category 2 Committee has now completed its work in reviewing our existing legislation and proposing widespread and innovative changes, which are presently under consideration. This product has served us well and its review was long overdue. There is no doubt that the proposals present us with an opportunity, albeit with its challenges, and we look forward to working through the detail with the Committee. I am most grateful to the members of this private sector who drove these proposals forward, especially Nicholas Cruz and Peter Montegriffo, with the enthusiasm and energy which so typifies our private sector whenever they are asked to engage with us.

780 Mr Speaker, we also continue to grow our social media presence as a method of increasing awareness to a wide yet appropriate audience. Our database stands in excess of 4,000 individuals, which we interact with almost on a daily basis. Our electronic bookshelf, hosted on ISSUU.com, now has some 90 publications covering the full range of topics that are of interest to our readers. These include self-generated fact sheets, articles, manuals and guides created by private sector firms. To date, these publications have been read in excess of 6,000 times.

Mr Speaker, in the area of insurance and pensions, Mike Ashton, our senior executive, has continued his drive to push Gibraltar into new areas of business and, of course, new markets.

790 Last year we received a letter from HM Treasury confirming that Gibraltar could access the UK part 7 insurance transfer business. Whilst it was not the statutory instrument we preferred, it was a significant step forward after almost seven years of non-productive negotiations with the United Kingdom authorities on this matter. Since last July we have been working hard to clarify certain aspects requested by the run-off industry and currently expect that the first application for a part 7 transfer from the UK to Gibraltar will be initiated during 2015. Once this process is clarified we expect and understand there will be significant growth in this sector and are in direct communication with a number of intended new entrants.

795 Mr Speaker, a further new area of business we have worked on this year has been the insurance linked security business (ILS). We have worked closely with the Horseshoe Group, headquartered in Bermuda, who set up an ILS working group with Government and international senior practitioners from across the ILS base. Following the FSC's publication of the ILS guidelines in September 2014, Gibraltar's first ILS transaction of €100 million by Lottoland, a Gibraltar-licensed lottery operator, was finalised in April 2015. This was little over 12 months since we formally announced our intentions to work towards being an alternative ILS jurisdiction at the largest annual ILS conference in New York. We are grateful to INEA for their confidence in our jurisdiction and we continue to work actively to promote Gibraltar as a European domicile for this business. I am, Mr Speaker, delighted by the progress we have made in this area. (A

800 **Member:** Hear, hear.)

We have continued, sir, the process of marketing and raising the profile of Gibraltar as an insurance jurisdiction with participation at key insurance industry events and conferences and extensive networking on a global basis. We continue to seek opportunities to add greater diversity to the current insurance sector, where the predominant class of business is UK motor insurance. We have had a number of high-level discussions with insurance groups that are interested in gaining a better understanding of the benefits and opportunities that Gibraltar offers to new applicants. Given the level of seniority with which we are engaging, it leads me to conclude that Gibraltar's insurance industry will continue to grow and to diversify.

815 Mr Speaker, following on from the work we completed in 2013, Gibraltar Finance has, since the autumn of 2014, been working closely with the FSC and their FSC pension consultant and industry representatives on new personal pension regulations to widen and strengthen the existing regulatory environment. A consultative document was published earlier this month and we expect the regulations to become law before the end of 2015.

820 We have also looked at a set of broad parameters to enhance the existing occupational pension regulations, and again, working closely with the FSC and local industry representatives, we plan to start on this once the personal pensions regulations have been completed.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has become a favoured jurisdiction for QROPS, but we want to expand the breadth of pension products to include contract-based pensions and pension schemes established with a PCC cell, subject of course to robust regulation, in order that Gibraltar can develop into a truly international pensions centre.

825 Mr Speaker, we are totally committed to ensuring that our regulatory regime is robust but efficient. We believe that speed to market and a practical and pragmatic approach to regulation is what the industry requires and are constantly investing in this process. There is no question that this is work in progress and we have some way to go before achieving, but I am confident we are going in the right direction and will get to where we want to be. I will continue to work closely with Samantha Barrass, the CEO of the FSC, and the Finance Centre Council to ensure we make this happen.

830 We are also working hard and investing in the new legal framework for financial services through the legal reform programme. This is a mammoth task, but I have no doubt that we will end up with legislation which will be very much more efficient for licensees, professionals and the regulator to navigate. I cannot stress the importance of this initiative for the sector and look forward to delivering this radical overhaul of complex and often clumsy legislation.

835 But, Mr Speaker, how has this sector performed in real terms since 2011? This House will recall the election noises from Members opposite that we could not be trusted to tackle the difficult challenge facing this sector and that it was, in effect, too big a risk. Well, Mr Speaker, the numbers demonstrate that this could not have been further from the truth. Against a background of continued challenges and a world economy struggling to get itself on its feet again Gibraltar has not just held its own, which would have been an achievement in itself; we have grown significantly by whichever measure you choose to consider. The Chief Minister has already referred this House to the data, but I do not apologise for repeating some of these. Jobs in our sector in 2011 stood at 4,083, 31st October, and at 31st October 2014 had increased to 4,643 – almost 600 new jobs in this sector, and I understand the numbers in 2015 continue to grow at a similar rate this far. I am sure this success will delight the Members opposite. The consequence of that is that PAYE receipts for the financial year 2014-15 have increased by some 14.5% since 2010-11. But, Mr Speaker, when one looks at the corporate tax over the same period receipts have increased by a staggering 325%. Good news for the sector, good news for the Government, and of course good news for the jurisdiction.

840 Mr Speaker, before turning away to gaming, I must pause and thank the team at Gibraltar Finance, so effectively and ably led by their Chief Executive Mr Jimmy Tipping, for their work this past year. They cover a huge spectrum of services from marketing to organising events, to exchange of information, to product development, to legislation, to Cat2 and HEPSS applications, and of course to the technical areas of the OECD, FATCA and our vitally important work in working with HMT and other countries on blacklists, all of which are equally important and critical.

845 I must also thank the Finance Centre Council and all the participating associations for their honest and genuine support in what we are seeking to do together, and of course Samantha Barrass and the entire team at the FSC, whom I look forward to continuing to work with closely.

850 Mr Speaker, in gaming, Gibraltar's undoubted success in the area of remote gambling is, we believe, something to be most proud of. We have been continuing to grow, and licensing at a rate of six applications or so a year since 2012. There are still some companies that we would love to welcome to Gibraltar and we are working hard to make this possible. All this against a background of serious challenges, including new licensing regimes across Europe and of course the UK point of consumption tax. We have done incredibly well, but need to continue to work closely with our operators to maintain ourselves at the cutting edge and forefront of this industry.

855 As at 31st March 2015 there were 33 licence holders, an increase of three on last year. However, since that date we have issued a further three remote operator licences and the *Sunborn* licence, so there are now 36 remote licence holders and two non-remote casino licences.

860 Members will be aware that during the course of this year the Government commissioned a review of the 2005 Gambling Act by four of our most experienced and prominent lawyers in this field along with our Gambling Commissioner. I am grateful to each of them – Sir Peter Caruana, Peter Montegriffo, Peter Isola and Peter Howitt – for sharing the benefit of their huge experience and expertise in this area with us to ensure that we end up with the best possible regime for our operators and jurisdiction alike. The work of the 'four Peters', as they are known, will lead to a series of proposals for significant changes in the way both remote and non-remote gambling facilities in Gibraltar are licensed and regulated in the future. Once these have been considered, extensive consultation with operators will ensue and their input will be invaluable to our evaluation. The review will capture and consider all aspects of gambling in Gibraltar and not be limited to remote operators or land-based casinos.

875 Mr Speaker, I must emphasise at this point that, although there are no significant deficiencies in the existing licensing and regulatory arrangements, we must ensure that our legislation offers to be at least as effective in the next 10 years as it has been in the last and that Gibraltar's reputation as a safe, responsible and transparent jurisdiction providing gambling services of the highest standards locally and internationally is maintained. Additionally we must ensure that gambling duties – remote, casino, machines, bingo, betting and pools – paid by all our operators remain fair and proportionate given the ever-changing and demanding tax and licensing environment that gambling operators are exposed to.

Mr Speaker, Members will also be aware that the GBGA's judicial review challenge of the UK's point of consumption tax has yet to be concluded. The ruling may come soon. Notwithstanding the decision of the trial judge, the Government is considering changes to the remote gambling duty as the model itself needs to better reflect the emergence of the B2B games industry developing in Gibraltar as well as the high costs of multiple and duplicative licensing, regulatory and duty models emerging across Europe and further afield for both B2B and the B2C industry.

During 2014-15 the gambling industry generally, and the remote industry in particular, continue to significantly increase its contributions to Gibraltar's economy. Remote gambling duties increased to £14 million from £11.6 million, largely due to an increase in the number of licences held by our licensees and an increase in turnover, as well as the previously mentioned increase in the number of licence holders. Corporate tax received from gambling operators for the same period, this last year, currently stands at £31.3 million, representing an increase of £3.3 million from the figure last year.

Mr Speaker, the impact of the challenges I referred to earlier has led to an increased cost base of the remote gaming industry in Gibraltar and internationally and the trend towards consolidation amongst operators has resulted in some modest reductions in the total number of staff employed in the gambling sector and corresponding PAYE contributions.

Mr Speaker, it remains the case that some of our operators continue to grow their base here while others are contracting; indeed, some are subject to merger and acquisition activity in part driven by the intention of reducing operating costs in Gibraltar and elsewhere. The Members will no doubt be aware, Mr Speaker, of the news this morning of Gala, Coral and Ladbrokes being in talks to potentially merge their businesses together. This is why we must ensure that the cost of doing business in Gibraltar remains as competitive as ever and we remain the first-choice jurisdiction and host to the remote gambling industry.

This Government remains committed to providing constructive support to the remote gaming industry and again this year I was pleased to be able to visit the globally recognised International Casino and Exhibition Conference in London and meet with a number of our licensees, as well as view the never-ending range of technical and operating developments in the remote and non-remote sectors.

We were also delighted for the first time ever to support the KPMG eGaming summit here in Gibraltar, which continues to grow from strength to strength. We are also excited by the prospect of the potential interaction between the industry here and the University of Gibraltar in a number of areas, including responsible gambling, all contributing to the centre of excellence we are working with the industry to promote in Gibraltar. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.) (Banging on desks)**

I must also thank the Chairman and members of the GBGA for their work and support this past year. Their constructive and professional interaction with Government is most welcome and beneficial to Government, the sector and our community.

