



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10.27 a.m. – 2.05 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 23rd June 2015

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 10.27 a.m.

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

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

Order of the Day

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Appropriation Bill 2015 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes.

Minister for Health, the Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Hon. Dr J E Cortes): Good morning, Mr Speaker.

In your intervention at the end of yesterday's session I for a moment wondered whether I would have to memorise this speech overnight, so I am very glad with your leave that I didn't have to!

Mr Speaker, as I start my Budget address, my fourth, and my last before an election, I do so with an overwhelming sense of achievement and pride. And I do so also in my capacity as Gibraltar's first Minister for Climate Change, a title which I also carry with pride.

For this Government has delivered unprecedented change in environmental governance, sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation, a level of change that has placed Gibraltar in a position of leadership within the UK Overseas Territories and small island states.

Sound environmental governance includes government, business and civil society, and views natural resources as collective public assets that are not diminished when they are shared, thereby allowing communal benefit from clean water, air and biodiversity. Gibraltar's environmental policy has changed considerably to this effect over these past few years. This change, Mr Speaker, has been specifically recognised by the United Nations Environment Programme, major international NGOs, the Global Island Partnership and others.

These last four years have seen the Department network in Europe where we have proudly flown the flag of environmental governance and leadership, leaving our mark in the international arena. Organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and of course the European Commission are now far more aware of Gibraltar and how we strive to lead by example in all that we do.

Mr Speaker, to further prove the point, last summer we hosted an expert group meeting on sustainability that included representatives from around the Mediterranean, from universities, Government Departments and also from the European Union and the United Nations. Networking at the wider Mediterranean level is where we now propose to focus, having as we do a great deal to contribute and to learn from our counterparts at a regional level.

Perhaps the biggest testament to our increased presence in the environmental arena was the UN Climate Change Summit held at the UN headquarters in New York where I had the honour and privilege of being invited on behalf of the Secretary General to represent Gibraltar, in the General Assembly Hall with world

leaders from countries large and small, as we focused on our collective global ambitions to halt climate change and mitigate its impacts. It has been an inspirational year on the environmental front, Mr Speaker.

35 The icing on the cake came in December when the Department of the Environment and Climate Change was admitted as a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – the world’s largest global environmental network. This is a ground-breaking achievement for the Department given the international reputation and role of the IUCN, which acts as a United Nations observer and has consultative status on several international conventions on nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change. I had
40 the pleasure of paying a visit to the IUCN’s Secretary General in Geneva last month and was rightly proud of the positive reputation Gibraltar already has in these circles.

Mr Speaker, environmental civil servants and advisers continue to be involved in discussion and decision-making at all levels of Government, working not only for my Ministry but for all other Ministers who call upon their input and advice on a regular basis.

45 The green filter continues to work well, with Department officials playing an increasing role in planning, as well as in the EIA process. Departmental scientists attend all DPC meetings and work hard to ensure that planning conditions are met. The Government’s green procurement policy, which was instrumental in changing the environmental dynamics within the local market, is being reviewed and updated. By continuing to apply and direct the public sector’s purchasing power towards green alternatives,
50 we continue to stimulate the market and create niches for green initiatives, employment and economic regeneration.

Staff at the Department continue to work across the public sector through their involvement in numerous committees, ranging from transport to noise, planning, to climate change and infrastructure projects. In this context a number of policy documents are currently being updated, the most notable being
55 the Environmental Action and Management Plan and the Climate Change Programme. These will be published in coming months and will be based on research and data that allow for informed policy decisions. This is how we work, Mr Speaker; we do not produce reports stating wishful policy without hard facts and substance. Policy in this Government is based on sound science.

I am pleased to say that while Gibraltar continues to develop, I see no imminent conflict with or danger
60 to its environment or its biodiversity. For example, the new Mons Calpe and Eastern Beach developments will be ready for smart metering, for fitting of electrical car charging points, will have low consumption water heaters and renewable energy sources. And the 1,700 new affordable homes and related developments on the Eastside will not be a threat to our environment either. They are on brown sites, will be energy efficient, incorporate renewables, and contain large landscaped areas.

65 Mr Speaker, I am pleased to inform Parliament that the 2015 figures on recycling have already seen an increase of approximately 38.5% in mixed packaging waste on cans and plastics, 15% on glass, 21% on cardboard and 60% on paper. This has been possible due to the combined efforts of the Department, Master Service, and of course, the general public, clearly and increasingly fulfilling its role in improving recycling practices at home and in the workplace. Additional pink bins have been provided this year to further
70 increase the recycling rates of waste electrical and electronic equipment. In fact, we are already half way through the year and have nearly surpassed the amount of these items recycled in the whole of last year.

Our recycling campaign continues to expand and this year’s World Environment Day saw the launch of yet another kerbside recycling service, the recycling of waste cooking oil in the new orange bins.

75 Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to announce the upcoming delivery of yet another environmental manifesto commitment in relation to waste management – the creation of Gibraltar’s first dedicated eco-park. This new facility will be a one-stop shop for recycling all household waste streams and will be fully operational this summer.

Looking ahead in terms of our long-term waste strategy, we re-issued the tender for a waste treatment facility since none of the initial tenders submitted met the required technical specification. This project is
80 going through a renewed tender process in order to ensure that we get the best value for money and just as important, the best possible environmental option.

Mr Speaker, one of the successful outcomes from the Litter Committee, which continues to meet on a regular basis with stakeholders and includes NGO membership, is the designation of dedicated litter wardens. These officers have received the necessary training and patrol Gibraltar daily, creating awareness,
85 educating and deterring people from irresponsible tipping. No-dumping signs will shortly be going up in litter hotspots to further remind the public that in Gibraltar bins are only a short distance away and there is no excuse for the illegal dumping of refuse.

Works continue on refuse cubicles around Gibraltar, with four cubicles being completed last year and three new temporary cubicles installed.

90 I once again take this opportunity to thank all the members of the litter committee for their hard work and dedication. It really is a pleasure working with them and I very much look forward to continuing to do so.

Collaboration with NGOs continues. Regular meetings take place between Government officials, and myself, and a number of organisations such as the GONHS, ESG, and Housing Estate Committees.

The Nature Conservancy Council continues to be consulted on issues associated with the protection of Gibraltar's natural environment in line with my statutory obligations under the Nature Protection Act.

Mr Speaker, this past year has seen a concentrated effort by the Department to raise awareness of a whole array of environmental issues in schools. This included, once again, their involvement in World Environment Day, which this year also saw involvement from NGOs and environmentally friendly businesses. A lot of effort has gone into both energy-efficiency and marine awareness and you may have seen the episodes on GBC on the work carried out by the Department in respect to our waters. Perhaps the most popular awareness initiative has been the launch of Gibraltar's underwater camera, the first of its kind in Europe. This underwater camera forms yet another element of the wider marine surveillance programme carried out by the Department to monitor the status of marine habitats and species within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. A dedicated website has been created on the Department's Thinking Green website to provide all with real time footage of Gibraltar's rich underwater environment.

This pioneering project is proving to be successful for many reasons. It is continuously providing scientific data on Gibraltar's marine diversity and water quality and perhaps more importantly, Mr Speaker, from the point of view of delivering a mindset of sustainability within our community. Children and adults alike, entertain themselves in the wonders that underwater Gibraltar has to offer. The appreciation of nature and the realisation that sustainable management is essential can best be achieved through visual appreciation and understanding. Our marine environment is too often remembered for the wrong reasons, or forgotten due to its inaccessibility, and this programme thrusts the marine realm into our daily lives, in a non-intrusive yet highly exciting and educational manner. Once again, Mr Speaker, this initiative has been recognised far and wide.

Mr Speaker, the Government's online geoportal also continues to work well and is being used widely, here and abroad. The interactive map of Gibraltar, produced by the Technical Services Department together with the Environment and IT, is continually being updated. The increasing use of GIS among the public and private sectors is yet another success story in the Environment portfolio. An interesting point of note is that in the last two months the number of hits from USA has increased significantly to the point where the USA is currently the number one country in terms of page visits to our geoportal.

I am also pleased to say that for the second time running, the Department of the Environment attended the UK Overseas Territories Workshop on the Environment and the use of Geographical Information Systems. The workshop was funded by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and took place in Turks and Caicos in February last year, where the Department took the opportunity to showcase how Gibraltar is making use of GIS and 3D modelling tools for environmental research and planning purposes. Gibraltar's participation in these workshops is important in fostering collaborations and strengthening links with the UK's Overseas Territories and Environmental Research Institutions.

Mr Speaker, in order to stress the importance that this Government places on building partnerships with our colleagues from the Overseas Territories, Gibraltar will host an international environmental conference in July this year with a focus on the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small islands.

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations to discuss key conservation issues and highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and forge partnerships. Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems and possibilities will benefit from learning about one another's history and experience of planning and conservation initiatives.

Mr Speaker, both the Gibraltar Electrical Authority, which I now chair, and the Department of the Environment and Climate Change have been working extremely hard on other fronts regarding Gibraltar's Energy and Climate Change Strategy.

The Department of the Environment and the recently created Climate Change Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister, have already addressed key aspects of Gibraltar's strategy during the course of the year. The strategy will be elaborated further in the revised Gibraltar Climate Change Programme and is divided into four main overarching themes which include: Adapting to climate change by building Gibraltar's resilience; facilitating the transition towards a low carbon economy; improving our understanding of climate change science and raising climate change awareness and changing consumer behaviour through educational initiatives.

This follows the strategic approach adopted by the United Nations Environment Programme for combating climate change. Some of the key measures that form part of the strategy are being implemented already and include: Developing and encouraging the uptake of solar energy; developing and encouraging the uptake of marine renewables and improving end-user efficiency.

The ongoing programme by the GEA to replace public building lighting and street lighting with solar powered devices and/or LEDs is proving particularly successful, as proven by the figures released by the GEA which shows a considerable reduction in energy use. The reductions represent 19% in street lighting

from 2012-13 to 2014-15, 50% in floodlighting from 2011-12 to 2014-15 and 22% in traffic light consumption from 2012-13 to 2014-15. These represent a reduction both in carbon emissions and in cost to the Government.

Other key initiatives that have been carried out recently include: the introducing of financial incentives to increase the uptake of solar technologies such as the Solar Energy (Deductions) Rules 2015; protecting local carbon sinks – the extent of the Nature Reserve has been increased; an energy-efficiency awareness campaign, currently underway, and an energy awareness website which is being developed to be launched later this year.

Mr Speaker, that is not all. This year I also commissioned and published our first ever city level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions for Gibraltar which provides an accurate understanding and picture of the major sources, activities and contributors of these emissions.

Work on other day-to-day energy issues continues to take place. In relation to energy performance of buildings, the Government has completed a Building Renovation Strategy which sets new cost optimal levels of energy performance for new and existing buildings as well as defining nearly zero energy building standards as we move towards 2020. The assessment of the energy performance of public buildings is ongoing. In the last financial year, approximately 267 Energy Performance Certificates have been issued and 37 EPC site visits have been carried out by staff of the Department.

The Department has also participated and been actively involved in a number of other EU conferences and workshops.

Mr Speaker, where does all of this leave us? Well, the total amount of carbon dioxide emitted from power generation fell by 24% from 181,182 tonnes in 2013 to 141,936 tonnes in 2014. Clearly our energy and climate change policies are not only taking shape, but showing results.

Our coastal water, bathing water and groundwater monitoring programmes continue to operate smoothly with samples being collected on a monthly basis from all our beaches, offshore locations around Gibraltar's coastline and from Gibraltar's freshwater aquifers. The Department also continues to collect and monitor marine sediment, phytoplankton, fish and bivalve tissue samples.

Data collected is used by the Department to help meet its reporting obligations under the Bathing Water, Water Framework and the Marine Strategy Framework Directives; these are key pieces of EU legislation that have an important role in the management of our territorial waters.

Mr Speaker a notable development in this aspect relates to Western Beach, already covered at length by the Deputy Chief Minister in his address yesterday. What I can add is that potential outflows to all the other beaches have over the past two years been systematically blocked or diverted, so that there can be no danger now of any sewage outflows in any of them. The Department closely monitors all discharges to the sea.

The importance given to the quality of our waters and our beaches is clearly enshrined in the announcement I made earlier this year regarding new wastewater treatment plant; a project that should have taken place many years ago, but which the previous Government ignored despite the fact that it is an EU Directive requirement.

The tender process is now nearing completion and I will be making an announcement soon. This will ensure that Gibraltar is finally compliant with the EU's Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.

Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment and Climate Change is also making steady progress with its support of the artificial reef programme, with new additions to the reef network such as the Sunswale which was recently deployed in the vicinity of the Rosia Marine Conservation Zone. This project has been warmly welcomed by local conservation groups, recreational divers and fishing associations.

It has now been nearly two years since the artificial reef programme was re-invigorated by the Department with the creation of the North West Artificial Reef and I am very pleased that, as I had anticipated, the reef has proven to improve marine life in the area.

Work is also being carried out on other marine ecosystem restoration. This facet of the marine programme draws on historical sources and local expert knowledge to inform the re-introduction of species that were known to exist in the Bay such as fan mussels, oysters and sea grasses, the latter species being a tremendously important source of food, oxygen and habitat as well as an excellent carbon sink.

Mr Speaker, in line with this Government's manifesto commitment to regulate fishing, diving and other marine activities in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, it gives me a great sense of pride to be able to say that this past year has seen the publication of the Marine Protection Regulations and the Tuna Preservation Regulations. These are probably the most significant pieces of local environmental legislation published for 20 years. They set to regulate a myriad of activities that take place in our waters such as fishing, diving, scientific research and the activities of dolphin tour operators.

Some of the key measures introduced in the regulations include the licensing requirements, minimum fish sizes, the creation of Marine Conservation Zones and the ability to implement designated fishing seasons and yearly quotas for species requiring additional protection such as Atlantic bluefin tuna. No-

anchoring zones have also been designated and included in the regulations to protect the seabed, particularly reefs.

Mr Speaker, the regulations are a very significant step in the long road of regulating marine activities in our waters. The Department has had to make key changes to the way it operates to be able to administer the functioning of the regulations. A dedicated counter has been created to process all licence applications and queries and a number of guidance documents published to better inform the public on how the regulations work. A marine species identification booklet has been produced and is made available to all applicants to highlight some of the common fish and mollusc species found in Gibraltar, along with their corresponding minimum sizes.

Both regulations were subjected to a lengthy consultation process encompassing a wide variety of stakeholders, including but not limited to, recreational anglers, divers, marine biologists, cottage and big game fishermen, spear fishermen, diving and dolphin tour operators and sports fishing enthusiasts.

In line with the spirit of co-operation and continued consultation, the Marine Protection Regulations also provided for the creation of a statutory working group, which I chair. This working group meets on a regular basis and serves as a platform to discuss relevant issues such as sustainable fishing activities in BGTW.

Mr Speaker, this fulfils many of the recommendations of the 2013 Fishing Report. And it has stopped, virtually overnight, the past problem of non-resident anglers along the shores with multiple rods not allowing space for others and littering the shoreline. I cannot but stress the immensity of this task and achievement, involving tremendous dedication from the Department's staff and wide-ranging discussion with many people, to arrive at what are workable pieces of legislation that achieve the dual purposes of safeguarding the marine environment for future generations while allowing all responsible activities to continue in an organised manner.

The Tuna Preservation Regulations, in particular, show the world that Gibraltar has stepped up to assume its international obligations and is well capable of being entrusted with legislating for the protection of its marine resources within the whole of BGTW, much of which falls within a European Special Area of Conservation. The closed season for tuna, for example, now follows the provisions of ICCAT, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna. Any bluefin tuna that is now caught within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters during the open season needs to be reported. A dedicated office and landing point has been created where anglers are able to dock against the jetty to weigh and report any tuna catches. Alternatively, anglers may also submit the required forms electronically. An awareness campaign on sustainable fishing practices will also form part of this landmark initiative along with a tuna-tagging programme. The programme builds on the ongoing work carried out by the Department together with local fishing clubs on species that are commonly found in Gibraltar such as the white bream.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has never ever had this level of responsible regulation, which looks after the interests of nature, those who fish, and those of us who enjoy eating fish, sustainably. In this way we can clearly refute any allegations from others that we are illegally exploiting or failing to protect our marine resources.

Mr Speaker, in terms of environmental health, the Environmental Agency, with its dedicated team of environmental health professionals continues to work on many fronts and expand its work in environmental monitoring including control, building control, waste regulation and food import controls. In addition to the developments mentioned in my speech last year, the Agency has also: incorporated the issuing of ship sanitation certificates into its work; become the main entity liaising with the UK's Health and Safety Executive on major projects such as the new power station; continued to liaise with pollution specialists; continued to expand its GibEnviro app; continued to provide specialised waste management training to staff and to waste industry representatives; established a partnership with the University of West England to provide practical Environmental Health training; continued expanding its anti-dog fouling campaign; and delivered food hygiene courses to organisers and participants of outdoor events such as Calentita, the Fair and it has also revamped its annual Christmas campaign.

The Agency does a tremendous amount of excellent work for the community that often goes unnoticed, but is nevertheless absolutely essential for maintaining the level of Gibraltar's environmental governance.

Mr Speaker, works on the improvement of the North Front Cemetery are progressing. In the past 12 months, walls have been plastered and painted, toilets refurbished, signs and information panels erected as well as paths cleared. We will be installing CCTV cameras in order to combat any future spouts of vandalism as was, unfortunately, the case recently. Mr Speaker, I am also pleased with the recent publication of a Command Paper on the revised Cemetery Act, the old Act dated from 1889, bringing this legislation in line with modern times and allowing for more efficient management. Another important development that I am pleased to share with this House is the digitisation of cemetery records using GIS.

Mr Speaker, we all know how important green areas are for our well-being. Between April 2014 and 2015, we have therefore continued with the urban planting programme and planted a total of 158 trees around Gibraltar. At the same time, the Department has worked extensively on the maintenance and

improvement of existing green areas. And what better showcase of the value of green areas and the benefit they bring both environmentally and socially to the community than Commonwealth Park. The park continues to be enjoyed by very many and has now become one of Gibraltar's prime recreational areas.

How many in this House doubted! How many questions were asked suggesting it would be a waste of money, or impossible to achieve or maintain! Mr Speaker, people have voted with their feet, and their feet are now firmly in the grass. And to think that the Opposition could not find a way to support the Act that guaranteed the protection of what is now one of Gibraltar's most cherished assets.

Work will now shortly start on the first of the new dog parks, which is expected to be completed in September. The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens have also been improved. Their work is expanding beyond the purely recreational to an increasing role in taxonomy, ecology, conservation and education. Indeed, this capacity building has facilitated the integration of the Botanic Gardens as a key associate partner of the University of Gibraltar's Institute of Life and Earth Sciences, which will allow the gardens to continue to develop as a key player in research and conservation in the region, and promote Gibraltar internationally.

In addition, there have been many improvements to planted areas and a much greater outreach to involving young people. April next year sees the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the Alameda Gardens, and a number of improvements and events are planned to celebrate this historic date.

I move now to the Gibraltar Nature Reserve, an area that as you know I hold very dear. The Government remains committed to restoring Gibraltar's natural assets in a sensitive and environmentally friendly manner for the enjoyment of residents and as an improvement to our tourist product. No one can deny that the Government, through its Environment, Tourism and Heritage Ministries has pumped more investment and done more to revitalise this natural treasure in three years, than the GSD did in 16 years in Government. (*Banging on desks*)

The revitalisation of the Nature Reserve was well overdue. The gravitational pull of such new attractions to cruise liners to Gibraltar cannot be underestimated. To assist in the marketing process, a nature reserve app for smartphones has been launched and is available for both Apple and Android devices. Another application that is currently being developed is an interactive encyclopaedia of Gibraltar's rich wildlife.

Mr Speaker, formerly derelict areas of historical interest continue to be renovated and reopened to the general public. The project also includes upgrading the various paths in the nature reserve with an all-round enhancement of safety and accessibility features. Innovative attractions and facilities for the general public will be provided as part of the project including a spectacular new suspension bridge at Royal Anglian Way and a glazed lookout, or 'sky walk' at Mount Misery.

Mr Speaker, the launch of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan is imminent. The new plan contains a wide range of recommendations for the Upper Rock and other areas of ecological importance in Gibraltar that were afforded protected status under the Nature Conservation (Designation of Gibraltar Nature Reserve) Order 2013.

A large number of measures being included within the new plan have already been implemented or initiated in different parts of the reserve during the past year such as: improving visitor access and restoring paths within the Upper Rock and the Northern Defences; improved firebreak clearing programme including the creation of new firebreaks; installation of nature reserve demarcation and traffic awareness signs along with interpretation panels; installing new balustrades and restoring road barriers; re-populating key species such as the Barbary partridge and the wild rabbit.

Mr Speaker, I have to pause here, given the fact that I was accused by Members of this House of being responsible for the decline in the numbers of the secretive Barbary partridge, and was blamed for its imminent disappearance. Ongoing surveillance has revealed that not only have the imported partridges acclimatised well to their new environment, but more importantly, hatched young in several locations within the Nature Reserve. I would like to acknowledge and thank GONHS for their support and for the monitoring that they do, providing the Department with vital scientific information without charge, and to also thank the Upper Rock management team for their increasing role in improving this wonderful natural asset.

There are other measures being carried out including: increasing resources for the Department's Environmental Protection and Research Unit; increasing human resources for the Upper Rock Management Team; increasing security in the Upper Rock with dedicated environmental security guards patrolling day and night; creating new picnic areas; securing, restoring and improving access to heritage assets within the Upper Rock such as Genoese Battery and Royal Anglian Way; the continued systematic removal of invasive and alien species, largely through the astounding voluntary work by Bart van Thienen and continued installation of bird and bat boxes within and outside the nature reserve, particularly in the town area.

Mr Speaker, the export of a group of Barbary macaques to the Blair Drummond Wildlife Park in Stirling, Scotland, grabbed international headlines in October last year. This was the first large scale export of macaques since the 1990s. The exportation followed a period of extensive research and discussions with

park officials which allowed for the relocation of approximately 30 macaques from the Middle Hill troop, that was frequenting Laguna and Catalan Bay. The macaques were flown to the UK on a chartered aircraft and then transported by road to the safari park. They were accompanied at all times by two experienced Gibraltar keepers from the macaque management team with additional support provided by officials from the Department.

The selection of this particular group was facilitated by the tracking work carried out last year by a team of US researchers from Notre Dame University together with the macaque management team, GONHS, the Veterinary Clinic and the Department of the Environment, sponsored by National Geographic. The exercise was carried out flawlessly since all the animals were trapped with minimal disruption and I would like, once again, to thank all those individuals involved for I know how hard they worked to execute this task to perfection.

Mr Speaker, Members and the public will have noticed that, since October last year, the trouble caused by macaques in built-up areas is hugely reduced. Mr Speaker, as they are free-ranging animals they do of course have the ability to turn up anywhere in Gibraltar of their own free will. They will surely do so, and there are still one or two areas where this is the case, but the situation is very much improved, thanks to both the exportation and the increased resources which we have provided which allow movements to be better tracked, problems pre-empted, and response and action to drive them away to be much more effective.

Mr Speaker, a year ago I was repeatedly condemned in this House by Members Opposite for what they claimed was a total failure in the management of the macaques. I would reply then that the problem dated from before my time as Minister, that my former advice to the former administration had been systematically ignored, and that nature takes time to respond. They did not want to hear. Well, Mr Speaker, while we can of course in future have a resurgence in macaque activity in some areas – and we will of course respond – I think that I have so far been proved right.

Work on the management of our macaques has continued on numerous fronts. New personnel have been employed to tackle on the ground situations and new ponds created in different parts of the Upper Rock such as Prince Phillip's Arch, Royal Anglian Way and Middle Hill. All the macaque feeding sites are being given a facelift and I am very pleased to say that works are now nearing completion. The end product will result in a significant improvement for our macaques and our tourist product.

Mr Speaker, the new Macaque Action Plan will be published this summer although once again, numerous measures are already well underway such as: providing new facilities for food storage and preparation; clearing of scrub in different areas of the reserve; the provision of new watering points; and developing of a macaque education and awareness application for mobile devices.

We have also embarked on a revitalised macaque awareness initiative in collaboration with the GONHS, the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and Monkey Talk Gibraltar, thus bringing all stakeholders together for the first time.

Mr Speaker, the Environmental Protection and Research Unit goes from strength to strength. During this past year, the section has more than doubled in size and I am proud to say that there are now six officers working on a shift system. A new vehicle has been procured in addition to the two marine vessels and environmental patrols are now being carried out every single day of the week, both on land and at sea. The fact that our own environmental protection vessels are now regularly patrolling Gibraltar's marine protected areas is clearly sending the right signals. The section continues to work hand in hand with the Royal Gibraltar Police.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Air Quality Monitoring Programme has continued to operate smoothly during this past year and has once again achieved levels of data capture above 90%, thanks to the efforts of the Environmental Agency and Government appointed air quality consultants.

As always, there is still room for improvement and a five-yearly Monitoring Regime Assessment is being carried out to inform the configuration of the network over the life of the next air quality monitoring contract. This will consider what additions we may have to make to monitoring units and how these will need to be relocated following the commissioning of the new power station, which may include a monitoring unit in the North District.