As with financial services, it is useful to compare the performance of the gaming sector from 2011 to 2015 to see how we have fared in our management of this sector. The PAYE receipts have increased in that period by 37.9%, corporate tax receipts have increased by a staggering 318% over the similar period, and gaming duty has increased by 28% – all numbers which demonstrate the increasing strength and importance of this sector to our community.

I mentioned last year the excellent work undertaken by the staff in the Gambling Division, both in licensing and in regulation. It is my expectation that the revisions of the Gambling Act, gambling duties and the changing nature of the industry in Gibraltar and regulation elsewhere will lead to further responsibilities for the Gambling Division during the next year so that it too keeps pace with this increasingly complex and valuable industry.

I also announced recently my delight at the agreement reached with Mr Phill Brear, our regulator, to extend his time in Gibraltar and to assist us in ensuring that we have the time and resource to engage in our search for his successor in the years to come, to ensure we enjoy a seamless transition with his support throughout this process. We are grateful to him and his team for their superb work and commitment to the jurisdiction.

I must also thank Lorraine Britto and her team at the Gambling Division for their efficient and ever-reliable work during this year.

Mr Speaker, the Liaison Department was set up last year to facilitate interaction between the gaming and finance sectors and Government Departments. The concept has worked extremely well and been welcomed by both sectors. The ability to intervene and avoid issues has made the entire process efficient and helpful for the sectors, which was the intention behind setting it up. The work of the Department has extended from fast-tracking work permit and other applications to the Ministry of Employment to assisting employees facing redundancy from their employers in these sectors, to facilitate banking arrangements for the gaming community prior to the opening of Gibraltar International Bank. Support has been provided to companies across all Government Departments and filtering of employment opportunities has led to a close working relationship with the GBGA and the HR Forum to identify skills and services required by these

sectors. My thanks to Lizanne and Tania, who manage this small but effective unit in making the private sector interaction with Government smoother and more efficient across all areas.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to Maritime Services, an area that I assumed responsibility for following the reshuffle of portfolios last December. I would like to report on the Gibraltar Maritime Administration (GMA), which includes progress with respect to its commercial and regulatory sections. I must first express my gratitude and congratulate my colleague and friend, Minister Neil Costa, for his hard work and achievements in the maritime sector in the years that he was driving it. In respect of the GMA, in many ways he has laid the foundations for one of the most successful maritime registries in Europe, and I am grateful for his work. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

Overall, the Gibraltar fleet, both yachts and ships, has increased by around 3% between 2013 and 2014. This is despite increased competition from other registries and a challenging economic climate. The reputation of the Gibraltar flag as a high-quality register continues with the accreditation on the US Coastguard QUALSHIP 21 programme in 2014, as well as an increase in rankings on the Paris MoU league table up to number 21 worldwide. Just by way of comparison, the USA is ranked 26, Panama 36 and Spain 41.

The GMA's Seafarers' Section reported another record year for crew certification, with nearly 5,000 provisional and full-term certificates issued in that year. The GMA is the central authority for maritime training in Gibraltar and has enhanced its programme with state authorities. In the last 12 months GMA surveyors have been training Royal Gibraltar Police officers, fire fighters and Gibraltar Port Authority staff in a variety of technical courses and scenarios. The Department also manages the maritime cadet programme, which is co-sponsored with local bunkering companies. Currently, four cadets are undertaking training to be qualified as British ship officers.

Last year the GMA participated in a number of important marketing events, most notably the Cannes Yacht show last September and the ministerial delegation to Hong Kong, led by my colleague, Mr Costa, in November 2014. Both events have led to significant enquiries on the yacht and ship products respectively, including new contacts with vessel owners and two new ships for the Gibraltar Ship Registry directly as a result of that visit.

In September this year the Gibraltar Ship Registry will be co-sponsoring a series of major events at the London International Shipping Week, along with the other British Red Ensign Registries. These events include the official opening ceremony, which will have a Gibraltar presence, and the Gala Dinner.

Mr Speaker, as a final note, I am delighted to inform this House that the GMA, for the first time ever, will be hosting and sponsoring Gibraltar Maritime Week here in Gibraltar on the *Sunborn* in July. This three-day event will cover the main maritime areas of shipping, super-yachts and seafarers, and a number of international experts have been invited to give presentations and engage in workshops on the most important contemporary issues that affect that sector.

May I thank Richard Montado and Diane Soussi for their tireless and professional work this year and for driving this important Authority forward in the manner in which they have.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the commercial aspects of the Gibraltar Port Authority, a responsibility which I share in part with my colleague and friend, Mr Paul Balban. I am pleased to report that the initiatives introduced by the Gibraltar Port Authority to improve efficiency over the past 12 months, underpinned by the Government's targeted marketing strategy, appears to be having effect. It is essential that we get better at what we do and properly communicate with the market how we are progressing.

Levels of shipping activity for the Port across most sectors for the first four months of 2015 would indicate that the slowdown experienced in recent years might be coming to a rapid and sharp end. In our efforts to provide the full range of marine services, the GPA oversaw its first two successful LNG ship-to-ship transfers in our waters, **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks and interjections)* highlighting the highest safety standards applied by our people and reinforcing their enviable reputation across the maritime community.

The marketing strategy put in place by the GPA last year is working extremely well, further enhancing the Port's profile. Of note, in what was a first for Gibraltar, the Port Authority, in collaboration with the International Bunker Industry Association, hosted a two-day international bunker conference. This proved to be a tremendous success and we are already facing demand to ensure that this is not a one-off event.

Of interest, Mr Speaker, in 2014 more than 300 super yachts called at Gibraltar, and we will work further to increase this number in the coming 12 months. The Government is currently considering a number of proposals to increase berthing capacity and services available to the discerning super yacht owner, with announced plans for a new super yacht marina on the Eastside, at Ocean Village and along the new wharf being created by the fantastic new small boat marina. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

Finally, the GPA continues to actively engage with the local maritime community to consider ways of further improving our dynamic business, staying abreast of regional and global developments and solidifying our position as a leading port.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar is fortunate to have a Captain of the Port with the commitment, knowledge and experience that our Captain has, and to boot he is a Gibraltarian. I am grateful to Commodore Sanguinetti and his team for their professional work this year as our Port department grows from strength to strength.

1010 Mr Speaker, I cannot close without thanking my team at the Ministry, led by Julian Baldachino, who ensure that the Ministry functions without fuss and with the efficiency I have come to expect. I must also thank my secretary, Lourdes Piri, for her effortless support and professional work throughout the year.

1015 Mr Speaker, I believe it is appropriate that I close by thanking the private sector for engaging with us, both directly and through their associations, in enabling us together to continue to develop each of these areas. In financial services, in gaming and in the Port, I enjoy a first-class working relationship with the professionals and their associations. We enjoy a real partnership and it is our view that the only manner in which we can further develop and succeed is by listening to each other and by working together for the benefit of Gibraltar PLC and all those businesses involved, and we are totally committed to continuing to work in this manner in the years ahead.

1020 Thank you, Mr Speaker. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I propose that the House now recess for five minutes before we continue with the next speech – or in fact this time maybe for 10 or 15 minutes, given it is tea time.

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Mr Speaker: The House will recess until six o'clock.

The House recessed at 5.45 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6.00 p.m.

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

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Selwyn Figueras.

1030 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to rise to address this House on the Appropriation Bill for the fourth and final time before the end of this Parliament and a General Election before the end of the year.

1035 It is the practice in this House for the Members to make their contributions in relation to the Bill and to the Budget Book, the outturns and estimates and to then make general statements of party political positions, setting out by way of consolidation the issues that have been the feature of the last 12 months in politics.

This debate is, Mr Speaker, the opportunity we get every year to sit down, collate, organise and present political arguments on our respective portfolios without fear of interruption, as a general rule at least, (*Interjection and laughter*) or without indeed hindrance by the rules of question-and-answer sessions.

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A Member: Point of order.

1045 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Given that we are in an election year and, more particularly, given that time is ticking down to the end of my time and that of all those present in this Parliament, I also propose to revisit, as has the Hon. the Chief Minister, a variety of themes that have coloured the debates across this floor since December 2011.

1050 In dealing with my areas of responsibility I will touch lightly upon the figures set out in the Budget Book which, as ever, makes fascinating reading. In relation to planning, justice, traffic and transport there really is not very much to write home about beyond a handful of specific points which I will make once more this year in relation to the Justice portfolio, which I turn to deal with now.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his contribution to the debate. This is an area of Government business where largely there is agreement across the floor of the House.

1055 In the companies and insolvency context I can report that in my dealings with London professionals wearing my business development hat the concept of a new companies and insolvency regime has been welcome and, certainly from the professional point of view, a positive development in the message about Gibraltar plc's appeal as a centre for structured and asset finance transactions. The coming into force of the new body of legislation, a not insignificant series of changes, has represented a real shot in the arm for the purposes of selling the jurisdiction in the context I have just alluded to, being an insolvency regime which, although new to us, is certainly not new to UK practitioners, practitioners who can turn to a body of

1060 jurisprudence established in England and Wales familiar to those who practise this area of law. Having lost some ground over the years to other centres, I am confident, and expect that others in this room and beyond are, that we might now be able to work to recover some of that lost ground.

In relation to his comments on the Prison, Mr Speaker, I am happy to hear that the atmosphere at the Prison remains relaxed. Indeed, I venture to suggest that it might be even more relaxed given that they now get their weekend premiums following the Hon. Chief Minister's address yesterday.

1065 It is also welcome news to hear of all the EU initiatives that Gibraltar is signed up to in the context of co-operation, because anything that brings us closer to the European family of law enforcement is good news indeed.

1070 Finally, Mr Speaker, on the address of the Hon. Minister, I look forward to debating the proceeds of crime legislation as published and as he indicated would be taken during July.

In the Justice portfolio one issue stands out above the rest as a source of dispute between us, and that is the Government's handling of legal aid and assistance. It is an issue which, frankly, was worthy of probably a much more mischievous use than that to which we have put it. I have raised it on a number of occasions when the opportunity has arisen, and yes, it is one of those stalwart issues that is covered here every year – and with good cause, Mr Speaker. The background to it goes thus, and I am quoting a short excerpt from my own speech last year, saying that:

'The GSLP Liberal manifesto contains a commitment to increase the limits of qualification for legal aid and assistance and to explore other mechanisms to ensure citizens have appropriate legal representation when they need it. It goes on to say, and I quote:

"Although there is a draft Bill ready, these have not been increased for many years and a lot of people who should be eligible and need legal aid or assistance are not getting the cover."