Other notable developments that have taken place in this field during the year include: investigating the implementation of an air quality forecasting service for Gibraltar; the expansion of the monitoring site at Bleak House which is now monitoring heavy metal concentrations in air; upgrading the air quality compliance dashboard to optimise the page for visualisation on mobile devices; and participating in an EU project aimed at evaluating the impact of marine tourism on air quality and climate change.

Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment has been transformed. It is now what it deserves to be, and its staff in all the disciplines – scientists and administrators, wardens and divers, as well as all its various contractors – work tirelessly to improve the environment in Gibraltar and our environmental performance on the world stage. It is a pleasure to have them all as colleagues. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, 2014 was a very challenging year for electricity production in Gibraltar when on Easter Sunday one of the Waterport engines suffered a major mechanical failure, which subsequently led to a huge fire that took out Gibraltar electrical power supplies and extensively damaged poor old, battered Waterport Power Station. Government was quick to react and within a period of one week it had arranged for the delivery of additional rental plant to replace the generating plant that had been lost in the fire in order to ensure that there was sufficient installed capacity to deliver the electrical energy demands of Gibraltar.

This led to seven months without power cuts – the longest period since at least 1995. Even with the three power cut episodes that we have suffered recently, the average number of power cuts is infinitely smaller for this year than for as many years as I have been able to go back – which is more than 20 – and why? Because we have a tremendously professional team at the GEA, and because this Government cares.

The Authority will continue to improve the reliability of the system to minimise the likelihood of generation power cuts and reduce emissions during this interim period, while the new power station is being designed and constructed. To this end we have already started the process of decommissioning the ex-OESCO engines in the South District Power Station and this will be followed by decommissioning GMES Power Station as both of these power stations had ageing plant that have been major contributors to NOx emissions in the South District.

The failure of Waterport last year sadly led to a brief increase in NOx emissions, reversing the trend that we started in 2012, although happily these levels started to fall once again this year.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt whatsoever, whatever the Leader of the Opposition might say, that all the problems that we have been facing in relation to power, stem from the former administration's crass and irresponsible failure to act on advice, recommendations and reports that the Waterport Station and the distribution system were on the point of collapse about a decade ago. I am not at all convinced that their horrendous, polluting, carbon-belching eyesore of a power station would have been ready by now. For one thing, Mr Speaker, *they* are the ones who were having trouble finding the money for it.

And Mr Speaker, minutes after his speech claiming that it would have been finished, the Leader of the Opposition said to GBC that ours would take more than four years to complete. Even though the new plant will require much less infrastructure, being close to Waterport, and cause much less disruption being as it will be in an essentially industrial area and accessible by sea. What lack of knowledge of the subject, Mr Speaker! He did not mention the problems they were encountering with storing the diesel in the old MOD tanks, having to set up a new docking operation that would have poured diesel from tankers into pipes by GibDock. No concern for the flammability of diesel – which is much greater than LNG – or the smells that would have affected the residents of the South District in the event of a leak. Nor how long would all that take.

Perhaps more extraordinarily, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition made allegations of inside information, claiming that the project was 'beset' by problems. What problems, Mr Speaker? Are his informers letting him down? Or maybe he has seen something I haven't when he's been there at night with his wire cutters? *(Laughter)*

But in any case, it was too little, too late. Or perhaps too much too late, when you consider the huge price of their proposal and their secret promise to increase the cost of electricity by 5% per year for 20 years! **(A Member: Oh!)** If an air terminal quadrupled in price, what price a power station?

Mr Speaker, *the* biggest headline last year from the point of view of improvements to the environment and quality of life in Gibraltar was the award of the contract for a new power station to the French construction giants Bouygues. This state-of-the-art power station will be capable of using both gas and light fuel in order to be as efficient and environmentally friendly as is technologically possible. It will deliver a potential 80 megawatts of power, plus an additional 4 megawatts through heat recovery – a tremendous environmental plus – about 20 megawatts more than the GSD's planned station. Moreover, it will guarantee energy self-sufficiency for Gibraltar for the next 30 years and more, if not quite 'to infinity and beyond' as Buzz Lightyear would have said.

We were absolutely right not to proceed with the previous administration's contract for a power station that would have burnt more polluting fuel and would have cost more and incurred huge fines for Gibraltar in respect of carbon emissions. This was not just the right decision; it is the right investment for our nation's future.

Mr Speaker, it may not be wise for me, as a politician, to publicly reveal one of my biggest weaknesses. Let's call it a 'rookie error', Mr Speaker, but here it goes. I have a weakness for science fiction. I enjoy moving into a fictitious world of technological fantasy, ridden with fantastical dangers which at once excite and terrify you, but with the comfort of knowing that they will never really happen. It is with some knowledge of the genre, therefore, that I must attribute to the Opposition one of the worst examples of science-fiction writing that I have ever read. Fiction certainly, although it verged in fact on science comedy, because, at least true science fiction tends to be well researched. Mr Speaker, their leaflet on the, 'Dangers of LNG' was a veritable disgrace. From the photograph of a burning tank which had burnt on their watch, and in any case was of a totally different fuel, to their mathematically incorrect analysis of comparative

cost, it was an insult to the community. Fortunately it has already been almost forgotten, which shows, thank goodness, the maturity of the electorate.

Mr Speaker, the true figures show that even allowing for costs of cancellation, relocation of businesses from the North Mole, reclamation and temporary supply, this Government's power station will cost about £26 million less than the former administration's. When you take into account that ours will be able to produce 84 megawatts as opposed to their 64, the cost per megawatt capacity for their station would have been over £2 million and ours just over £1 million, nearly half the cost. And this still does not factor in the cheaper fuel for our station, savings from discarding rental plant, nor the clear environmental benefits in the emissions of virtually no particulate matter, no sulphur, and much less nitrogen dioxide.

Let me reiterate, Mr Speaker, that LNG is just about the safest fuel around – LNG, Liquid Natural Gas, not LPG, Liquid Petroleum Gas, which is the one that causes explosions. The few googled reports of LNG burning that the GSD have used are none of them in the kind or size of plant that we are planning for Gibraltar. The plant being designed for Gibraltar will be a world leader in safety.

Seriously, Mr Speaker, the people from Lloyds went on the information that they were given. This information was incomplete and inaccurate. In good faith they prepared the best possible report based on the worst possible quality of information. *(Interjection)* No-one is questioning their calibre, but you can only work with the information that you have, and the GSD just did not have it. So Lloyds, I repeat, in perfectly good faith, made assumptions on conjecture. Such important decisions cannot be based on inaccurate information. Mr Speaker, the Opposition has abused the name of Lloyds Register and has tried to manipulate their honest report to suit their own scheming ends. The report points out potential difficulties that need to be overcome, these in many cases being precisely the difficulties that our potential providers are succeeding in resolving.

Mr Speaker, the Lloyds report concludes that some of the risks are:

‘Significantly greater than those found to be acceptable for conventional LNG marine storage terminals.’

I repeat the key words, ‘conventional marine storage terminals.’ This one will not be conventional. The report does express concerns that the port is, at this point in time, not equipped for handling LNG. Well of course it isn't. It isn't equipped for handling herds of stampeding elephants either. We've had no need to deal with either up to now! *(Laughter)* But all the necessary adaptations will be made in order to be able to do so – to handle LNG, Mr Speaker, not to handle stampeding elephants – although there is just about as much danger of a significant incident in our LNG plant as there is of a stampede of pachyderms suddenly disembarking in the port and taking our fair city by storm.

Mr Speaker, I am certain that Lloyds Register would not recommend boiling water being poured over anybody's head. They would point out that you have to be aware of the potential dangers of boiling water and the need for it to be handled carefully, and for there to be safeguards in place to avoid scalding. But that does not mean you cannot make yourself a cup of tea! You must ensure you use a safe kettle and that you are trained in how to pour, and how much to put into a cup before it overflows.

Mr Speaker, the Government and the GEA are doing things responsibly. The UK's Health and Safety Laboratory have advised that an LNG power station and storage in Gibraltar are doable – provided it is done correctly. Therefore we are awaiting the detailed designs – which we are on the point of receiving – in order for them to finalise the detailed assessment. That is the time when we will, responsibly, share these with the public. Lloyds has essentially said nothing different to this.

Mr Speaker, the matter is one over which the Opposition should be showing a responsible approach and be willing to wait until all the studies have been completed and all the science is clear before resorting to spreading fear. Is this too much to ask? Their failure to do so, their rushing into the fray only betrays their real lack of confidence in their own position.

Mr Speaker, the GSD does not care about power, or clean air, or safety. They do not care who they scare with their misinformation and fabrications. Their approach is not about genuine concerns, but a vile attempt to inject needless fear into our community. It is an absolute disgrace. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, the Opposition will very soon find all its arguments come tumbling down. As the author Gonzo Arzuaga, paraphrasing none other than Albert Einstein, said:

‘A smart person knows how to fight a battle. A wise person knows which battles not to fight.’

Mr Speaker, the Opposition, are not smart, and, most certainly, they are not wise. They have lost this debate even before it has really started. As Members will know, and the Chief Minister made reference to this in his address, cruise ship giants Carnival Cruises have just ordered four brand new cruise liners, with a capacity for 6,600 passengers each, all powered by gas and carrying LNG storage tanks. And to quote the President and CEO of Carnival, Arnold Donald, speaking recently to Bloomberg TV:

‘We certainly wouldn’t be doing anything we didn’t think was perfectly safe.’

Mr Speaker, I have spent my entire life fighting for a safe environment –I am not about to change now. I can confidently say that the new power station will be safe, clean, virtually non-polluting, with enough capacity to cover our energy needs for years, and will be supplemented by renewable energy as we develop this.

To return to the more mundane, Mr Speaker, I can report that during the last financial year a total of 179.2 million units were billed and the amount collected was £24.6 million.

The number of consumers rose slightly to 19,411, an increase of 138 from the previous years.

The total installed generating capacity at the end of the year stood at 95.48 megawatts as new rental plant replaced the ageing plant. Once this plant is decommissioned and the turbines removed from site to make way for the new power station, the installed capacity will be 75.08 megawatts which is more than sufficient to meet the forecast peak demands until 2017 of approximately 42 megawatts, until the new station is commissioned.

The price of fuel supplied during the last financial year has decreased substantially to levels that had not been seen over the last 15. It started the year at £559.40 per tonne in April 2014 going down to £358 at the end of December, before going slightly up again to £368.94 per tonne in March 2015. These low oil prices have not had a huge impact on our fuel expenditure on account of the Authority having entered into a hedging arrangement which has been in place for the last six years. I must add here that the cost of LNG remains lower.

Mr Speaker, the Authority continues to upgrade and expand the network and the supervisory control and data acquisition that is used to monitor the generation and main distribution system, thus providing a better and faster response when dealing with power outages. This year we have installed the fibre optic link through No 7 High Voltage ring in preparation for the full automation and monitoring of all the substations as part of the new power station infrastructure works.

Improvement works also continue to the electrical supplies to Laguna and Moorish Castle Estates as part of the block refurbishment and lift programme.

Improvements to the public lighting network continue with replacement of existing street lights with LED and /or low energy lanterns. This year Waterport Road, Queensway and Catalan Bay village have been done. As I mentioned earlier, this has seen a reduction in the street lighting electrical consumption of 15.3 % compared to 2013-14 and 18.7 % compared to 2012-13. These are true savings in energy and money.

We continued also replacing our Christmas lights with LED lights and again received very positive feedback from the public of last Christmas’s lights, and in particular the switching on ceremony that was organised in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture.

Training and development of technical staff of the GEA continues. This year we arranged specialised training courses to introduce modern jointing techniques that reduce the down time in repairing low voltage joints by more than 50 %. This was in addition to the refresher health and safety and fire training that is part of the continuous development of Authority staff.

During 2015-16 in addition to the day-to-day maintenance and repairs, work will continue on the new power station infrastructure and we will see the start of the associated infrastructure new distribution centres at Waterport and Mid Harbours.

The design of the new power station will gain momentum with the EIA and the technical review of the engineering design by Bouygues that will be carried out by the Authority technical team supported by Mott MacDonald as technical engineering consultants.

Work is also programmed to continue on the replacement of substations which were procured this last financial year and which now will be replaced to increase the reliability and robustness of the high voltage network.

Mr Speaker, as you know, my portfolio was extended by the Chief Minister last December to also include responsibility for water production, as Chair of AquaGib Ltd. During the period AquaGib has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance indicators in respect to the provision of potable and seawater, and sewerage services. In order to achieve this level of service AquaGib had an expenditure of £12,115,000.

In addition, AquaGib Ltd has continued to invest over the period on capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving the water infrastructure assets in Gibraltar as included for in their contract with Government. During this period a total of £730,000 was spent on capital projects, which included: the replacement of potable and seawater mains; replacement of customers’ water meters, meter cupboards and manifolds; improvements to the reverse osmosis desalination plants by the building of new chemical dosing equipment and a second pass RO polishing unit at the Waterport Plant; also phase 1 improvements and upgrading to the Scada system of remote monitoring and operation of the

RO plants, pumping stations and reservoirs; IT upgrading to handheld remote meter reading equipment; and the replacement of the pumps at the Varyl Begg Sewage Pumping Station.

The form of electricity and water bills has been changed in order to provide more information and encourage efficiency. Indeed, this reflects AquaGib's policy and new energy efficiency measures are constantly being reviewed in all the company's activities.

The approved budget set by the Company for the provision of potable and seawater supply, and sewerage services in Gibraltar next year is £11,100,000. This reduction in budgeted cost follows the resolution of the ex MSF employees employment issues as a result of the Collective Agreement between the Government, AquaGib and Unite the Union.

The approved budget set by the company on capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan in Gibraltar has been set at £638,000. This includes the following projects: replacement of more potable and seawater mains; replacement of water meters; replacement of RO membranes at Governor's Cottage Plant; rock stabilisation works at Governor's Cottage; phase 2 improvements and upgrading to the Scada system; and IT upgrades to the Sage 200 system.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, there has been tremendous activity in all my non-health-portfolios, much of interconnected, and reveals a logic and forward thinking linking all of these within one Ministry.

And so, Mr Speaker, I turn to my health related portfolios.

In relation to the Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority and now Elderly Residential Services, let me set the scene, Mr Speaker, by quoting a cruise passenger who sadly had to be hospitalised in Gibraltar. He wrote to the Authority saying:

'I was a patient in your hospital for two weeks and I do wish to express my gratitude to all concerned with my treatment. The medical and nursing care was first class with a general standard of efficiency. A high standard of training coupled with effective organisation shone in every way. So thank all of you for your share in getting me fit enough to return home. I count myself very lucky that the ship docked where such a fine hospital is available.'

(A Member: Hear, hear.) Mr Speaker, this Budget speech will primarily highlight the improvements made to our health service during the last financial year.

Mr Speaker, there is of course much more to do. I continue to listen to the people I represent and realise that there are no easy answers to some of the problems which have built up over many years, just the painstaking work of putting right what was wrong. But I am as determined as ever to deliver a health service of which to be proud.

Mr Speaker, in previous presentations to this House I have made reference to the need to change the GHA's management structure. I am now pleased to report that this has now been completed. This has allowed the team to start setting up essential groups and committees such as the Clinical and Corporate Governance groups which are essential and will ensure we address issues such as patient safety, staff training and development, audits, learning from clinical incidents and accountability.

Mr Speaker, as we know, the GHA provides a comprehensive range of health services for the people of Gibraltar. This includes Primary, Secondary, Mental Health and the Ambulance Service, together with arranging care in the UK or Spain for those patients whose medical condition requires that to be done.

Mr Speaker, we are extremely fortunate to have the high calibre of professionals delivering these services for a relatively small population. People now want to be informed about their care, and want to be involved in decisions about their care. Patients also expect to be active participants in developing plans for their own care. The public is more aware than ever before about health care. Therefore in order to continue building on our reputation and respond to the challenges of the future, the values that underpin healthcare practice must reflect what the public expects of us.

Mr Speaker, I gave a commitment over three years ago and with the assistance of all at the GHA, we will continue to seek ways of improving all areas. We have a vision of the kind of organisation we wish to be and the service we wish to provide, and our strategic plan sets out that vision and how it will be achieved.

Mr Speaker, in its strategy, we have identified five key objectives which are: (1) prevention rather than cure; (2) provision of care and services; (3) training, development and succession planning; (4) governance, quality of care and safety; and (5) communication and engagement.

Mr Speaker, I will now turn my attention to specific areas of our health service, what has been achieved and what is in the process of being introduced.

In the field of public health and health promotion, health promotion is one of the key ways to improve the health and quality of life in our community. We promote the comprehensive childhood immunisation programme, but at the same time we also look to the more senior members of our community, for which the GHA has introduced a new vaccine against shingles, which will be of great benefit. Shingles is more common in people aged over 70 years, and complications are also more likely in older persons. For this

reason as of this year the shingles vaccine will be available to all persons during their 70th birthday year, or if older than 70, on their 79th birthday.

Mr Speaker, during this period, Government also introduced vaccinations against meningitis C for students who were starting university as a means of protection against the disease. Meningitis vaccination has been routinely given to infants in Gibraltar for many years. However, research has shown that the protective effect of the vaccine may decrease as the child grows older. Young persons who enter into higher education for the first time usually move into areas where people live close to each other, such as university halls of residence and shared accommodation where they are exposed to unfamiliar bacteria. They will benefit from the protection offered by a single dose of the meningitis C vaccine.

We have also requested the necessary vaccine stocks to be able to introduce meningitis B vaccination in the autumn at the same time as the UK.

Mr Speaker, the colorectal cancer screening programme was formally commenced on 1st April last year. During the first year of the programme a total of 2,159 invitations were sent and 2,204 test kits were dispatched. In response, 849 samples were received, of which 638 or 75% were negative. During this year, the screening programme picked up two cancers.

Mr Speaker, as promised last year, the GHA introduced a new screening programme to detect aneurysms of the abdominal aorta from 1st March this year. This programme aims to detect such aneurysms in older men who have a higher risk of the condition, which can be fatal if not detected and treated in time.

Mr Speaker, our ability to screen the hearing of neo-natal babies is also progressing even further, with staff being trained and new equipment procured.

Members will be aware of recent UK news reports where consideration is being given to a 'new', safe and non-invasive system of genetic screening for unborn children. Well, I am proud to say that we introduced that system almost a year ago – the first national health service provider anywhere in the world to do so! This has greatly reduced distress to mothers and also reduced unnecessary referrals to the UK. We have also acquired the services of a visiting consultant geneticist to advise on any issues that arise.

Screening programmes remain one of my priorities. The breast screening programme is expertly run and regularly improved upon, but I have discovered that the cervical screening programme that I inherited is far from satisfactory and this year we will work on bringing it up to the required standard.

Mr Speaker, another commitment from last year was to undertake the second Health and Lifestyle survey. The creation and successful completion of such projects highlights the commitment by this Government and the GHA to even closer understanding of the health of our people.

The 2015 survey will once again aim to find out the levels of perceived health in the resident population, as well as gather information on eating, drinking, physical activity and other lifestyle parameters. It will also be able to make comparisons with the earlier survey and examine trends. The information from this second survey will be valuable in determining future health priorities for our community.

Mr Speaker, in keeping with another of the commitments made last year, the GHA has set up for the first time ever a specialist microbiology service which will be delivered by Hampshire based Gibraltarian Consultant Microbiologist, Dr Nicholas Cortes – no relation, Mr Speaker.

Dr Cortes is providing advice to GHA doctors throughout the year, as well as making regular visits and training staff. He is providing guidance on clinical practices and expert advice on matters related to infection, something that is increasingly important with the emergence of organisms that are resistant to antibiotics.

He also provides advice on specific patients and conditions, as well as support in developing policies and protocols and in improving clinical governance. This service will support the work of our health professionals, but most significantly benefit our patients and our other service users.

Mr Speaker, on Health Promotion and Public Education, the Department has been busy throughout the year with the following programmes delivered: Skin Cancer Screening Day; Autism Awareness; Breast Feeding Awareness Day; World Asthma Day; World Blood Donor Day; Noise-Induced Hearing Loss; Dental Health Awareness Day; Dementia Awareness Day; Mental Health Week; Heart Health; No-Smoking Day; the Well Child; and Hand Hygiene Day.

Mr Speaker, one of the greatest Public Health challenges during 2014 was addressing the Ebola crisis. The Authority took the lead in building up preparedness for a response to the threat posed by the potential arrival of Ebola Virus disease into Gibraltar. Gibraltar's Port protocols were strengthened with specific measures applied to ships or persons having visited from affected areas. The Borders and Coastguard Agency, Pier Masters, HM Customs, the Airport and the Police were all similarly prepared.

A comprehensive 'Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers Policy' covering preparedness, disease recognition, personal protection, infection control, investigation, clinical management, specialist advice and waste disposal was prepared.

A dedicated reception and isolation unit within St Bernard's Hospital for admitting potential suspected cases was swiftly and safely created, together with a comprehensive training programme delivered by our excellent Infection Control Nurses to healthcare workers.

Two simulation exercises were successfully held on 5th November and 11th December 2014 to test these plans. We were well ahead of the game.

Mr Speaker, as I have mentioned already, the management structure review that I initiated in 2012 is now complete and we are now adapting to this and streamlining operations.

As part of its new services, the GHA HR department will shortly be introducing and conducting exit interviews with all employees who leave the organisation. The benefit to the organisation of encouraging staff to complete the exit interview process is that important information can be obtained which can be used to support other initiatives and policies such as health and well-being, stress management and equality.

Mr Speaker, in order to support the HR function of the GHA, we have entered into a formal agreement with the UK's NHS Employers, which will allow us access to the various services provided by the organisation. These provide access to publications which include guidance and case studies, access to seminars and webinars on topics such as health and wellbeing at work, staff engagement, organisational development, raising concerns at work, equality and diversity, just to mention a few.

Mr Speaker, the GHA will benefit immensely from this arrangement, from the experience and expertise that can be obtained from NHS employers. We are working hard in becoming the exemplary HR department of Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, staff are the most important asset a health service has, and we aim to provide practical support on all aspects of managing human resources, which in turn promotes better care to patients.

Mr Speaker, the GHA held its seventh annual Staff Awards Ceremony this year. Around 140 members of the staff and their guests came together to celebrate the long and loyal service of staff who have worked for the GHA for more than 25 years and a range of individual and team acts of outstanding performance in the last year. Special mention needs to be given to Mr Stephen Mascarenhas and Mr Francis Mauro who work as GHA messengers and were joint winners of the GHA's prestigious 'Employee of the Year Award'. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, on the issue of the consultant contract, I can report that we are in the final stretch to full resolution, with just some minor details being worked out between the negotiating teams of the GHA and Unite. We are also reviewing the contracts of our Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs).

Mr Speaker, in keeping with a manifesto commitment on the subject of General Medical Council (GMC) registration, doctors will in future need to be registered and licensed to practice by the GMC in order to register under the Medical Registration Board in Gibraltar.

The new procedures follow extensive discussions with private and public sector doctors in Gibraltar, as well as with the UK Department of Health and the GMC. We are working with doctors to ensure a smooth transition, to guarantee that currently registered doctors are reassured, and to resolve any issues that may arise without prejudicing anyone's ability to practice legitimately.

Mr Speaker, this process has required the enactment of further rules establishing the role of Responsible Officer who will oversee the licensing of doctors in Gibraltar. There will also be a comprehensive programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and regular appraisals to a standard acceptable to the GMC in order to be revalidated. This process has already commenced in the GHA with the support of the Health Education Wessex Training Board.

Mr Speaker, the process will provide comfort in the knowledge that all our doctors will be validated by the greatly respected GMC and is already serving as a catalyst leading to improvements of standards of practice and good clinical governance. I look forward to working with the MRB and the doctors in making this a working reality.

Mr Speaker, in the same vein, new regulations to govern Allied Health Practitioners are also in place. The benefits of this arrangement also include improved standards of practice and good clinical governance.

Mr Speaker, this Government, as none ever before, is committed to a quality service and safe professional practice.

Mr Speaker, the School of Health Studies (SHS) is at the heart of healthcare provision in Gibraltar, providing health care education to a range of staff in various settings, and maintaining close links and working with Kingston University and St George's University of London.

Mr Speaker, the school has over the last year introduced a range of new initiatives. The Enrolled Nursing Programme has had over 40 pupil nurses taking part. Enrolled nurses registering with the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Registration Board Gibraltar have and will take up employment with the GHA in various care settings. This is a joint award with the Pearson/Edexcel's Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) level 3. This was an innovation of this Government and is an opportunity not available in the UK. It has opened the possibility for nurses to train through all the different levels while staying in Gibraltar.

The first ever degree programme delivered fully in Gibraltar is due to render its fruit this year. Eleven students are expected to graduate in autumn 2015, and existing posts have been earmarked for all the students. The school is looking forward to offering joint degrees and working closely with the new University of Gibraltar.

The part-time MSc in Leadership and Healthcare has entered its second year. Senior managers from across the GHA are participating in the first ever programme of study at this level. A number of other training programmes have received considerable school input – for example, QCF levels 2 and 3 for health care assistants and Ambulance Service personnel, and assisting the ETB with their Care Training Programme in co-operation with the Care Agency.

The school is also assisting with the Clinical Governance aspects of the Ambulance Service ensuring that this service is patient centred, safe and effective.

Mr Speaker, in order to improve the learning experience and environment, there has been investment in the refurbishment and additions to the IT facilities within the school, which will offer staff and students further resources in the form of a 20-seater computer suite.