1080 Despite the not insignificant amount of very good work that the Hon. Minister and his team have done in Justice, which I am very happy to point out to congratulate him once more, they have not delivered on the manifesto commitment on legal aid and assistance. Instead, Mr Speaker, what has happened is that in 2012, new rules on legal aid were published, effectively extending the gift of unlimited legal aid to four defendants in the Marrache case. The rules excluded defendants in any other complex cases other than fraud, a fact which the Minister himself conceded in accepting that there could indeed be complex cases not involving fraud. It is a matter of public interest and intrigue why this was done the way it was. Of course, in the most recent exchanges on this issue, in September last year, the Government sought to dismiss the suggestion that there was anything worthy of legitimate criticism in the change by alluding to legal advice that the Government had received from the chambers of my learned and hon. Friend, Mr Bossino, in the hope, one expects, that it might silence the opposition. What would certainly be quite improper would be for us to accept that statement and the Government's interpretation of the advice at face value when, as the Minister himself has conceded, there were other cases where the rules should, by implication, have been extended to apply. The lack of an indication as to what distinguished at the time one set of cases from another meant that no compelling enough reason for the differing approaches could be deduced from the Government's position.

1090 The consequence of the change in the rules in 2012 was the meteoric rise in the legal aid and assistance charge on the consolidated fund. In the financial year 2010-11 the amount of charge on the Consolidated Fund was £623,202. In the next financial year, 2011-12, which straddled administrations, that sum went to £1,049,863, an increase – given that everybody has developed a penchant for speaking in percentage terms – of 168% year on year. In the next financial year, 2012-13, which was the responsibility exclusively of the new GSLP Liberal Government, that sum shot up to £2,210,557, an increase of 211%. The next year, 2013-14, the sum peaked at £2,653,000, an increase year on year of 120%, but that increase year on year is not actually the most spectacular one. If you compare the figure for the financial year 2010-11 to the peak in 2013-14 of £2,653,000, it is a frankly astonishing percentage increase of 426%, Mr Speaker. Then, in 2014-15 that sum went down to £1,850,000, and the estimate for next year is £1.2 million. I suspect that it is not a matter of coincidence, that it is because the case is at the stage that it is at and that there have been the changes that there have been, that the figure will continue to drop.

1105 The position today, as brought about by the changes in the rules published in 2014 that the Minister himself talked about, is that if another Marrache case came along the kind of expense of in the region of £10 million to which this community was put would not happen again. What the new rules in 2014 did, as a transitional provision, was to ensure that cases covered by the old 2012 rules would, until the conclusion of said matters, continue to be covered by those rules. As you might have guessed, Mr Speaker, the Marrache case was the only case covered by this provision.

1110 The defence by this Government on this issue has, unlike their defence in other areas of policy, been weak by comparison. On early challenge by my hon. and learned Friend, the Leader of the Opposition, and in answers to questions a couple of years ago, the Hon. Minister said that they were not going to reform legal aid in a piecemeal fashion – but, with respect to the Hon. Minister, that is exactly what they did.

1115 They have brought before this House a large catalogue of legislation, one that they can – sincerely – be proud of, including very substantial items such as the Companies and Insolvency Acts of last year, but they have not yet got round to making changes to the levels of qualification for legal aid and assistance, which they suggested in their manifesto was so badly needed:

‘The Hon. Minister inherited draft legislation that had been prepared in consultation with the industry, and could have made to that draft bill such changes as circumstances or policy dictate today. What he cannot do, with respect, Mr Speaker, is to take the better part of four years in Government reviewing and considering draft legislation, one which the Hon. Mr Licudi told us he had in February 2012.’

1120 As I said last year, Mr Speaker, the issue came to the fore not just because it was an important issue in its own right, not because they had set it out as such in their manifesto, but because of the piecemeal way in which, by defining a class of defendants into which at the time practically only the Marraches would fit, the Government effectively wrote a blank cheque to one group of defendants.

1125 As I said, Mr Speaker, we could have made much more of this issue by incessantly and repeatedly reminding the electorate of the staggering expense in this case. I chose not to, but that does not alter the fact that the Government footed a bill to the tune of 0.6% of GDP, and that is based on the latest figure of £1.64 billion.

1130 However significant the growth, whatever the economic health of this community is down to, we cannot allow ourselves to be blinded by the many numbers and the many zeros we have been looking at for the last few weeks. Ten million pounds is not a sum of money to turn one’s nose up at, and the fact that such an amount of money was spent on one case, regardless of the result, cannot simply be dismissed as an anomaly without explanation, or indeed accepted at face value just like that.

1135 The story is somewhat different with the outcome and expense of the Giraldi Inquiry, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition touched upon the issue in his own intervention and we will all recall, some more or less fondly than others, the lengthy debate on the motion filed by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition which, by virtue of political devices available to 10-man governments standing opposite seven-man oppositions in 17-member parliaments like ours, became to my mind one of the most unpleasant and unsavoury days of my short career in this House.

1140 I was counselled earlier this week to speak about issues that matter to me during this, my final address in this Parliament, and I speak, as suggested, from the heart when I say that witnessing the Hon. the Father of the House delivering his piece on the motion, oozing as it was with barely contained fury and a generous helping of contempt for the chairman of the inquiry, I found it difficult viewing. Not difficult because of any notion that anything the Hon. the Father of the House was saying was either powerful or compelling enough, in my view, to diminish the importance of the conclusion of the inquiry. Not difficult either because the Hon. the Father of the House was in any way legitimately deconstructing the Chairman’s view
1145 of the behaviour of and evidence given by members, current and past, of the GSD Government during the period of time in question. No, it was difficult viewing of a display which turned out to be an example of how the parliamentary privilege and, of course, parliamentary practice could be used by a Member of this here Parliament to play to a party-political audience and, without even the slightest hint of remorse for his targeting of the chairman and his work, to make a mockery of an inquiry that had cost the better part of
1150 £4 million and which they themselves had commissioned. When the Chief Minister then rose to speak and described Mr Bossano’s intervention as a *tour de force*, I was even more surprised. (**Two Members:** Shame!)

1155 One develops a thick skin rather quickly (*Interjection*) at the sharp end of politics in Gibraltar, but I have to admit that I came away from that debate finding it impossible to fathom how smug – yes, smug – some of the Ministers looked at the end of that debate; a debate on an inquiry that they themselves had commissioned, as the collegiate Cabinet Government that they are, and then gone on to spend millions of taxpayers’ money on and which they had just witnessed the Hon. the Father of the House trying to rubbish, in addition to the reputation of the President of the Court of Appeal, and they seemed entirely comfortable with it – proud, even. (**A Member:** Absolutely.) Never mind, Mr Speaker, I suppose it is all part of the learning curve. (**A Member:** Absolutely.)

1160 Moving on briefly to touch upon planning before finally moving on to talk about traffic and transport – (*Interjection*) I am sorry, is that a...? Mr Speaker, the Hon. the Chief Minister, from a sedentary position, informs me that he is not the President of the Court of Appeal, but he is in fact just a member, and I am grateful for the correction.

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A Member: He is the President of the...

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, moving on to briefly touch on planning before finally moving on to talk about traffic and transport, I would like to start by congratulating the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister

1170 for the progress that he and his Department have made in this area. The fact that the minutes of the meetings of the DPC are now, as well as the agendas, published online along with the applications and supporting information in respect of Government projects are clearly positive developments, as is the holding of meetings in public.

1175 I would like to congratulate them too, Mr Speaker, for being masterful at identifying areas of policy where the Hon. and Learned Sir Peter Caruana, conviction politician that he is, had not given ground on and in respect of which they saw the opportunity to put easy and clear blue water between themselves and the then Chief Minister.

1180 What the hon. Members did with the DPC, along with a number of other initiatives in the time since they were elected, was to take areas of policy in respect of which they could easily, starkly even, cast themselves as the diametric opposite of the Hon. and Learned Sir Peter Caruana's GSD in 2011. The holding of meetings in public of the DPC is one such example. You see, Mr Speaker, by adding more people to the Committee and holding meetings in public they at once became the perceived standard bearers for openness and transparency in that context, and the effect of it was to placate the relatively small group of people who took issue with not being allowed to participate in those meetings, whilst at the same time effectively neutralising in large part any complaints and criticisms that typically flow when works start on
1185 any number of projects by saying it was all done in public. It is very true that you can please all of the people some of the time, or indeed some of the people all of the time; but alas, Mr Speaker, you cannot, however, please all the people all the time.

1190 The complaints about the process today centre – and we have issued statements to the effect – on the quality of the decision making when it comes to difficult questions of choosing one set of interests versus another. It is in the context of the decisions taken vis-à-vis the Rizzo bakery and the facade of the old Police Barracks, as two examples, that the quality of the decisions is called into question. (**A Member:** Exactly.) The decisions made by the DPC in these two scenarios, as well as say the decision to allow the building of rather a tall structure right smack in the centre of town in Town Range, have caused consternation and anger in some quarters, because frankly the people cannot vote a DPC out and replace it with another.
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Contrast those decisions with their decision some years ago not to allow the demolition of an entirely insignificant building with no heritage value whatsoever because of an in-principle objection to demolition. The make-up of the DPC today, with two Government Ministers sitting in the Committee and the Town Planner having the chair, means that there is no political accountability, certainly not a direct or technical one, for the decisions of this public body.
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The Government, by divesting itself of the power to direct or lead the DPC on applications by private individuals and entities, has effectively freed the Committee – and itself, arguably – of accountability at election time. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, those feeling sufficiently aggrieved about bad decisions could vote to punish the Government – out – for having brought about this state of affairs, but the Committee would continue in situ, doing what they do, taking the decisions that they see fit to take in all the circumstances, taking into account political factors, whether those are front and centre in their deliberations or not, when there is no apparent or overt political leadership of it. This is why we maintain the position in respect of which office should chair the DPC. It should not, in our view, be the *office* of the Town Planner because... and I stress the point that it is the office of the Town Planner, because in the past some mischief has been done and some misinterpretation and there has been misinterpretation of what I have said in the past, because it is not the person of the Town Planner, but the *office* of the Town Planner that I do not think should chair the DPC. It should be the office of the relevant Minister, whoever that may be from time to time.
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I talked last year, Mr Speaker, about the difficulties of the Committee in controversial decisions by making reference to the application by the GFA to build the Europa Point Stadium. The fact that some say that the possibility of hosting top-level UEFA football depends on having the stadium at Europa Point makes what are sometimes very emotive issues very difficult to ignore, and members of the Committee could be forgiven for letting such matters colour their judgment, which is not to say that they do, nor that they will. The point is that if, regardless of the prevailing sentiment at the time when the decisions are made, they are subjectively bad decisions in the eyes of a large number of the electorate, there is precious little that can be done to change the course set by the DPC.
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The Chief Minister might think it scandalous that I should be talking about 'power to the people' when his predecessor made no secret of being something of a control freak in many respects – that it is scandalous that I should be talking about these things when, under the previous administration, meetings would be held behind closed doors and minutes would never get published – but to such charges there are simple answers. That was the policy of the GSD then and it remains the policy of the GSD now.
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The situation we have today, which brings me to my final point in relation to planning, is that the Government appoints the Town Planner as the Chairman of the DPC, but its own projects are not subject to the DPC's approval; a GSD policy position which has survived the New Dawn and is doing really very

1230 well. This despite the fact that we are close to the end of the life of this Parliament and the fact that they committed to making the Government's projects subject to the rules in the manner they promised.