Mr Speaker, to show this Government's commitment to healthcare education, an unprecedented year-on-year BSc Nursing programme is to run in September 2015 as opposed to the alternate year intake. This will allow more local residents to fill registered nurse posts.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to reveal that the school's programme have received an exceptional External Examiner report from the Southbank University of London regarding the academic quality of the BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing programme. The school has also received two further outstanding external reports from 'Pearson/Edexcel' regarding the support candidates receive from the school, as well as practitioners in the field.

Mr Speaker, finally on Health education, two GHA teams were shortlisted for the prestigious awards of Innovation Nurse of the Year and Lymphoedema Nurse of the Year by the 'British Journal of Nursing'.

The last 12 months have seen significant steps being taken by the GHA Ambulance Service to raise the pre-hospital care to current UK standards. Most GHA Ambulance staff have over 10 years' experience, reflecting the high staff retention, extensive experience and strong motivation for the job. The recent designations of a Clinical Development and Training Officer and a Resilience and Special Operations Officer have allowed these leadership roles to focus, develop and expand into their respective specialties.

Mr Speaker, Paramedic Service practice was introduced successfully on the 1st December 2014, and already the benefits of using these advanced skills are clear, with out-of-hospital pain management demonstrating to be a prevalent area of practice. Advance Life Support can be delivered out of hospital, providing lifesaving interventions at the incident site.

The Paramedic Response Vehicle (PRV) has proved to be at the sharp end of Gibraltar's pre-hospital response. Furthermore, attendance of a paramedic allows the possibility of triaging incidents, thus ensuring that resources and skill are used more effectively.

Mr Speaker, our multi-agency relationships are getting stronger, and our professional interactions are now providing reciprocal benefits. During this period, Gibraltar has exercised two multi-agency aircraft disaster exercises with many lessons learned by all agencies and at all levels.

Mr Speaker, Sponsored Patients and Visiting Consultants: the number of referrals to tertiary centres outside Gibraltar continues to rise, with over 3500 cases managed during this past year. Mr Speaker, this Government will continue to be committed to the programme and ensure patients with complex clinical needs get the best possible care and outcomes. It is for this reason that we have just two weeks ago entered into an agreement with St George's Hospitals Trust which will provide a range of treatments both in London and in Gibraltar, by way of visiting consultants and specialised nurses, which will not only ensure the best possible treatment, but also result in more efficient use of funding. This will improve such services as neurology, neuro-surgery, spinal issues and back conditions and gastro-enterology. The agreement with St George's will include the use of in-hospital accommodation for families. Moreover the acquisition of the new, expanded Calpe House will, when complete, also provide for much more economical accommodation for our patients.

Still in relation to sponsored patients, Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce that we have now completed the review of sponsored patients allowances and that, from the 1st of July, the weekly maximum allowance will be increased from £427 to £504, with a corresponding percentage increase in the allowances for those staying at Calpe House. Other improvements include greater flexibility in arranging return dates and escort conditions for the children and the elderly.

These are much overdue changes that have been discussed with and welcomed by patient groups.

Mr Speaker, I will now summarise developments in various other departments:

In Radiology: commencement of the Abdominal Aortic Screening programme which they run; and a premium ultrasound machine has been purchased, which includes an advanced foetal heart tool, which facilitates and enhances the foetal heart investigation.

Mr Speaker, the most significant investment in this department this year will be the replacement of the CT scanner which is currently 10 years old. This is further evidence of this Government's commitment to enhancing medicine in Gibraltar, and to ensure that there is proper upkeep and updating of equipment. This new scanner will increase the GHA's diagnostic capability, together with a better and safer service, particularly with regards to dose-saving software, reliability and image quality. This package has also included the training for staff in the department. It will be the most advanced CT scanner in use in the whole of Europe.

The possibility of bringing an MRI service to Gibraltar is now actively being pursued, as we continue to make plans to expand the St Bernard's campus to cater for growth and a distribution of our services.

Mr Speaker, this year has seen an increase in the requests for many tests across all of our Pathology services. This is related to workload increase and a greater dependence on laboratory tests in disease diagnosis and patient management, with a significant number of tests, including those for tumour markers having increased by over 300%. The department continues to work with service users to fine-tune test repertoire, as well as implementing tests that reflect best practice and modern approaches to diagnosis and management.

Mr Speaker, in conjunction with the UK, the GHA has introduced a new-born baby screening test. The GHA's Department of Pathology has been involved since 2012 in the pilot study, which was run by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust for the testing of Heel Prick samples taken from babies between five and eight days old, for certain genetic conditions in addition to those already checked. We can now identify these rare genetic disorders at a much earlier stage.

All these inherited conditions are those where babies have problems breaking down amino acids. Knowing about these conditions early allows dietary advice to be given to prevent the build-up of harmful proteins in the system and thus reduce the impact of the disease.

Mr Speaker, the move to a purpose-built facility at the St Bernard's Hospital catering site is planned to take place during this summer. This will change the way meals are served to patients, and quality above all will be the main benefit. Already the process to improve the patient meal experience has commenced with the successful pilot introduction of bulk food delivery in John Mackintosh Ward. Excellent feedback has been received from patients and relatives.

Great thought has gone into the design of the facility in terms of energy efficiency which will reduce running costs.

The new facility together with the changes to be made in the way that meals are served will give a wider choice of meals to our patients.

Mr Speaker, the GHA's estate is spread across multiple sites that include St Bernard's Hospital, Primary Care Centre, Ocean Views, Community Mental Health and the Catering Facility. There is also an increasing amount of equipment maintained for patients in the community.

During this last year, a total of 2,833 work requests and emergency call-outs were attended to. This is a significant increase in workload, which mirrors the increase in assets now being managed. The clinical engineering team has also been engaged in numerous major projects as part of an ambitious programme of improvements across the GHA, including: the expansion of clinics in the Primary Care Centre; a new Dermatology Clinic; expansion of the Blood Department; of the Community Mental Health Facility; relocation of the Hospital's liquid oxygen tanks; installation of a new lift for St Bernard's Hospital; and a new vital signs central monitoring system for A&E.

Mr Speaker, over this financial year, we have made substantial progress in our medical devices lifecycle replacement plan and continued to invest in equipment, upgrading critical medical devices that are nearing or at the end of their specific lifecycles.

Mr Speaker, I would like to stress the importance of investment and maintenance of equipment. The GHA repeatedly demonstrates its professionalism and dedication to ensure that St Bernard's Hospital and other sites remain operational.

Mr Speaker, in keeping with the Government's policy for promoting e-Government, the GHA reached an agreement with EMIS/Ascribe, a leading UK based company, for the provision of a full integrated electronic patient record (EPR) for Gibraltar. This follows a European tender process that started in 2013. The introduction of an electronic patient record was well overdue.

Mr Speaker, I am glad to say that we are now in a position to introduce this and that it will mark a huge milestone in the development of Gibraltar's healthcare, probably one of the most significant ever.

Mr Speaker, the GHA and EMIS/Ascribe have been working together to deliver a unique, world-leading product combining all areas of healthcare, the most integrated system anywhere, and will be jointly branding the product. As this develops, patient records will be electronic, so that wherever you go within the system, your clinician will be able to access all of your records. No more lost notes or referral letters, Mr Speaker.

Your GP at the health centre will be able to see your record of interventions in the hospital, X-rays, scans and other results, and your hospital doctor, at A&E or in the clinic, will be able to see your health

centre records. At the end of the process, a GP on a house call, on a mobile device, will be able to access your notes, as will a consultant doing a ward round in hospital. There will be alerts that appear on screen for certain conditions or medications, increasing patient safety even further. Prescribing and dispensing tools will also be greatly improved.

875 Mr Speaker, the preparation for this has been huge, with intensive training sessions, here and in the UK, and a great deal of organisational work being done by several teams, including the clinicians who will be using the system, and administrators, as well as the GHA's own IT and IS experts who have been commended for their expertise by EMIS/Ascribe. This has been an initiative like few that the GHA has seen, and the whole team and everybody involved there have to be congratulated.

880 I am pleased to state that the EPR Programme Board, which I Chair, and which includes Gibraltar and UK representation, last Friday gave the green light to go live for the Primary Care and A&E modules ahead of schedule tomorrow. (*Banging on desks*) Further modules will follow in phases, with full implementation expected in 18 months.

885 Mr Speaker, EPR will modernise and transform the way we deliver healthcare. It will bring many benefits to both staff and patients by significantly improving the management of information, allowing us to extract important statistics, and most importantly, making the patient journey smoother and more efficient – a true game changer.

890 Mr Speaker, the IMT team has otherwise had quite a busy year. Apart from the work done in supporting the EMIS team on the EPR project, other significant projects have included installing all of the IT systems and equipment and network infrastructure at Ocean Views, Community Mental Health and the new clinics at the Primary Care Centre. The team has also engaged in the installation of a hospital Wi-Fi network, a centrally managed digital dictation system for medical professionals and the British Sign Language online translation services.

895 Mr Speaker, the Day Surgery Unit continues to expand its services and the number of procedures undertaken. The unit continues to undertake on average between 85% to 90% of all elective patients requiring surgical procedures of all specialities. This is way above the UK mean. During 2014 a total of 2,666 surgical procedures were undertaken within the Day Surgery Unit.

900 Mr Speaker, the continued success of the Day Surgery Unit which allows a reduction in demand for inpatient beds with an estimated freeing-up of over 1,200 bed days on wards, together with the use of the newly refurbished and equipped third theatre, improved utilisation of theatre time, improved bed management, the recruitment of surgeons in Orthopaedics and ENT, extra surgical initiatives and the transfer of long-stay elderly patients to the newly refurbished John Mackintosh Wing have resulted in minimum elective surgical cancellations due to beds not being available, despite the increased bed occupancy experienced during this last winter.

905 Mr Speaker, all of this has contributed to the drastic reduction in the size of surgical waiting lists in St Bernard's Hospital to what is now the lowest in years. Mr Speaker, from a total surgical waiting list hovering around the 1,000 mark, in May this year it stood at just 387 patients, about a third, and this despite the fact that more clinics and more activity actually identify more cases. As one example, the plastic surgery waiting list was 154 in March 2013; it is now 80. The list for ENT was 125 and is now 49. And for 910 Ophthalmology, it was 140 and is now zero. (*Banging on desks*)

The number of operations carried out has also increased, with the figure from January to May this year being 1,432 compared with 1,282 for the same period last year.

915 Mr Speaker, this is an unbelievable achievement in such a short time after so many years of the same old story. It goes to show that this Government's policy of empowering and encouraging clinicians and other stakeholders, and supporting them, produces results.

Mr Speaker, we are now planning extra initiatives in Plastic and Orthopaedic Surgery, to reduce the waiting lists even further.

920 Mr Speaker, the GHA continues to explore opportunities of repatriating services. Even though in the short-term this represents a greater cost, these costs will be recovered in the long term. The quality of the service is maintained and there is less disruption to patients who do not need to travel abroad. Services repatriated so far have included: Cardiology Service – by increasing the Cardiology Service agreement with a visiting consultant to allow more work to be done locally; upper limb surgery – thanks to the specialisation of the new orthopaedic surgeon, the GHA is now able to offer certain upper limb surgery locally, thereby reducing the need for referrals to the UK; ENT Services – the GHA will now be able to 925 offer a variety of otology and laryngology surgical procedures locally, reducing the need of tertiary referrals to the UK and reducing the need to bring a visiting consultant over.

930 In oncology, the GHA is close to an agreement that will see cancer treatment carried out in Gibraltar by way of chemotherapy, consultant support and a multi-disciplinary approach to cancer treatment. In line with developing the strategy for cancer services, the first step has been the recruitment of the Cancer Services Co-ordinator, with whom I look forward to working very closely in the future. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that we now have an Associate Specialist in Accident and Emergency who, together with a new 24 hour administrative presence, is reforming the way we work in this front-line department.

On Primary Care, Mr Speaker, an area where we still need to continue to improve, especially with respect to access to services and availability of GP appointments. It is a challenge that we are overcoming and developments this year have included: four new clinics for use by the GPs have been developed; three and a half extra GPs are now working in order to reduce waiting times by increasing the availability of appointments. The increase will also provide GP cover for palliative care at the Cancer Centre.

Dermatology Service: a GP with special interest in Dermatology will support the Visiting Consultant service and carry out procedures locally. This will avoid delays in having to wait for the visit by consultants from the UK. To further support this service, a new dermatology clinic has been built, designed by the team as a bespoke dermatology unit, allowing the service to have an established base and provide a better service.

Works on the fifth clinic in the Dental Suite is currently being completed to allow for extra clinical sessions for both Orthodontics and general dentistry, with the aim of reducing waiting lists.

There is also a repeat prescription box, with relevant request forms that has been set up to facilitate patients obtaining a 'last prescription appointment'. This service has allowed the release of extra GP appointments.