I wonder, Mr Speaker, whether the Hon. the Chief Minister has made peace with the idea that he will not be ticking every box in the manifesto, like for example the parking under the Commonwealth Park, and that the luxury of not needing the approval of the DPC will prove too hard to give away. I see the Hon.
1235 Minister for Transport does not like it when I refer to the fact that that commitment is not delivered. It is just a little unticked box at the end of the day.

And talking about the park – I can never resist talking about the park, because it really is quite magnificent that there is no parking under it (*Interjection*); yes, I have looked, it's not there – it brings me to deal with my final area of responsibility on which I will be addressing you today. I open my address on traffic and transport matters by citing a quote which I think, Mr Speaker, you will find rather apropos. It goes thus:

‘If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter.’

This is a quote I had originally heard attributed to Abraham Lincoln but which, upon investigation, is said to have originated in 17th-century France by the hand of a mathematician and philosopher by the name of Blaise Pascal, a scientist attributed with the clarification of concepts such as pressure and vacuums. In fact, pressure-measuring devices have the ‘Pa’ of the Pascal on them in his memory. The quote, I think,
1245 captures very neatly the idea that the use of succinct and pointed language always trumps verbosity and unnecessary diversion from the crux of the issue.

In the last few months, Mr Speaker, since the publication of the STTMP – I think the acronym is correct – we have had many exchanges across the floor of this House – (**A Member:** PP.) PP, thank you. I suspected I might be missing a ‘P’, despite our break a moment ago! We have had many exchanges across this floor, Mr Speaker, about... I will just refer to it as ‘the plan’, (*Laughter*) in this House and publicly too,
1250 about our differing views of this initiative that the Government hails as something of a game changer.

The Hon. Minister, who often complains about my use of language as being complicated or hard to follow, in question-and-answer sessions at least, paradoxically enough touts the length of the draft summary of the plan as – or rather the draft plan, as we established earlier – the draft plan, as evidence of the initiative's brilliance in what has become, in essence, a ‘mine is bigger than yours’ argument. Well, Mr Speaker, I hate to burst the bubble, but that is not what this is about. They have had the better part of three and a half years to come up with the text of the plan, which by extension of the concept captured by Pascal, should have been plenty of time to make the letter shorter. The plan should have been able to fit on a
1260 rolodex card by now.

You see, Mr Speaker, it may be lost on the Minister that length does not on its own make an argument stronger in much the same way as shouting does not strengthen an argument or make truth of a lie. Noise is just that. It adds nothing. It is for this reason that every time the Minister seeks to defend the lack of action on the ground of any real progress on our roads to tackle the traffic problem in Gibraltar by flicking through the draft of the plan, which goes to 30 pages and has over 70 images and graphics for good measure, he does a disservice to himself and this community by effectively dismissing the genuine and important concerns many in this community harbour about the traffic situation. Why would he be so dismissive? Why would the Minister for Traffic be so happy to effectively flick away the traffic problems of this community with a flick of the draft of the plan? Simple, Mr Speaker: the Minister does not appear to perceive the problem and it simply does not mean anything to him – but I will come back to this point a little later.
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The draft of the plan looks impressive, certainly; I have said so here, I have said so publicly. It is very colourful, it has lots of images and it really does help to capture the imagination when you have some images to guide your thought. I have already said openly and in this House that, if returned to Government, the GSD would not be so foolish as to take the investment so far of well over £½ million and consign it to the dustbin just because it was not our idea.
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I take no issue with the plan per se, though it is costing us Mr Speaker. In the financial year 2012-13, the cost was £87,561, the year after that it was £337,700, and last year it was £170,000. The estimate for next year is £243,000. The total amount to the end of the financial year next year will be £838,358. I do not take issue with the plan per se; I take issue with the fact that, in the first place, the GSLP Liberals clearly did not have a clue between them on what to do about traffic. So, effective as they are – as I have highlighted earlier in the planning context – in finding the path of least resistance, they committed to paying external experts hundreds of thousands of pounds to tell us what any number of local experts and stakeholders could tell us about how to tackle the problem in Gibraltar already: tackling the culture of car use in Gibraltar by encouraging people to use alternative forms of transport by providing an integrated public transport system with an improved and appealing/safer environment for people to walk and cycle in.
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1285 It is clear from the plan, Mr Speaker, that car ownership, and importantly car use, is still front and centre in the thought process behind the plan. One of the initiatives supposedly designed to reduce congestion in

1290 the plan is to make more short-term parking available in the Landport Ditch area, so that people who want to come to town to shop find it easier to park their cars. Mr Speaker, this is in a report that acknowledges the increasing congestion and lists reducing pollution and congestion as one of its main objectives. It is certainly repeated enough, Mr Speaker; hence the length of the document.

1295 This, allied to their manifesto commitment, which remains unmet, to deliver twice the number of parking spaces beneath Commonwealth Park, proves that this Government is not serious about tackling the traffic issue. It lambasted the GSD when in opposition, despite the step change that that administration brought about in the traffic context, and yet they are now failing in the same way they described the GSD as failing; only for them it is worse because the backdrop of their failure is their supposed determination to undo the damage the GSD allegedly did. But we did not kill the Gibibikes, Mr Speaker: they did. We did not bring buses to Gibraltar that the elderly or disabled could not use: they did.

1300 The starting point for them is clearly ‘the car is sacred, don’t touch people’s cars’. If they were genuine about this process and did not care about the electoral impact of their decisions they would have set about introducing charging for parking in the town area – and not cheap parking either; parking fees at a rate that would make someone living in Montagu Gardens and working in John Mackintosh Square think a few times about whether it is actually worth taking the car out, *pa darse palo con la gente* to find a parking. (Interjection and laughter) They might have also reintroduced road tax and calculated it by reference to annual mileage. They might have also overhauled the import duty system and based it on emissions, so that more and more people would be persuaded to make better choices with their diesel/petrol cars; because, as we have seen, the uptake of electric and hybrid vehicles has been quite slow. They might even have contemplated measures such as banning vehicular traffic from the city centre beyond public service vehicles, or even introduced a congestion charge – a real hot potato in London. They might also have spent 1305 the half a million they have spent on Mott McDonald so far on renewing or replacing the Gibibikes, or on getting some cycle lanes painted, with some advanced stop lines thrown into the mix for good measure.

1310 Maybe they could have even come up with a pedestrian crossing at Ragged Staff. Wow! That really is phenomenal! The Minister announced the completion of a pedestrian crossing at Ragged Staff in the same way the Hon. the Chief Minister announced the second-highest budget surplus in the history of this community, and in much the same way, or with much the same pizzazz, as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition retorted, that actually we are up to our eyeballs in off-balance debt. He does not tell you that it took weeks to complete a pair of traffic lights and access ramps and that during that time it was a *salvese quien pueda* affair of people running the gauntlet on the traffic during the school run because they were not sure whether it is or it is not a pedestrian crossing. He likes his lines on the road... [laughter] He likes his lines on the – I wonder why we do not get more. He also talks about the crossing by King’s Bastion. I must have been one of hundreds who wrote to him a long time ago, suggesting that it might not be a bad idea to do it before someone got killed.

1315 I have welcomed the things that they have actually done. I was very quick to congratulate them on the installation of the intelligent traffic light system on Queensway, as well as the roundabout by the Marina Bay/Ocean Village area, colloquially known, I think many of you will remember, as *la curva del Med* area, and even the pilot scheme for drop-off and pick-up at St Joseph’s school, which has not been without its controversy. Valuable and effective though those initiatives have been, none of them can be described as revolutionary. It is the mere execution, under the guidance of foreign experts, of an understanding and expertise which is home grown and was already here. There is nothing in that report that we did not already know. 1320

1330 The plan contains statements like:

‘The border crossing causes congestion’. [laughter].

What a shocker, Mr Speaker! Another one: [laughter].

‘In future, the problem will be bigger if left untackled.’

Amazing insight, Mr Speaker! [laughter].

1335 The plan, with respect to Mott McDonald, who have only done what they were asked to do, teaches the local stakeholders to suck eggs. It gets it wrong in one respect, however, Mr Speaker. It says that car ownership is the problem. Well, car ownership is only part of the problem. It is the car *use* that is the issue, because the cars parked at home do not represent a problem.

The GSD set about building car parks for people to park their cars at home and at the same time was embarked upon delivering an integrated public transport system. All the Government has done is to rid the community of the Commonwealth Parade car park, given us the park and has then spent the rest of the time frantically trying to make up the numbers of parking. Why didn’t they just say in their manifesto ‘We’re

1340 going to give you a really nice park – car parking be damned? It will not surprise anyone that the risk of electoral damage of eradicating 700 car parking spaces was probably too much for them to stomach.

1345 ‘In Town Without My Car’ had some great ideas at the last election too for using the city walls as a solution for walking and cycling, and it is good to see this incorporated in the draft plan yet to be finalised after the second or third, possibly fourth round of consultation. I have lost count, Mr Speaker. It is disappointing to be the lone voice criticising the Government’s lack of action on the ground, but I suppose they must be satisfied with just the fact of the plan and the adoption of an initiative rather than any substantive change on the ground. The plan Mr Speaker even makes reference to public transport issues that the Europa Point Stadium might throw up. Did anyone mention a *fait accompli*? Of the many initiatives listed in the plan, what is the Government waiting for to actually get cracking? The new bus routes? The introduction of bus lanes? Well, I mean Mr Speaker, I cannot wait to see that. They tell me there is no room for cycle lanes, yet they are going to make a bus lane along Waterport Road. There is already an effective solution in place for eastbound traffic, so I am really looking forward to seeing what it is they are actually planning to do there, Mr Speaker.

1355 Talking about Waterport and the Watergardens area, I mentioned earlier that the Minister has no sense for the traffic problem, in some ways similar to me: he walks and cycles as I walk and cycle, other than now in the summer when it is too hot and I am on my maxi-scooter, Mr Speaker but he also has access to the official cars and, frankly, parks wherever he wants. So he just does not get it, which is probably why he finds it so amusing that I keep applying a few Pascals of pressure on him to get the job done. I suspect, Mr Speaker, that, like sound travelling in a vacuum, my message is falling on deaf ears.

1360 The plan was always, I am certain, Mr Speaker, for the Government to let four years pass, fill them with consultation, planning and drafting, and then consulting, drafting and planning to take them to publication of the full plan on announcement of the election. I note that token provision for a new link road to the south and for the black cabs – two manifesto commitments that they will not deliver in this term of office – are now in the Budget Book.

1365 In the transport context, Mr Speaker, I have to alight upon the issue of the new buses, and separately the issue of the contract for advertising on the old buses and the bus stops. The red buses have caused much consternation. For all the talk of eco and user-friendliness, the buses have hardly lived up to the hype. That and the fact that the award of the contract went to Bassadone Motors and that the Government refused to disclose whether it was the lowest tender have caused what should have been a victory for the Government to leave a bad taste in the community’s mouth. The Government boast of their eco-friendliness, but they are just diesel buses. They are not electric, they are not hybrid, they are not powered by chip fat: they are diesel buses, Mr Speaker.

1370 The Big Publications issue is another example of where an allegedly impartial process resulted in the award of a contract ultimately to companies owned by stalwart supporters of the regime, much like the contracts for the solar panels, the lifts, the doors etc, but in this case it does not seem to have worked out. Since September last year when I raised the issue, I have been trying to obtain from the Government confirmation of how much revenue the Bus Company and therefore the Government indirectly is missing out on because Big Publications has not paid up. Even last week they still did not know. Had it not been for my enquiry last year, Mr Speaker, we would not be pursuing the contract debt as actively as we are, and I am hopeful that substantial moneys will be recovered and that a full account of the payments/commissions due to the Gibraltar Bus Company will be brought to this House.

1375 I also take the opportunity, before moving on to conclude, of reminding the Minister that the Bus Company’s website, in particular the mobile version – and it is something that I directed at the former Minister for Transport, the Hon. Neil Costa, last year, but busy as he has been it may have escaped his attention – that the website, in particular the mobile version, which appears to have been created using a free utility which places third-party ads on the website, looks absolutely atrocious, Mr Speaker. It does Gibraltar’s image and that of our Bus Company no favours whatsoever. I wonder if the Minister could let me know how much that cost and perhaps the Government’s brand consultants can cast their eye over it. *(Interjection)* More generally Mr Speaker... Ah, it didn’t. It didn’t. Ah great. I am told, Mr Speaker, that the website did not cost any money. It might be time to spend a little bit of money on that website. *(Interjections and laughter)* Mr Speaker, of all the Departments *(Interjections)* that have overspent, Technical Services and Traffic was not one of them, I seem to suspect. *(Laughter)* I think there was some kind of budget cuts imposed and nothing happened, so I am sure... And failing that, of course, there is Credit Finance, so... Mr Speaker, I am going to move on now to – *(Interjection)* Well, yes, and it is interesting that Pascal was also credited with developing some theory which is relevant in the actuarial practice and Credit Finance might also be interested in that.

1395 More generally, Mr Speaker, and to develop a little further something that I have only briefly touched upon, I want to return to the issue of emissions. I note that the Hon. the Chief Minister has reduced import duty on hybrid vehicles to 0% for importers and to 5% for private imports. I wish to take the opportunity to impress upon him the fact that many jurisdictions are turning, as he may be aware, to calculating

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1405 registration taxes on vehicles on the basis of the rated emissions of the vehicles in question. Whilst our system has served us well for a long time, I wonder whether I might be able to pique the Hon. the Chief Minister's interest into looking at this. You see, Mr Speaker, as an example of the kind of anomaly that arises from our system, a Porsche Cayenne Hybrid, which has rated emissions of 193g/km of CO₂ pays, if imported by a dealer, 0% and attracts a £1,000 bonus. However, a Ford Focus Ecoboost 1.0 litre has emissions, by comparison, of just 109g/km of CO₂ and yet that pays 12% and does not attract the bonus. The latter is the cleaner car and, from the local environmental point of view, the more desirable one. I understand that market forces may play a role here, but I am happy to discuss the issue with him should he consider it desirable to do so. (*Interjection*) Indeed, indeed.

1410 And that, Mr Speaker, brings to a close my contribution in this debate. I would just like to say a few more – it's just a couple of pages – brief words on the state of the nation address that the Hon. the Chief Minister gave yesterday on the economic performance of this place we call home. It is clear that much of the growth we have seen in the last few years is down in no small measure to the investment of the Government in major projects. There is nothing wrong with that, clearly, so long as there remains a sense of control and an objective assessment of what this community is, devoid of what our aspirations may be. Put simply, so long as we spend within our means there should be nothing to worry about. We see that private enterprise is also taking the wheel in relation to a number of projects, all of which are in principle positive for this place, but questions still arise which I hear every day, and I will just take the opportunity of letting you have some of those questions.

1420 If we have one less bank and the new international bank does things as it is required to do by the terms of its licence, then how is everyone going to get a mortgage for all the property that is going to be available to buy?

How did we go from a £100 million hole to spending like there is no tomorrow?

How exactly did we go from broke to spoilt-rotten in a couple of years?

1425 Well, Mr Speaker, some answers are harder to come by than others, and try as we may we certainly cannot get answers in the context of the construct that is the financing arrangement through the Savings Bank, Credit Finance Company Limited and Gibraltar Investment Holdings Limited.

1430 Should we consider contingent liability and actual liability? Who is right – us or the Government? Is there a right and a wrong? There are a lot of questions to which the answers are certainly not clear for the average person on the street. Many of the issues are simply too complex or too alien to men and women staying busy paying mortgages, paying the bills, giving their children the best start possible – concepts which exist only in the abstract for them. We come to this House and debate these issues as the political leadership of this small nation and it is our responsibility to do the best we can for the betterment and the improvement of all the lives in this community. The Government owes a duty to the people not to put party-political interests ahead of the greater good. It owes the people a duty, as the party elected to lead, to assimilate and to understand the challenges ahead, the party elected to develop a vision of where Gibraltar goes next and how we get there. It owes the people a duty not to get it wrong, like we owe the people a duty to keep the Government on its toes.

1440 The economic output data that the Chief Minister yesterday set out was by any means good news for this place: growth of 10.3%; economic output of £1.64 billion; full employment – over 24,000 in employment; record this, record that; massive percentage increase here, massive percentage increase there. I am sincere when I say that it all sounds like great news, and not just for me, Mr Speaker, but for my children too, because it means that the economy apparently continues to fire on all cylinders, that the financial services and gaming sectors that form a large part of the work I do as a professional and what keeps my family in the blessed lifestyle to which I think a lot of us are accustomed, remain healthy.

1445 The only dark cloud I see in the distance has the name 'Credit Finance Company Limited' on it, and were it not for the uncertainty of that view in the distance on an otherwise sunny day all the other issues we tackle here from time to time would seem that less critical, that little less important.

1450 I hope, for the sake of this place and for the sake of the community at large, that things continue to go well for Gibraltar and that we have many more years of plain sailing, on which it seems, Mr Speaker, the Government's economic and finance model is predicated. I hope too, Mr Speaker, that should we encounter stormy seas along the way, that this economy's engine room is up to the task.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

1455 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Steven Linares.

Minister for Sports, Culture, Heritage and Youth (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, this is my 16th Budget speech to this House, (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks and interjections*) my fourth as a Minister and my last before the next General Election.

1460 My responsibilities cover Sports, Culture, Heritage, Youth; Civil Rights, the Ombudsman and CAB; and Drug Rehabilitation.

The Ministry for Culture has been very active during the past four years since we have been in Government, and especially during the last financial year. Not only have we increased cultural grants and improved many of our facilities, we have supported and organised many events in conjunction with Gibraltar Cultural Services (GCS).

I will not repeat – as the Hon. Mr Netto did repeat things from the past – the mess we inherited from the previous GSD administration, where wage hikes were given weeks before the last General Election. Suffice to say that it has now been replaced by the Gibraltar Cultural Services on the cultural side, together with the Ministry for Culture.

GCS is a private company which is owned by former agency officers who now manage all the cultural facilities, organise or tender out traditional events such as the Drama Festival, which has seen a growing number of extra nights of plays with more of an international profile, the Spring Festival and all the art, story competitions and exhibitions. An event that was done this year and produced by GCS is that of the retrospective exhibition paying tribute to Mario Finlayson’s artistic life. GCS also oversee Calentita – which was tendered out and has become bigger and better, as promised – Miss Gibraltar, New Year’s Eve events and the reintroduction of the New Year Classical Concert, to name but a few. There are new events they now organise, such as the Festival of Lights, Gib Talks that started in January this year, and the workshops for schoolchildren in conjunction with the Young Shakespeare Company. All these events have proved to be a great success.

No-one can argue the great improvements that have been seen in the Mackintosh Hall that is managed by GCS. They have invested in new chairs, new tables, TV and audio equipment, projectors, internet services, blackout blinds, air-conditioning and many other things. The public toilets in the Hall are being refurbished to include tiles to floors and walls and new LED lighting. We have refurbished most of our meeting rooms, changing rooms, exhibition rooms and communal areas. New windows have been installed, as well as new flooring and painting and decorating the Hall in general.

The Library has gone through a total transformation. A large selection of military books, fiction, non-fiction and children’s books was donated by the MOD library last year, as well as library furniture and library supplies. Some of this has been added to our current collection; the rest will be added once we extend the library further. There are two more computers for public use with free Wi-Fi and an extra one for the administration reception desk. The Mackintosh Trust kindly donated three more computers for the reference section and the subscription of free university journals for students’ research.

One of our manifesto commitments was to have homework support groups, like my hon. Friend mentioned in his Budget speech in relation to education, and GCS together with the Department of Education are working closely to provide both homework and research assistance to students at the Mackintosh Hall Library. The pilot scheme, as my hon. Friend mentioned, was launched last year, which has proved to be a total success. Now GCSE and A-level students are taking advantage of this service that has qualified teachers from the college and schools at the Library to help students in their research.

Mr Speaker, a digital project is underway with the introduction of the Mandarin Online Public Access Catalogue. This will not only make the process of borrowing books more efficient, but library members will be able to look at books on offer and pre-book them via an online service.

The library facilities have also had new air-conditioning installed as well as LED lighting and new children’s’ furniture.

Works to the courtyard to extend the cafeteria and install a new guttering system has been approved by the DPC, despite the fact that the hon. Members mentioned about the DPC. It has been approved. I hope he is happy that these are approved. These works will continue very soon.