A British Sign Language Video link Service was introduced this year for patients with hearing impairment. This will fill a communication gap which was missing and will allow this client group to access the services with no barriers. Initially this has been installed at the Primary Care Centre to allow clinicians and service users to communicate, but it is planned to roll out this technology to secondary care. A text service for the profoundly deaf has also been introduced.

I can report, Mr Speaker, that these improvements have resulted in the famous queue for appointments on the first of the month having been cleared in June in just 15 minutes.

For Dementia and the Elderly, Mr Speaker, in line with the completion of the GHA Strategy, the drafting of the Dementia Strategy for Gibraltar is also nearing its completion. Part of this strategy is the development of the Dementia Day Facility which will be ready in a few months. The new Bella Vista Day Centre will offer services for up to 90 users and will provide much-needed rehabilitation care to clients and support to family members. Some of the services provided include current services which will be re-located to the new site.

Mr Speaker, I would like to give a special mention here to the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society which through their work, commitment, dedication and financial contribution through fund raising – as well as choosing the name for the centre – have been key stakeholders in making this project a reality.

As members know, in December last year I was entrusted also with the residential services for the elderly. Of relevance here is the new Dementia residential facility, also due to open in a few months and which will look after 52 residents. I must also mention the opening during the past year of John Mackintosh Wing, thanks to the hard work of the former Minister for the Elderly, my friend and colleague, Samantha Sacramento, also as a residential home for the elderly.

During the coming year we will be building up on these developments to improve provision of elderly services, including of course Mount Alvernia, and we will continue to work closely with the Care Agency to ensure smooth transition between home and residential care.

Mr Speaker, as we all know, the GHA has the largest Government budget. The financial year 2014-15 saw the budget top the £100 million mark. The main challenges to controlling expenditure correspond to clinical demand-led items, mainly GPMS prescriptions, Drugs and Pharmaceuticals and Sponsored Patients. The GHA is studying ways of becoming more efficient in these challenging areas.

Mr Speaker, on the element of Capital Expenditure, however, with the creation last year of the GHA's CAPEX committee, we continue to deliver tight budgetary control, with capital expenditure being well within budget this financial year. Necessary major works have been completed, new equipment procured, and a phased, planned and co-ordinated asset replacement programme is in place. This is thanks to a more informed prioritisation of expenditure and controlled capital replacement programme as a result of improved communication with all stakeholders that has clearly identified budget holders, and greater participation from user areas – all part of the streamlining resulting from the management restructure.

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to Mental Health, and I have deliberately left this to near the end of my budget speech since it is most definitely one of this Government's greatest achievements during these three years.

Mr Speaker, as related in my first Budget speech to this House, there were tears in our eyes when the Chief Minister and I first visited KGV on being elected. I had returned after 20 years and could not believe the state of the building and the horrendous conditions that patients had to live in and staff had to work in, being the clear result of years of neglect and lack of investment by the previous administration, together with their lack of vision and sense of priority.

Mr Speaker, both the Chief Minister and I vowed to create a centre that Gibraltar would be proud of, and never again would Mental Health be the Cinderella of our Health Service. We achieved this. (*Banging on desks*)

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Several Members: Hear, hear.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Very proud – very good.

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Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in his address yesterday asked Members of this side of the House whether they got a ‘twinge’, presumably of guilt about the state of a school. Well, Mr Speaker, it is not a twinge the opposite side should be feeling, but a cramp of the most bone-twisting kind. Nay, Mr Speaker, they should shrivel in shame for having created and maintained a mental home with such inhuman conditions and kept it going in its Victorian decadence well into the 21st century, condemning some of our less privileged citizens to a life of squalor – indeed, forcing some of them to live out the end of their lives in the old KGV. Thank God, Mr Speaker, for the professionalism of the staff and the care that they provided so that at least they could maintain as much of their dignity as possible.

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Mr Speaker, the main focus of work in mental health this year has therefore been in preparing for the opening of the new facility, Ocean Views. The 7th February 2015 saw the long awaited migration to this site, a 52-bedded, state-of-the-art, modern facility and a bright new chapter in Mental Health. A historic and truly memorable day for Mental Health in Gibraltar.

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Mr Speaker, I pay tribute to all the members of the Mental Health team at every level, who worked diligently for many months in partnership with all stakeholders including service users, carers, support groups, relatives and the general public to ensure the transition was carried out with precision, safety and causing minimal disruption to patients.

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Mr Speaker, this is not just about a brand-new facility, but a new philosophy of care. This will reflect a holistic approach in the diversity of the therapeutic programme which will be available. The new treatment plans currently being introduced are comprehensive and based on a recovery model approach, as many of the patients treated demonstrate difficulties in a variety of life circumstances.

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Ocean Views will now offer a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit, a multi-functional suite which will cater for specific cases such as adolescents, vulnerable adults, mother and baby and forensic cases. The other wards will cater for acute admissions, rehabilitation, elderly mentally ill, together with two male and female rehabilitation flats.

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There are improved clinical areas, an Activity and Rehabilitation Centre, together with ample open spaces and gardens. This provides a good balance of residential and recreational areas in an environment which is conducive to healing.

Mr Speaker, this new facility and approach to mental health care has already started to show its benefits. The patients absolutely love the new facility and they are benefiting from the large investment which has never before been made.

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Mr Speaker, critical to the overall Mental Health Service and clients has been the need to review and update the current Mental Health Act. A multi-professional group has been working on this piece of work for the past two years and I will have the satisfaction of bringing the Bill to this House later this week.

Mr Speaker, keeping in line with the commitment to improve Mental Health Services, this year has seen the completion of a full refurbishment programme to the community mental health department based at Coaling Island, achieved with minimal disruption to the running of clinics and services provided by this excellent team. Following from the official opening on 24th September 2014, very positive feedback has been received from service users, relatives and members of the public embracing the new therapeutic and welcoming environment.

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Mr Speaker, this huge investment in our Mental Health Services is aimed at offering more effective clinical care pathways that are integrated across acute, community and residential care settings. This has been necessary to ensure that patients and service users are supported at all stages of the care journey and in a setting that is most appropriate to their needs.

I will now summarise, Mr Speaker, a few other key developments during the year. The new Complaints Procedure: in line with our manifesto commitment, we reviewed the Complaints Procedure, with the relevant legislation completed and published. The process has now been moved away from the GHA and is now managed by the Complaints Handling Service which works under the umbrella of the Office of the Ombudsman. The new scheme commenced on 1st April 2015 and aims to provide a more independent and fairer process in managing complaints.

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Mr Speaker, even though there was a bilateral agreement between the UK and Gibraltar which had been in place since 1974, where patients referred by Gibraltar had the benefit of transplantation services in the UK in the past, for many years our patients had been denied access to the UK’s transplant services. Thanks

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to the joint work done by the Gibraltar Dialysis Patients and Friends Association, by the Chief Minister and myself, these difficulties have been resolved. The GHA is in the process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Health Service Blood and Transplant Service to ensure access for our patients who require transplants.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that, in keeping with our philosophy, clinicians now play a greater role than ever before in the running of the GHA. After decades of inaction, the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) has been reconstituted and now meets regularly with the management team and with me. One of the first initiatives being planned together with the MAC is a sexual health policy, an area where we need to progress.

Other areas which we are planning to develop this year and where progress is already being made, include stroke management, child health, and telemedicine.

There is also a great deal of working together with health-related NGOs, including general users' groups such as the Health Users' Forum, and also, but not exclusively, those relating to sponsored patients, breast cancer, prostate cancer, multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions, maternity and child issues, breast feeding, sexual health, mental health, and autism. All these groups have my full support and encouragement and I am grateful for their commitment and energy.

In relation to autism, the GHA has advanced tremendously in its work in support of autistic children and young people, and their families. There is now a highly trained and motivated multidisciplinary team – including members of other Departments such as the Education Department and Social Services – and very successful courses have been held for parents. We are at last filling a huge gap that existed in this area just three short years ago.

The Government will also shortly be entering into an agreement with Cancer Relief in relation to a hospice in Gibraltar, showing how willing we are to work with charities and support groups.

Mr Speaker, to finish I would like to thank all at the GHA, without whom these achievements would not have been possible. I am incredibly proud of nurses, medical staff, AHP's and the administrative, secretarial and other support staff – from labourers to domestics and everybody else – for their professionalism, dedication and commitment to ensure the GHA provides a quality service. I am grateful too to my new colleagues in the Elderly Residential Services with whom I have now had the pleasure of working for some months.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank all the hundreds of members of the public who come to see me, or write to me, for bringing problems to my attention that I invariably try hard to solve. Without this feedback, we cannot improve.

And I want to thank the Trade Unions, with whom I work regularly and closely, for the constructive, effective and tireless way in which they carry out their essential and legitimate duties in supporting all our employees.

I would also like to thank all those public servants and any other employees in so many departments that I am involved in for their incredible commitment and work, including of course the staff of this House.

And of course my own personal staff, based at Environment and at the GHA, some of whom will sadly be retiring soon. They are lovely people, an incredible group of professionals, dedicated, supporting, loyal and great fun to work with, even during the times when we are under pressure. You have made all the difference to me over the past three and a half years. *Thank you.*

Mr Speaker, I will never be satisfied that I have done enough. We clearly have some way to go still in providing the standards of excellence that we all aspire to. But I can confidently say, for example, that never in the history of the Gibraltar Health Service has so much progress been made in such a short space of time. The same can be said, Mr Speaker, in other areas of my portfolio.

Mr Speaker, I have absolutely no intention of slowing down. *(Banging on desks)*

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, before you ask for the next speaker, I wonder whether people want a five-minute comfort break before we move on to the next speech? I propose a recess for five minutes.

The House recessed at 12.10 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 12.20 p.m.

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

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Jaime Netto.

Hon. J J Netto: Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand to deliver my 20th Budget address and by my own free will the last one that I will be doing, given that I will not be offering myself for re-election at the forthcoming General Election. (*Banging on desks*) I am grateful, Mr Speaker, to all hon. Members.

In today's speech I will commence with matters to do with Utilities, then Social Services, followed by the Environment, Health & Safety and finally some minor issues with regard to matters that I have had the pleasure of contributing through my passage in local politics.

Mr Speaker, the overriding issue as far as Utilities is concerned has to be the need to have a new power station, to provide a reliable and stable production of electricity to meet the needs of our community and for business to execute work in a smooth and efficient way. Here it is obvious that the present Government inaction on this vital project for Gibraltar has been shambolic to say the least. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Three and a half years ago the party opposite produced a 'False Dawn Manifesto' in which it stated among other things, 'We will ensure that Gibraltar's power needs are provided for and any binding agreements entered into in respect of the new power station will be respected'. Yet the very opposite has happened to this commitment as stated in their manifesto. The very first thing that the new incoming Government did was to cancel the contract for the construction of the power station, which was signed by the previous Government. In order to do so, as if money was no problem whatsoever, it had to pay some £5 million to compensate the company for the cancellation of the contract and works already carried out.

Following the cancellation of the contract, the Government entered into a period of dilly-dallying in order to see what alternative to the existing power station they could come up with. During the last three and a half years the Government has provided, in this Chamber and outside, dates for commencement and completion of the new power station, only to be superseded by new dates, endlessly.

Whilst this was going on, power cuts kept occurring, and to this effect the Government went on overdrive to smear the GSD with an incessant number of press statements to say that the power cuts were due to the 'creaking infrastructure' inherited from the period of the GSD Government. In fact we heard it this morning from the Hon. Minister himself. This distortion and manipulation of the facts was proved wrong when I placed a number of questions in Parliament, which showed that the majority of times in which there had been power cuts was due to the interim generators brought by the present Government.

From the very beginning of this term of office by the current Government, I have stated unequivocally that the GSD Government policies to have a diesel power station, given Gibraltar's specific circumstances was the right one even if that meant that because of health and safety consideration we should have to pay a higher price for the plant.

Mr Speaker, we should not forget that the GSD project for a power station was based on a 'best available technology' at the time, and it was also approved by the Pollution, Prevention and Control Regulation with the necessary permit issued; therefore, completely safeguarding the environment within the context of European and Gibraltarian law, even if the Minister this morning would want us to believe otherwise.

A project that if the new Government would have honoured its manifesto commitment would have meant that the new power station would have been finished by now with the necessary infrastructure to go with it, and having power cuts being something of the past. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Despite this, the current Government has tried to tarnish the project with a number of pseudo-arguments that do not stand to scrutiny. On the one side it argued that natural gas is a clean source of fuel, whilst diesel is not. The reality is that both are fossil fuels, and both pollute – even if the Hon. Minister for the Environment and the Chief Minister want us to believe otherwise.