A substantial amount of money will be spent to replace the roof of the theatre, which had not seen maintenance for years and with the high winds this winter parts of it flew away.

GCS also manages the Ince’s Hall, and I can announce that whilst the conversion of the Gibraltar International Bank took place the theatre benefitted from having a new mezzanine floor with extra toilets and changing-room facilities, and a scissor lift has been installed to help with heavy props from the ground floor to backstage.

We have improved both the Mackintosh Hall and Ince’s Hall theatre technical infrastructure. We have invested in new sound consoles, a talk-back communication system, microphones, projectors and other technical accessories. We will soon be investing, in both theatres, on a new PA system, new lighting system, translation equipment and other theatre enhancements.

The Gustavo Bacarisas Gallery now has a new CCTV and security alarm system installed, as well as new internet facilities. Made-to-measure glass cabinets are also available for displaying secure items.

I am happy to announce that GCS now has in-house technicians who will manage all technical infrastructures of all the facilities, which now also include the open-air theatre at the Alameda Botanical Gardens, which I am sure Mr Netto did not visit when he went.

The Central Hall, another of the facilities managed by GCS, has had a new commercial kitchen installed and new curtains have been bought, which has enhanced the place for users.

1525 GCS has also been tasked to manage the Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery, which was inaugurated at the beginning of this month. Another manifesto commitment completed and one we should all be proud of. The City Hall is now under the auspices of the Ministry for Culture. The Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery is there and I will mention a little more about the City Hall later in relation to heritage.

1530 Montagu Bastion is now the Gibraltar Exhibition of Modern Art Gallery (GEMA). This gallery has been housing the Little Constellation Network exhibition, which will end in August. This project is part and parcel of our policy of exporting our artwork and learning from other small countries about our culture and theirs.

Ramps and user-friendly installations are being installed in all cultural venues and a portable platform is now available for outdoor events.

1535 A Performing Arts Academy will soon start in Flat Bastion Magazine. This will fulfil three of our manifesto commitments: learn an instrument; having an academy of performing arts; and establishing an orchestra. Works to the premises will commence within the next few weeks.

In October we will see the European Show Dance Championships hosted at the Tercentenary Hall. Many will travel to compete, which will fill our hotels and form part of our policy of events-led tourism.

1540 A total of 22 clubs, associations, bands, NGOs and others have benefitted from having allocated premises, as promised in our manifesto, and we will continue to identify places which we can allocate. I am happy to state that all these have been allocated using the system that was used by LPS. Before we came into government this was ignored by the previous GSD administration, who allocated directly to whomever they wanted not having any regard to those who had been waiting for premises, some for up to 10 years. New premises have been given to the Taekwondo Association at the North Jumpers Bastion. This is part and parcel of converting this area into a hub of martial arts groups, that is the Martial Art Centre, to which we committed to in our manifesto.

1545 We are currently working closely together with the Department of Education in order to provide and extend the community use of schools for cultural purposes. To date the Bayside School drama studio will be available for this purpose.

1550 Since we came into government our goal of creating events which attract many to come and enjoy them with us has seen the creation of festivals such as the Jazz Festival, the Music Festival and the Literary Festival. The Jazz Festival and the Music Festival were two of our manifesto commitments. Both are being run under the auspices of the Ministry for Culture. The Ministry for Culture has also supported the Gibraltar World Music Festival, the Gibraltar International Song Festival, the Fringe Festival and the Wine Festival. The Calentita, as I mentioned before, is our gastronomical festival, which has become bigger and better every year since we came into Government... as we said we would in our manifesto.

1555 All the events mentioned above are part and parcel of the Government's policy of events-led tourism. This includes the sporting events which I will mention later we support. Events-led tourism is attracting people to our shores and this brings money to our economy.

1560 On the sporting front a great deal has happened since we came into Government and also since the GFA achieved its international recognition as the 54th member of UEFA. A new building is being constructed that will address certain UEFA concerns, but these will benefit all sports. The new building will accommodate facilities such as changing-room areas for officials, delegates and teams; doping control centres; two TV studios; one media centre; press conference rooms; two additional bars; additional public toilets; reception areas; increased storage; press boxes; VIP hospitality areas. All the above fully accessible to all. All this will enhance the use of the area for international events and provide much needed upgrades in general facilities and spectator stands.

1570 Mr Speaker, it is with great pride and joy that within the overall sporting upgrade of facilities we have built a state-of-the-art Stay and Play building. The GSLA's Stay and Play programme for children with special needs was previously done in one of the Boathouse Vaults. Now this building has purpose-built toilet and changing areas; kitchenettes; cleaning areas for activities; perimeter padding; easy-access ramps; inclusive playground equipment and safe play surface. This summer's programme will use this facility, as it will be handed over to the GSLA shortly.

1575 The installation of an extra floor in the empty space above the hockey stand changing rooms, complete with accessible external access walkways, will enhance the Bayside complex and will provide much needed office and storage space for sports associations.

1580 Within the Tercentenary Hall, the old ground-floor lecture rooms have been reprovided on the first floor and will be kitted out to allow use by the general community. In addition, an extra small store and lecture room have been provided. The GSLA can now make use of a new boardroom to hold meetings and use for other things, and this was not previously available. In addition, the new reception area has improved the first impression that users to the facility get when walking into the facility and will enhance operations. Both the existing bar and cafeteria will be relocated and amalgamated as one, offering extra services to the general public and freeing up space for the GSLA to utilise and expand its services for other sporting projects.

1585 Both GSLA five-a-side pitches were replaced as they had become unsafe. The tennis courts required replacing as the turf pile height was affecting the actual playing of the sport in this facility.

1590 The hockey pitch has been limited in its use for years due to the fact that light was not provided and once it got dark in winter, approximately half six, no more training could be practised and this meant that the pitch was only used barely two hours daily. This was significantly hampering the development of the sport, whose league programme was limited to weekends. After long discussions with the MOD, NATs and other stakeholders, and to mitigate their concerns, collapsible pylons have been installed on the northern side of the field with shorter fixed pylons installed on the southern side of the facility. Extra floodlights under the canopy will supplement the extra lux levels needed. The GSLA has entered into an agreement with the MOD to facilitate the use of these floodlights. The works are now complete. Another manifesto commitment completed.

1595 The management of the GSLA will continue to improve facilities that have been neglected for years. This is the case with the squash courts and the offices. Further changes and refurbishment will take place in order to maximise space: allocation of hockey nets to maximise use and provide more centralised points for our Special Olympians; more studio area will be available once the relocation of the bar takes place; bin stores will be constructed on Bayside Road, which is a legal requirement; an overhaul of the hockey pitch sprinkler system plus the refurbishment of the squash court will also be done soon. The GSLA will continue with improvements and maintenance to equipment as and when needed.

1600 Mr Speaker, the GSLA took over the running of the GSLA 25-metre pool – not the municipal pool, like Mr Netto said; I wonder where he got the ‘municipal’ name – the swimming pool during our term in office and this has seen a great deal of improvements. Two months after we came into government the whole of the ducts of the air-treatment system collapsed. The air-treatment system had not been working for years and this meant that users were exposed to high levels of chemicals that are normally used to purify the pool water. Therefore further diesel-generated engines ran the filter and pump system. The cost of this was exorbitant. The installation of the photovoltaic system and dehumidifier replaced the previous not-fit-for-purpose system. The pump and filter system, together with the heating of the pool and the hot water in the changing rooms, now work with the solar panel system. In the last financial year a total of £85,000 in running costs has been saved from this system. All changing rooms, spectator and poolside facilities have also been refurbished. All this has been done on the 25-metre pool.

1615 I am happy to announce that major refurbishment work has already commenced in the other pool, which will include the installation of a photovoltaic system and dehumidifier that will replace the previous system, which was getting close to a complete shutdown and was beyond economical repair. It had not received any sort of maintenance since the facilities opened. The new systems will improve air quality and water temperature maintenance that were bordering on inadequate; provide savings in terms of water, electricity and fuel; conform to HMGoG environmental policies regarding carbon footprint etc; and reduce overall maintenance costs. In addition, the interior of the facility will undergo a much needed refurbishment, which will include essential attention to poolside issues; refurbishing of the changing rooms; reconfiguration of the easy-access/family changing rooms; replacement of flooring; general facelift; and tackling the issues which have been historical with the plumbing problems. This project will mirror the one undertaken in the 25-metre pool and will mean that both pools will have received attention during the current administration’s term in office. Contractors have been given very strict timeframes so that the works do not impinge on the peak summer months. This facility is one of the GSLA’s busiest so there is no good time to shut it down, so a period when the least amount of users would be affected was identified. In addition, continued use could have possibly meant extensive equipment malfunction and an extended closure.

1625 The state in which we inherited these pools goes to show the lack of commitment of the previous GSD administration to things that matter to our community.

1630 The Gibraltar Bathing Pavilion’s phase 2 has been completed and the facility is now open to the general public. The issues regarding the main pools have been solved with the main contractors absorbing the costs and maintenance will now be easier. Improvements have now been made in terms of accessibility to the sea and pools and the general public will now be able to enjoy this fantastic facility.

1635 The GSLA has and will continue with the highly successful and ever-popular Summer Sports and Stay and Play programmes. The new facilities mentioned before will enhance the Stay and Play programme this year. NatWest are once again sponsors and activities have been extended to include older age groups with the diversity of activities increasing year on year with the collaboration of other agencies and Departments such as the Royal Gibraltar Police, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Social Services and St John Ambulance to name a few, as well as a wide cross-section of the local voluntary sports associations.

1640 The Sports Development Unit has continued to promote and offer coaching courses and opportunities for volunteers, delivering several workshops that include child protection.

I would like at this stage to thank all those volunteers for their hard work and dedication they put in. They give a lot of their time. Without them, all sports will just not be able to function.

1645 The Sports Development Unit is also working closely with the GHA and the Physical Activities Association for Mature and Older Adults to increase and promote partnerships in terms of exercise prescription and cardiac rehab. These are at an early stage but are very much active.

1650 Given the stumbling blocks consistently experienced with accreditation through UK entities, the GSLA has made initial contacts with the University of Gibraltar about investigating the possibility of getting these accredited locally. The GSLA will continue with its courses, but having them backed by the University would be a major step. Quality assurance etc needs to be considered. Discussions are at an embryonic stage but look positive.

1655 A new GSAC committee was elected in September and HMGoG, through the GSLA, once again supported locally registered sports associations with participation at international events, improvements to facilities and sports development projects.