The fact remains that with today's technology the criticism of diesel power stations have largely been overcome by the use of selective catalytic reductions systems and exhaust catalyst. On the other hand, natural gas is a fossil fuel composed mainly by methane, and has a high fugitive escape from the extraction and transportation of the fuel giving rise to the biggest cause of greenhouse effect on the ozone layer – something the Hon. Minister for the Environment keeps silent on. (*Banging on desk*)

Another false argument by the Government is to state that the GSLP Government project will cost half the price of the GSD one. This brings me to the despicable innuendo stated by the Chief Minister when he stated in a GBC interview, 'One is tempted to ask who was going to pocket the half of the extra amount it was going to cost' – the inference being that someone somewhere must have been profiting from it, quite an outrageous and scandalous statement from someone who holds the office of Chief Minister.

I also notice that a year ago the Chief Minister actually said that their project was going to cost half the price of our project. Today, this morning, the Minister for the Environment said it was going to cost £26 million less. At this rate, by the time that their power station is done, it is either going to be the same or even more, at the rate they are changing their tune.

Yet Mr Speaker, we know from answers in Parliament that the overall cost of the present project by this Government, as I said, will be almost on a par with the one that would have cost under the GSD Government or more. Under the contract of the GSD it would have been around £120 million for the power station inclusive of the installation of a new dual distribution network all around Gibraltar with five new

distribution centres. Yet this compares with answers given in Parliament for some expenditure so far as October of last year to be around £90 million, whilst there remain other unquantified expenditure in relation to the reclamation – pipelines, LNG storage tanks and the so-called 17 years of infrastructural works announced by the Government. So, this is another false dawn argument.

Then we have the cheaper cost to run the gas power station than the diesel one. Yes, it is true that gas is cheaper today than diesel given the over-abundance of gas in the world markets due to the new controversial process of fracking to extract gas. However, we do live in a volatile world with scenarios in which pricing is changing so fast that no-one can predict with absolute certainty the price of fossil fuels within the next 12 months, let alone in 10 or 30 years' time. Proof of this is that no-one saw the drop of oil in the last 12 months. Still, it will remain to be seen if fracking will be permitted to stringent regulations to come, and what will this do to the current practice and cost.

Mr Speaker, what is totally improper for this Government to do is to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money in the acquisition of consultants' reports on how to proceed with the power station, and for the Government to refuse time and time again to provide Parliament with copies of all relevant documents inclusive of health and safety ones. Clearly this would be inadmissible in democracies that do not provide genuine accountability and transparent standards in order to allow a fair level of information and debate on important matters. Yet here, the Government operates in a secretive and opaque manner in order to avoid being scrutinised by Parliament in the hope to accomplish its objective in a *fait accompli* without having proper accountability over its decision to implement policy, more so in what is a very sensitive project.

Despite the delay in the Government to construct a new power station, today not a single brick has been laid in respect of this or even the provision of LNG storage tanks to supply the power station at the North or Detached Mole. Furthermore, it has not even determined whether it is possible to store large enough quantities of LNG safely in order to make the project economical. In addition, the Government has still not worked out – nor reached an understanding with the RAF – on how the new power station can be run without exhaust plumes disrupting flights, which we know is a matter of concern. In short, it is a project that is beset with problems and, at this rate, it is unlikely to be completed by 2020. (*Interjections*)

The fact remains that the GSD has been expressing concerns about the use of LNG so near populated areas since the beginning of Government intentions on this matter. However, when the Government made a decision to locate the LNG Installation in the Detached or North Mole without having all the necessary safety reports beforehand that this raised alarm bells given the cavalier way in which it was proceeding. This haphazard manner in which the Government is operating is a result of a post-tender decision to have a private entity to build the facility at no cost to the Government in exchange for bunkering rights.

The current situation is that while a contract has been awarded for an LNG power station, none has been awarded for the construction of the LNG storage facility which is required to supply the power station.

It is obvious from the Government's own communiqués that all the necessary health and safety reports, including gas cloud models and blast risk assessments, were not obtained before the decision to build an LNG installation at the Detached or North Mole was made.

On 17th February when the Government said the 'the rigorous risk assessment process...is now underway' and when we pointed out that these assessments post-date the decision to locate and build an LNG installation so near urbanised areas, they said on 18th February that, 'the original contract with Bouygues was for the design, build and all safety reports associated with the proposed power station' and that they were 'not in a position to be able to publish these reports at this time due to commercially-sensitive information they contained'.

There is a huge distinction between safety reports associated with the power station and safety reports associated with the supply of it via an LNG storage installation. It is clear that no report has been obtained prior to the decision to locate an LNG storage installation at the Detached or North Mole. To the extent that the Government relies on reports produced by Bouygues, the latter have a commercial interest in the project and are not independent: no responsible Government would make a decision to build an LNG installation so near a densely-populated area based on the reports of those who are going to build the power station and therefore have a commercial interest in the... post-dates the decision to build the power station at the North Mole and build the LNG installation at either the North or Detached Moles. (*Banging on desk*)

The Government has committed itself to a project and awarded a multi-million pound contract, whilst on its own admission not fully understanding the full safety implications. It now wishes to stifle debate to avoid having its position further compromised. At no point has our community had an opportunity to hold an open and frank debate on the issues with all the facts to hand because the Government admits that those facts are not yet available. The GSD will not take the Government's hopes for outcomes on trust and remains unwilling to accept the same level of risk which the Government appears to be willing to accept when faced with the potential catastrophic consequences of an accident at this facility to our community.

Mr Speaker, the Government may be content to proceed in this adventurist and amateurish way, but the GSD is not prepared to go along with what is one of Gibraltar's most important projects. Hence the reason

why it went out of its way to have a world-leading authority to make a report to determine the safety aspect of the Government policy on LNG plans for the power station and the proposed bunkering facilities. Even if the Minister for the Environment wished to rubbish the report, I am sure that the mantra of science is not going to be one that is going to cover him that much.

1235 In its executive summary it states that the proposed LNG terminal options within the Port of Gibraltar have been assessed on their suitability to handle major hazards and based on the findings of the HAZID study are judged to present high risks, some significantly greater than those found to be acceptable for conventional LNG marine storage terminals.

1240 Furthermore, both the North and Detached Mole have been evaluated for suitable terminal locations and based on typical safety criteria and project are seen as not suitable for the purpose the Government is considering. No doubt the Government has moved – and is moving – to spin the conclusion of the report, as we have seen this morning by the Minister, with all sort of smokescreens and personal character assassination aspersions to divert public attention from the authority of Lloyd's Register, but the fact remains that the GSD Opposition has contributed further to having a proper transparent debate where the
1245 Government has been caught severely neglecting this community's real concerns. What is clear is that the GSD is not alone in our concerns over the use of LNG given the press statement issued yesterday by the Environmental Safety Group which also points to the unacceptable risks being taken by the Government.

In concluding this aspect of my Budget address, Mr Speaker, the GSD remains convinced that this is *not* a safe location for our community to have an LNG bunkering facility and power station. We would not
1250 build such a facility at the present location. The outgoing Government is hell-bent in doing this regardless of the safety considerations that should come first, for them the commercial interest of bunkering companies comes first.

Mr Speaker, there are many good reasons for the electorate deciding to kick out the present Government from office at the forthcoming General Elections, but the manner in which it has failed to address the needs
1255 of providing the new power station is a monument to their incompetence and a good reason for the community not to trust them ever again.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to Social Services. At the end of her last year's Budget address, the hon. Lady the Minister for Social Services, stated, 'We will not take our feet off the pedal. It is full speed ahead for us as we continue to meet our manifesto commitments'. Yet in measuring the strength of the feet on the pedal,
1260 one has to come to the conclusion that either the feet or the pedal requires a major overhaul in order to get the manifesto commitments completed.

Take as examples, the commitments on 'Life Planning for Disabled Persons Programme', or the 'Disability Action Plan', both manifesto commitments. Here throughout the last three and a half years what we have heard repeatedly by the hon. Lady is an amount of waffle enough for Parliament staff to provide a file on its own in *Hansard*. The double-talk and beating around the bush is colossal. Once one has stripped
1265 all the excuses and pussy-footing, what we have is the fact that the commitments have not been done, regardless of the dressing-up by the Minister in the form of, 'This does not mean that the work has not been done in different strategies that will form part of the plan as it is developed'. In other words, having failed to deliver, the Minister described what social workers have been doing for years, long before the hon. Lady arrived at the Ministry.

Another failure on the part of the hon. Lady to deliver is on the transposition of the UN Convention on the rights of disabled persons. Here again, the excuses by the hon. Lady are considerable, such as it has taken her three and a half years to consult all stakeholders, or that the matter has been ongoing, or that it is near completion, etc. It is really quite pathetic. The fact remains that their manifesto commitment on
1275 page 82 states, 'We will legislate to further protect disabled people within our first year in Government'... and I say that again, 'our first year in Government', 'using the terms of the UN Convention as a model.' On this score the hon. Lady has failed – and failed miserably.

Mr Speaker, even in the quite easy task of establishing an Equal Opportunities Commission as provided for in the existing Equal Opportunities Act – that there is in place thanks to the GSD Government – and for
1280 which it is a manifesto commitment under the GSLP/Liberal party, the hon. Lady has miserably failed to deliver on such a minor assignment. Good job that at least the primary legislation on Equality was done by the GSD, because if this too had to be done by the hon. Lady, judging by her non-performance in this matter, it would have taken the hon. Lady some 20 years to do, based on the excuses of, 'It is ongoing', 'It is being considered', 'We are consulting', etc.

1285 Another area where the 'feet on the pedal' have had a lacklustre performance is in the completion of the Dementia Care Unit. Three and a half years ago, the hon. Lady inherited a project from the GSD which had already spent close to £10 million in converting the Old Naval Hospital and refurbishing the buildings with just £1 million for completion under the first GSLP budget. Yet it has taken the hon. Lady all this time to complete something that was four-fifths done. The hon. Lady may try to claim that the delay was necessary because, according to her, one room was too small for having a resident, despite that such a room was not.
1290 Therefore the delay in delivering this GSD project is another sign of incompetence and lack of willingness

to prioritise such a project over other fanciful ones like the extension to No. 6 Convent Place. Another issue of concern in this matter is that in the new Estimate Book it does not have an added provision for recurrent expenditure for the staff that will be necessary to man the new Dementia Unit, despite the fact that the intention is now – at least now – to open the facility sometime this summer.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Equality, in her maiden speech in June 2012, she stated that by having a Minister dedicated for this, for the first time to equality issues, that this will be an important step by this new Government. She also stated that this will mean that ‘vulnerable people will be given priority’.

Despite the fanfare by the Minister for Equality about how she will now be the saviour of minority groups, one has to say that not once in three and a half years she has said anything about the plight of the Moroccan Nationals in Gibraltar, let alone done anything positive to contribute to solving the long-standing grievances by them. Here we do have to mention that in solving their problems this has been thanks to the work done by the late Bernard Linares when he reversed the decision of the GSLP to forbid Moroccan children access to our schools; (A Member: Hear, hear.) my own decision to give Moroccan Nationals equality of services in the then ETB – something of which I will have to say more later; or the commencement to naturalise the Moroccan Nationals for which I thank the current Chief Minister for completing this process from the initiation of this process by Sir Peter Caruana QC. It beggars belief that the Minister for Equality should have been silent on such an important matter throughout this term of office.

It also beggars belief that the Minister for Equality should only answer my question about conducting a survey to determine any discrimination against female employees in relation to obtaining less income for work of the same grade or profession as male colleagues, with the standard answer of, ‘It is ongoing’. This is an initiative that has been important for Unite the union which has been putting pressure on the Minister who seems to be unconcerned about the petition of the union. The fact remains that whilst the hon. Lady is too busy in having photographs of herself published every other second day in the press, she has forgotten that during her tenure of office that female participation in statutory bodies is less now than when the GSD was in office – quite an indictment for someone who said in her maiden speech that equality issues will be placed at the heart of policy decisions. (*Banging on desk*)

It is obvious that the Equality Minister has not yet understood that an Equality Minister needs to take positive steps to end discrimination. One good example from where the hon. Lady could learn a lot is from the positive action taken by the GSD Government in providing professional courses to female civil servants so that the glass ceiling of not allowing such employees access to middle and higher management be broken from the situation *we* inherited by the previous GSLP Government. (*Interjection*) I think they are starting to like me, Mr Speaker, it is nice to hear some background music to... (*Laughter and interjections*)

Mr Speaker, the GSD legacy closed the gap between men and women through the introduction of social policies, such as maternity grants and equalisation of pension rights; the support of working parents, with school lunches and family-friendly hours; and encouraging upward social mobility for women through training within the public sector.