1660 This past year GSAC has also been asked to advise Government on matters not related to funding. The wealth of knowledge and experience held by the members of the Council was, in the GSLA's opinion, not being maximised and several contentious issues have been solved amicably and satisfactorily after the advice of the Council was sought. Some issues are still pending. This advice has also included to oversee for the GSLA that sporting associations are run in a manner that is acceptable to the international body they belong to; and for those that do not yet, to make sure that they are equipped to be able to form part of their international bodies. GSAC is also the body that decides the level of funding that each association gets when they have applied for this. The Government has this year committed five hundred thousand for this purpose. Five hundred thousand pounds – just in case... I do not want people to think it is euros, (*Laughter*) which is much less.

1670 In addition, financial support has also been given to both the Commonwealth Games Association, who participated in Glasgow 2014, and to the Island Games Association for Team Gibraltar's participation in Jersey, to be held next week. Our Government values our participation in international competition, since those who compete are ambassadors flying our flag and now even advertise the tourism brand of visitgibraltar.gi.

1675 The GSLA has also hosted and assisted, and will continue to do so, in events such as the UEFA Futsal Friendlies; the FIBA C Division under-18 Men's and Women's Championships; Champions League; the Europa League qualifiers; the Gibraltar Darts Trophy; the Junior Chess Open; various international Gibraltar chess opens; international rugby friendlies; Squash International Open; Gibraltar Regatta; Rock Master Ten Pin Bowling this year will see a revamped competition.

The GSLA have and will also continue to support non-sporting events, such as the Song Festival; various music festivals, summer months; the Classic Car Rally; the Harley Davidson Rally; international dog shows; and IDO European Dance Championships.

1680 As per every year, the GSLA facilities, including those offered through the Schools Community Use programme, have once again been oversubscribed and the GSLA facilities team are working hard, very closely with the Department of Education, in compiling a user audit analysing the use of facilities that has led to underused slots been reallocated to those on a waiting list.

1685 Due to Gibraltar's limited land mass and the increased participation level of our people in sporting as well as cultural activities, coupled with the fact that we are organising more and more events, creates a problem, but we are constantly trying to identify areas where these can be done.

1690 We have recently introduced a new pricing policy that, whilst offering the GSLA the opportunity to collect revenue from foreign groups and private entities wanting to use our facilities, it has also curtailed abuse by tour operators who were putting unacceptable pressure on local volunteer associations to fulfil their companies' commercial obligations, at times without prior notice. The HMGoG continues to welcome the visit of many groups that promote and develop the local sports and privately organised events above revenue collection, although this can go hand in hand; however, this abuse needed to be stopped.

1695 The GSLA is undergoing a general management restructure, the first steps of which should be visible soon and will provide the Authority with the tools to modernise its practices and policies. The integration into the HMGoG IT system is well under way and an online booking system is being designed that will form part of the e-government portal and will provide online booking services to those with access to the portal. Counter and telephone services will still continue, but the system should increase the efficiency of the service and curtail abuse. This will allow the Department to develop and release staff to deal with items which at the moment are left pending.

1700 The GSLA is also undergoing a rebranding exercise with the design of the new logo, designed by a member of staff, and the relevant paraphernalia that goes with it. In addition, the old website has been revamped and should be ready for launch soon, providing a one-stop shop for information and contacts on current events, news and relevant documents. Within the rebranding the GSLA will go live on social media, keeping the general public updated with news and events.

1705 Mr Speaker, King's Bastion Leisure Centre was managed before by the GSLA before March this year. On carrying out a cost-effective exercise in the centre... which was costing the taxpayer £2.6 million per

annum, we have now moved to reducing this substantially without affecting in any way the service provided. I am sure the hon. Member, the Leader of the Opposition, who uses these facilities, since he mentioned it once in a Question Time, has realised the difference in using the machines now. They have been all upgraded; everything is working perfectly, as opposed to how it was before. We have now moved to making this place work in a commercial way without increasing the costs to users, ending the contracts that were entered into by the previous administration, which includes some of the money of the £100-million black hole, was the contracts which was entered into by the previous administration. Mr Speaker, it meant that operators would spend, say, £100,000 in cost and make an income of, say, £50,000; then King's Bastion Leisure Centre Ltd would pay them the shortfall of £50,000 plus 30% profit. The incentive therefore was to spend more and earn less. Now most operators have moved to pay rent and to make their businesses work as any other commercial entity, therefore making huge savings.

Further, we are looking at ways in which we can reduce the cost of electricity that the ice rink consumes by seeing if solar panels can be placed on the roof to produce electricity and at the same time have air conditioning for the whole of the centre, since the one that was originally placed there by the previous administration was not fit for purpose. In fact, I can give you the information that the system was one for offices and not for a leisure centre, and within a year it was broken – and it cost in the region of £750,000. This is what we inherited.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management staff of the centre who have taken the brave decision to run the whole of the centre themselves – they were ex-employees of the GSLA; further, to thank some of the users of the rooms at the centre, who have had to, at short notice, make alternative arrangements to give way to the IT department to use these rooms to introduce the new ID card system. Suffice to say that once this is completed they will be able to return to using these facilities.

Mr Speaker, in the past year the Gibraltar Youth Service has undergone a number of significant changes, most noticeably within its structure and staffing arrangements. This has led to an increase in face-to-face work as we are reaching out to more young people. The administration role of the Gibraltar Youth Service is now based at the main office of my Ministry for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Youth at the City Hall, where the staff continue to provide support for the Youth Service. The professional complement of the Youth Service has been restructured to consist of a principal youth officer, two senior youth workers and five senior and community youth workers. In September 2014 four new youth and community workers joined the youth work team. The youth work team is complemented by supply youth support workers who provide support to the full time youth and support team. The Youth Service has been working with Human Resources in regulating the employment status and proper contracts have been issued. This will correct a longstanding issue affecting this group of workers.

In addition, to support the work carried out by the youth clubs we have once again offered the locally recognised and assessed courses in Understanding Youth Work to volunteers and prospective youth support workers. This year, trainees are able to select the assessed or non-assessed route. The non-assessed routes offer the trainees a certificate of attendance along with the chance to volunteer their services to various youth work projects. The Youth Service is committed to personal professional development and it has set up a skills audit of all its employees.

The youth clubs have now undergone significant refurbishment, and now, in addition to their current facilities, they have all received new air-conditioning systems and multi-media stations with surround systems. The Youth Centre has been upgraded and it now enjoys new equipment for photography and media projects, DJ booths and modern lighting equipment.

The Youth Service team has been committed to continue operating the four youth clubs. In addition to normal club opening hours, the team has also worked very hard to reach out to more young people and offer more weekend work of high value and quality youth work projects. The Youth Centre began opening its doors during the weekends, as we promised in our manifesto, as from 18th January 2014, last year.

The Youth Work team has been able to offer young people the opportunity to take part in new community projects with outside organisations. They have participated in charity work by helping the Cheshire Home Group with their flag day and manning the stand on the Mental Health Week, to name but two; the Luce Foundation project leading to a residential week in Spain, PSHE and personal support with both Bayside and Westside Comprehensive Schools and the College of FE; Social Services training programme, safeguarding children; working closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police neighbourhood policing units in the areas of the four youth clubs; organising treasure hunts, Halloween events and Easter projects that provide food hampers to vulnerable adults in the Community; a group of young people also took part in a Heritage Trust project to plant trees in the Upper Rock; trips to the Isla Magica, La Finca, in Alcadesa, Aventura Amazonia and many others, which I will not go through, but all these and more are what develop personal skills. Young people from the Youth Centre hosted a group from Wales and returned with them, visiting Wales for two weeks. This trip saw them do many fundraising activities in which they participated to pay for their own trip. A group of young people from Sweden visited the Youth Centre and both groups cooked and did many activities together. Their leader had previously been involved in a youth

exchange with the Gibraltar Youth Service in the late 1990s. All in all, a great variety of events that empower the young to develop their personal skills and to become caring people in our society.

1770 A Youth Forum has been formed to give young people the opportunity to share their views and opportunities on issues that affect them and our community. The members have had meetings with me, where they had the chance to put their views forward and make positive contributions to our community's development.

1775 Young people have been involved in a project to create a short movie on what the youth clubs offer as a way of attracting more young people to participate in activities organised by the Youth Service. The movie, called 'My Opinion Matters', has come about as a consequence of the fact that they know that we listen to them and value their opinion, and to this end I intend to meet with them as regularly as *they* deem necessary. The Youth Advisory Council has been re-established and will also meet regularly.

1780 As can be seen, the Youth Service is an extremely busy organisation and has been providing and successfully achieving these projects during the last few years. With the new youth and community workers in post, we hope to continue our successes and look forward to an even busier and promising year ahead.

1785 This year has also been a busy year for heritage and the coming year promises to be equally exciting. As I stated above, we have now completely undone the mess created by the GSD administration in relation to the Culture and Heritage Agency by replacing the cultural side by GCS. The Heritage side is replaced by the Museum team under the tenure of Knightsfield Holdings Ltd, together with the Ministry of Heritage – that did not really exist.

1790 Insofar as the Gibraltar Museum is concerned, it is now functioning under the terms of a management contract signed with Government, and I am pleased to report that the sense of having moved away from the agency system is palpable already. Among the improvements to the Museum this coming year, the 86th anniversary of its foundation, will be the complete reinstallation of its climate control system, important for the proper care of the collections and also for the comfort of visitors. The last financial year saw the repainting of the building that is looking like a property of significance which is deserving of a Museum. The entrance will be relocated to its original place. Now that the building has been refurbished it makes sense to have this entrance at the north-eastern corner of the building. As part of these changes, new displays will be opened as part of the Museum's ongoing programme of renewal. The recent open day was, yet again, an unqualified success.

1795 In relation to the involvement of the Ministry, we now have governmental oversight of our tangible heritage and archaeology that has been augmented and retained in house by the appointment last October of our own archaeological officer. Here, as well as all the other changes... has seen our heritage looked after even better. Our heritage filter is now stronger than ever, with direct liaison between the Government, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the Museum team and the private developers to iron out as many heritage concerns as possible before DPC. Our new heritage filter also provides expert advice to DPC itself as well as to different Government Departments and important stakeholders such as the Gibraltar Heritage Trust. This will streamline any heritage concern that may arise. Already the system is being put into place where developer-funded archaeology will be the norm rather than the exception, making Gibraltar increasingly compliant with our international obligations and current archaeological best practice in the UK.

1800 To this end, I am happy to report that the Gibraltar Heritage and Antiquities Bill is now at its final draft; A highly complex and encompassing legislation that will enshrine many of our heritage and archaeological concerns, providing a higher level of protection for buildings, sites and conservation areas than has existed to date. The bar will be set high, thereby providing the necessary baseline from which to seriously protect and preserve our unique heritage for future generations. The mantra throughout has been heritage protection that safeguards development, continued construction tempered by measured heritage mitigation. Needless to say, it has taken us four years to get right what it took the Opposition 16 years to fail on. This has been achieved with the participation of all stakeholders.

1815 The Ministry for Culture has been instrumental in a large number of projects, big and small, across the whole of Gibraltar, including minor works on the dockyard clock, Trafalgar Cemetery, St Jago's Arch, Eastern Beach Bunker, Giralda Gardens and others; plus major works on Montagu Bastion and the Main Guard, the Heritage Trust office. And I am happy to say that by driving yesterday via where Water Gardens is, the Estate opposite, I see that the Old Mole Head will soon be completely demolished, the building at the top, and will be soon exhibiting what it was in its former years and glory years. While in many cases these projects commenced last year, we can now report the satisfactory completion or near completion of all of these.

1820 In the case of Wellington Front, we are now well underway to opening the whole of the promenade linking Line Wall Road at the level with the John Mackintosh Hall to the King's Bastion Leisure Centre. This is a first phase that we hope to eventually link southwards to Rosia Road and north to the American War Memorial.

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The Northern Defences, long abandoned and derelict, is now getting the attention that it deserves and the contractor on site will continue to work on this unique site with a view to open it up to the public and to allow private entities to consider expressions of interest on the whole or part of the site.

1830 The City Hall is now exclusively for the use of cultural, leisure and historical events, as we promised in our manifesto we would do. As mentioned above, the Mario Finlayson National Gallery is now opened to the public. The Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery took only five months after it was first announced by the Chief Minister to complete. Not only does this speak volumes about the professionalism, commitment and dedication to work of my staff and of the Gibraltar Cultural Services, but also this Government's profound respect, appreciation and ethos of preservation of our culture, architectural heritage and identity as
1835 a people. This is only the first phase of bringing back this iconic building to its former glory. As most of you know, the Mayor's Parlour is situated on the first floor of the building and guests to receptions hosted by the Mayor were either not able to attend or had to be carried by people of goodwill up the stairs. Our Government's policy is to make places accessible to all. Therefore the second phase will be done in this financial year and will see a much-needed lift, which will go all the way up to the top floor. This will be
1840 followed by the refurbishment of the exterior of the building in order to cure the historical problems of dampness. Thereafter the rest of the building will be refurbished.

As for the future, we can look forward to a number of exciting heritage restoration and refurbishment projects, including the façade facelift of the Ince's Hall to complement the excellent work done on the Gibraltar International Bank; repair and restore the Grand Battery to continue from the works on the
1845 Northern Defences; and the active rediscovery and re-use of abandoned heritage assets such as military magazines, bunkers and buildings for use by clubs, associations, NGOs and others. The Performing Arts Academy mentioned above is yet another example of how places of heritage can be restored in a sensitive manner for our current needs.

This past year has seen intense activity with regard to the World Heritage bid for the site that has been named Gibraltar Neanderthal Caves and Environments. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport of HM Government of the United Kingdom is presenting this bid on behalf of HM Government of Gibraltar as their sole nomination for 2016. This speaks volumes for the quality and potential of the site and its outstanding universal values. The nomination dossier was completed and submitted on time and it is now in the process of evaluation by UNESCO. In addition to the preparation of the dossier, which has been carried
1855 out by the Gibraltar Museum after wide consultation with stakeholders in a formal steering committee, works have been carried out to the site and some are in the process of completion. These works have included cliff stabilisation and protection of the cliff above Gorham's Cave, removal of old scaffolding and debris accumulated on the beach over the years, repair of the steps leading down to Gorham's Cave and erection of new access into the caves themselves. Other works have included the beautification of the approaches to the site, particularly along Europa Advance Road.
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The assistance of other Gibraltar Government Ministries and Departments and NGOs should also go on record, as all have pulled together in order to be able to deliver on what has been and continues to be a major project with international recognition. We are pleased with the outcome so far but are not resting here. A five-year management plan has been produced for the site and has the approval of stakeholders and the Government. In order to continue this process we will introduce interpretation of the site and we will promote the site as a new tourist product.
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I hasten to add that the site's sensitivity means that access to the caves will be strictly controlled, but there will be viewing platforms at the Europa Advance Batteries from where the caves can be seen and understood. As part of this process I am pleased that we have been able to work together with the Gibraltar Clay Target Shooting Association in the beautification of the site that they currently occupy at the 3rd Europa Advance Battery. It is a good example of how the community can work together and rally round a cause, with everyone winning in the process.
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In order to ensure a balance between excavation and protection of the site, a five-year research and conservation strategy has also been prepared and this will run in parallel with the management plan. Recognising the importance of this aspect, an international committee was appointed, headed by a former deputy director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, to oversee the strategy. The excavations have now resumed in these important sites during June and July. To this end, extra staff are being recruited, amongst them archaeologists, researchers and technical assistants, as well as other administration personnel.
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Together with this bid, works have also been undertaken at the old Moorish Castle Prison site. A feasibility study is currently being carried out with a view to providing office accommodation, laboratory facilities and storage space for the UNESCO project. An added bonus is that the historic sections of the old castle walls and prison will also be opened to the public for guided tours, eventually linking to the Northern Defences area through Road to the Lines.
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I am also pleased to report that this year's Calpe conference will focus on the Neanderthals, appropriate in the year of nomination, and that an impressive line-up of top world speakers has been prepared. The conference will take place in the brand new premises of the University of Gibraltar between 24th and 27th
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September, a fitting tribute to the academic and learned nature of the conference. I am happy to have collaborated with my colleagues in the Education to make this possible. In fact, by working in the collegiate approach that our Government has instilled, it has meant that collaboration between Departments has worked in many areas linked to heritage. The opportunity to have refurbishments in the Museum building was taken up to install new entrances to the attic, including new swift and bat boxes in key locations and this was done in collaboration with the Ministry for the Environment. I am sure Mr Netto will be very pleased to know that we also have now have swifts coming more to Gibraltar. I am pleased to announce here that the swifts have taken immediately to these new nest sites and we are making a contribution here to the conservation of these birds. (A Member: Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

Finally, and continuing with this Government's commitment to research, I can announce two important pilot research projects. (*Interjection*) The first is in collaboration with the University of Cambridge in studying the human remains uncovered at the Old St Bernard's Hospital site, constituting a uniquely large and historically significant sample, the study of which provides an important historical snapshot into the development of health in Gibraltar during the 17th and 18th centuries.

A second research project is being organised with University College London. This project looks into recovering for posterity, through the use of texture mapping, the important 18th century graffiti from the Gibraltar under Siege buildings. Some of this graffiti includes text by Lieutenant Ince, of the Great Siege fame... and importance and very rare and provides yet another example of Gibraltar's unique place in history.

Since assuming responsibility for Bruce's Farm, this administration has worked tirelessly to ensure that those who suffer from the consequences of addiction are able to access this service and be dealt with in an expeditious manner. For the last three years we have seen year upon year increases in the occupancy at Bruce's Farm. In fact, the average occupancy during this year tells us that we may have our busiest year in Bruce's Farm since it opened in 1999.

Over the past year we have established a partnership with Broadway Lodge, one of the most respected and longest-established drug rehabilitation centres in the UK. Already we have a rolling programme with them to oversee the continued improvement in the services we provide. Some of our members of staff have been able to undertake training attachments with them, and one of our senior managers has spent three months with them to take part in a review we have provided. This has allowed us to benchmark our services and implement a series of improvements that are still ongoing.

As was announced in my predecessor's Budget speech last year, we have now employed an additional counsellor who now provides a further source of support for those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot commit to a residential programme. This has enabled many persons who in the past would have not received any help to undertake a programme that mirrors that which is undertaken at Bruce's Farm, but within the community. Additionally, we have extended this service to the prison. The link between drugs and crime is well documented. For the first time we are able to undertake real, tangible work with inmates and, if necessary, either refer them to Bruce's Farm upon completion of their sentence or continue to provide support upon release. The take-up of this service is encouraging and over the past six months we have increased this service from one to three days a week.

We also continue to work very closely with volunteer groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. We have facilitated their increased input within the prison, where they perform some very effective work with inmates that complements that undertaken by our counsellors in this establishment.

An important development has been the establishment of a halfway house for those who complete treatment at Bruce's Farm. We were finding that one of the major issues faced by those finishing residential treatment was that they faced being homeless. This inevitably contributed towards their relapse. We now have a specifically designated flat that has been constantly in use for the past five months. This is going a long way towards ensuring that vulnerable people are afforded an opportunity to reintegrate themselves back into the community in a planned and supported way.

At a strategic level we have now re-established the Drugs Advisory Council, which had lost all focus and was allowed to lapse by the previous administration despite its statutory nature. We know that drug misuse is an issue of concern to many of us, as evidenced in the recent Police Authority survey. We risk not making a real impact unless all stakeholders from health, law enforcement, education and rehabilitation pool resources and ideas to formulate initiatives to address the threat that drugs pose to our community and individuals alike. This Council has now been relaunched and it has been tasked with formulating a revised drug strategy.

The fact that Rehabilitation Services now falls under the remit of my Ministry opens many exciting opportunities in terms of taking an anti-drugs message to the wider community. Already the drugs team is in discussion with the other constituent teams within my Ministry to explore how we can achieve this in such diverse areas as sports, culture, heritage and youth and other public events.

1950 Several meetings have been held in relation to my responsibility for civil rights, which include the Ombudsman and the Citizens Advice Bureau. As we all know, these entities run in an independent manner and our Government will not interfere in the way they run only to give financial support and general encouragement. The only change that I would like to announce at this stage is that the Ombudsman's office, as the Hon. the Minister for Health, Dr John Cortes mentioned in his Budget speech, is now charged with the complaints received by users of the GHA. Another manifesto commitment completed.

1955 In conclusion, Mr Speaker, in this last year we have seen the culmination of some of the works we started in 2011 and the continuation of others. All the Ministries that I have been responsible for and the ones that I have now have seen a vast improvement of service and a great deal of investment. We promised change, and change we have and will continue to deliver. Whether in sports, culture, heritage, youth or drug rehabilitation, the improvements are there to be seen. Investing in our people is what we, as a Government, have as our first priority.

1960 I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of staff under my responsibility who have worked hard to fulfil all the manifesto commitments that we had promised in the General Election of 2011.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

1965 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, after that *tour de force* in respect of the portfolios that the hon. Gentleman is responsible for, I move that the House do now adjourn until 11 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr Speaker: The House will now adjourn to 11.00 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 7.54 p.m.