This Government has failed to provide a concerted effort to positively encourage more women to participate in bodies linked to influencing policy-making and the introduction of further meritocratic policies, such as equality legislation. And even today, it is pathetic for a so-called socialist government to wait for a European Directive in order to implement paternity leave in the private sector. If they were real socialists, they would have had the boldness to do it right now. They could even adopt the very successful legislation on maternity leave as a model, brought about by the GSD Government, as a tool to emulate and implement the paternity leave. (*Interjection*)

As expected, the Minister for Social Services will claim that thanks to this new Government they have brought about a new dawn in which they will have advanced the rights of minority groups. Well, the only thing to their credit in this area was the legislation on civil partnership, although we do notice the existing tension between the Minister and the Equality Rights Group due to the slow pace in advancing their overall rights. The hon. Lady’s slow pace in advancing disability issues rests in the fact that in three and a half years we still do not have a lift to allow disabled persons access to this Chamber, although I did notice that the Chief Minister justifying this inaction in this matter on the basis that they still need to consult further – three and a half years and they *still* need to consult further!

Where, Mr Speaker, have we heard these words before? Is it the standard answer given by the Minister for Social Services which are, ‘It is ongoing’, or, ‘It is that people are being considered’, or, ‘We are consulting’ – excuses for not delivering on their promises.

Mr Speaker, at our last month’s session the hon. Lady refused to provide Parliament with a copy of the Care Agency Training Programme. Quite apart with the disdain in which this false dawn Government treats the legislature in blocking access to information, there are only two reasons why the Minister refuses to provide me with the reasonable request to such information. The first is that it would expose her to having to acknowledge that the majority of the training delivered in this term of office is a natural development of the training and objectives under the previous Government, like when the hon. Lady stated that the Training

Officer had been employed in *her* period of office, when this actually happened in *my* term of office. Alternatively, the decision stems from the blocking of the Opposition's role in Parliament to scrutinise the validity or priority of the training provided, as set against the objectives of the Care Agency. Well, the hon. Lady may wish to overtake the Father of the House in terms of refusing to provide information, but the Minister cannot claim to be open and transparent in the execution of her responsibilities in this House.

Mr Speaker, this year we finally had the release of the Sir Jonathan Parker Report on the Dr Giraldi Home Inquiry. (*Banging on desk*) (*Interjections and laughter*)

It seems everyone is getting very excited, Mr Speaker. (**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!)

There can be no doubt that Sir Jonathan's findings completely vindicated the position of the GSD throughout this unfortunate saga: namely, that all allegations of abuse in the Dr Giraldi Home – including those contained in the witness statements obtained by Ms Hernandez, when the Chief Minister was her lawyer, for her unfair dismissal claim – were properly investigated by the Social Services Agency at the time; and that those of a criminal nature were referred to and investigated as appropriate by the Royal Gibraltar Police. And that neither the Chief Minister nor the Minister for Social Affairs at the time – Sir Peter Caruana QC and Yvette Del Agua respectively – in any way attempted to cover up or prevent any allegation from being investigated properly and in accordance with due process and the rule of law.

Sir Jonathan could not have been more categorical in his findings when he states: 'I accept, without qualification, the evidence of Yvette Del Agua, Jaime Netto and Sir Peter' and also when he states that Joe Bossano's suspicions were 'unfounded in every respect.' (**A Member:** Shame.)

The fact that the GSD has been vindicated, however, is not something that the Opposition wishes to gloat or give more importance than is merited. What the Opposition does consider unfortunate and an utter disgrace, however, is the refusal by the then GSLP/Liberal Opposition to believe the words of Gibraltar's highest authorities, including the RGP and the Chief Minister at the time.

It will be recalled that the GSLP/Liberals, purely for their own cynical and partisan political ends, relentlessly propagated and exploited the allegations publicly, both locally and in Spain. As a consequence, the names and reputations of many hard-working employees at the Dr Giraldi Home were dragged through the mud unnecessarily, causing them, the residents of the Home and the families of employees and residents, undue suffering and anguish. (*Banging on desk and interjection*)

The Opposition is of the view that those Members of the Government who participated in the programme '*Espejo Publico*' in Spain, in which the Dr Giraldi Home was described as 'The House of Horrors' should have done the decent thing and inform *Antena 3* of the outcome of the Inquiry. It is shameful that those who made untold damage that was inflicted on the Home, its residents and its employees, did not restore the reputation in Spain of the RGP and the Attorney General, whose respectability and professionalism were called into question during the programme, remain shamelessly silent now that the conspiracy to tarnish the Home, its employees and the GSD Government has so miserably failed in the Courts.

We also note Sir Jonathan's findings regarding Joanna Hernandez, and find these to be highly revealing, apart from the fact that many of Sir Jonathan's descriptions of Joanna Hernandez's shortcomings as manager serve to exonerate the decision of the Social Services Agency in not renewing her contract. Sir Jonathan found that 'Joanna Hernandez' bullying manner often resulted in members of staff not turning up for work or taking time off due to stress'.

The inexplicable delay, of over a year, in relation to the investigation into claims of bullying against Ms Hernandez by 35 trainees is a cause of great concern to the Opposition and, no doubt, to the 35 trainees themselves. It is regrettable that the Chief Minister, who was personally responsible for calling the Dr Giraldi Home Inquiry, and who had no apparent qualms in getting personally involved in the recent investigation into allegations of bullying against the RGP, is now so reluctant to get involved in the bullying allegation against Joanna Hernandez and, instead, persists in a perfunctory passing of the buck to the Chief Secretary.

The very least the Chief Minister could do in this regard is to ensure that the investigation into the claims by the 35 employees is conducted in a timely fashion and in a manner consistent with the principle of fairness and natural justice. Whether it is acceptable or, indeed, proper for the Chief Minister to pretend to wash his hands of any overseeing or monitoring responsibility in relation to the bullying allegations against Joanna Hernandez, is a matter for the electorate to decide, particularly in the context of the Dr Giraldi Inquiry.

Finally, we conclude that the £2.6 million Dr Giraldi Inquiry was an unnecessary, politically-motivated exercise that could have easily been avoided had the GSLP/Liberals not demonstrated such utter disregard and contempt for the unequivocal and categorical confirmation by the highest authorities in Gibraltar, that all the allegations had been investigated and appropriate action been taken at the proper time.

The electorate will be able to decide for itself whether the damage and detriment to the Dr Giraldi Home, its employees, its residents and Gibraltar as a whole, precipitated by the GSLP/Liberals wilfully

ignoring of the truth and preference for a cynical, politically expedient exploitation of the Dr Giraldi affair, was worth it.

1415 Mr Speaker, I now turn to the Environment. In my last year Budget address I started by congratulating the Minister for making a commencement in relation to the use of renewable energy in a number of areas, such as the solar photovoltaic panels and the solar water heating sets installed at the Tercentenary Sports Hall, the GASA Municipal Swimming pool and in the housing estate of Tangier Views. The materialisation of these projects based on the consultant's reports that have been commissioned over the last few years is generally to be welcomed.

1420 However, what concerns me is the slow pace in which the Minister is proceeding with Gibraltar's renewable energy action plan in accordance with the EU target dates for Gibraltar's compliance. It should be noted for the benefit of those listening to this debate that the EU targets set for the European Countries is to produce 15% of energy consumption from renewable energy sources by 2020, and 27% by 2030. At the moment we are only producing 0.061% of the total energy generated in Gibraltar; this is a long way short of the EU targets.

1430 If we consider that within the Government strategy we have constant delays in the construction of the new power station, and despite a more recent statement that the plant will be operational by 2017 – although we believe that it will be by 2020 is a more likely scenario. In addition to this we have more and more delays in the commencement of both the Waste Treatment Plant and the Municipal Waste Treatment Plant which are integral parts in the package to produce renewable energy. This means that our readiness to meet our EU targets for renewable energy for 2020 is starting to be seen as difficult to meet.

1435 Yes, the continuation of solar photovoltaic and solar water heating projects are good things in themselves, but they do not contribute to the extent that we all would like to see, at least not in the short term. Also, the vertical axis onshore wind turbines will not produce the amount that will help us to meet our targets. Nor will the private company which will convert wave movements into renewable energy, again another project which has experienced delays in getting started. In relation to the power purchase agreements that investors or developers might contribute, this requires further details to see if the estimates of producing 10 megawatts are realistic or not, inclusive of the details of the project and duration.

1440 One needs to consider that photovoltaic electricity-generating schemes do require large areas of unshaded south-facing surfaces on rooftops and/or vertical facades to work correctly. A typical flat in Gibraltar with a couple, with two kids as average, consume typically 7,000 kilowatts per hour per annum, to provide this requires 6 kilowatts of photovoltaic array occupying 72 square metres. Therefore, I look forward having the details of this scheme.

1445 In addition to this, the use of marine currents and other micro-technologies welcome all as they are, are items that still need to be quantified and produced before we can realistically place them within the overall package of measures to meet the EU requirements in this matter.

1450 Just to make it clear, Mr Speaker, I am not at this stage saying that it is unachievable, the attainment of 15% by 2020, I have chosen my words carefully by saying that I am concerned about the delays in starting some of the more important projects that will contribute to a greater extent towards our targets, although a clearer picture will emerge in the next two years to determine if hopefully we do achieve the objectives. What is true, though, is that had the GSD won the election in 2011, our programme of co-generation between the power station, the waste water treatment plant and the new incineration plant would have given us, by 2016, 4% of renewable energy which means that these projects plus the use of all other practical measures available today, would have given us a lead in the attainment of the 2020 targets from the low levels in which we find ourselves today.

1455 Mr Speaker, yesterday the Hon. Chief Minister introduced a number of measures within the overall environmental objectives that should be welcomed without reservation. The fact that LED lighting is to remain at 0% of import duty, and filament bulbs are to go up from 12% to 24% is what I would call a progressive measure. In this vein, import duty on two stroke motorcycles from 30% to 50% is to be welcomed too. Also, the move on hybrid cars going from 2% to 0% in import duty is a further good measure; this alone with having used hybrid cars down to a flat rate of 5% is also a good move.

1465 That said, Mr Speaker, the Government is certainly not leading by example when it comes to the purchase of Government vehicles for its own fleet of vehicles. The figures provided last month in term of the cars bought for Government Departments, authorities, agencies and Government-owned companies, shows that when we exclude the purchase of the G1, or the hybrid cars for official use, then the vast majority of cars purchased are rated as excessively polluting, very polluting or quite polluting under the categories applied by the EU thresholds. Here we have again another example where the environmental filter has not worked again.

1470 Therefore, in this score, the Government has certainly not meet its manifesto commitment when he states on page 32, 'The whole of Gibraltar's transport fleet is powered insofar as possible by non-polluting engines'.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the sewage treatment plant and the municipal waste treatment plant. The Government had a manifesto commitment on page 33 in which it stated:

‘We will develop a sewage treatment plant, the absence of which has allowed La Linea to defend its own sewage landing at Western Beach by saying we also put our sewage into the sea’.

1475 The fact remains that this manifesto commitment has not been implemented, nor will it do so in the remainder of the term of office of the present Government. As a result of this inaction this has landed the British Government into the European Courts for failure to provide the sewage treatment plant.

1480 The hon. Member opposite may wish to justify the non-implementation of this party manifesto commitment on the basis that neither did the GSD when in Government, but despite this being a poor excuse the fact remains that this project should have been done in 1991 when the GSLP was in Government.

1485 The fact remains that the party opposite, when drafting their manifesto, prioritised the need to do the sewage treatment plant because doing the sewage plant would stop people in La Linea from justifying their own discharge of sewage in Western Beach. So we have a double whammy with the non-implementation of this important commitment, on the one hand for genuine environmental reasons which are paramount in any consideration; and on the other hand stopping La Línea from using our own neglect in this matter as justification for them not stopping their own discharges of sewage at Western Beach, this despite the close relationship that existed between the Chief Minister and the previous Mayor of La Línea in the last three and a half years.

1490 So, having used pseudo-nationalistic reasons for doing the sewage treatment plant in Gibraltar, today we have neither. This exposes the hypocrisy and double standards of the members opposite, whereby when the problem of discharges of sewage from La Línea into Western Beach in the last year of the GSD Government their attitude then was of orchestrating campaigns against the then Government along with their media-friendly press for not pursuing the matter with speed and vigour – (*Banging on desk*) delays which have continued for the last three and a half years and with the present Government adopting the same policies that the GSD did when in Government.

1495 Last month the Minister, in answer to one of my questions, said the commencement of the work for the sewage treatment plant will be once the financial and technical negotiations are finalised. Mr Speaker, at this rate these negotiations are going to last more than when NASA had to negotiate with the US Government its budgetary programme for 2015.

1500 Could I remind the Hon. Minister that the tender for the sewage treatment plant was allocated in October 2014 to Northumbrian Services Ltd for £22 million. One would have expected that the technical specification at the tender stage would have been examined when the award was done. I also have noted that in the Draft Estimate Book on page 156, there is a token figure of £1,000 for this project. Therefore I would be grateful if the Hon. Chief Minister in his right of reply could indicate if the award to Northumbrian Services Ltd has been done away with or not, and if a different company is going to carry out the works, or is it going to be a public sector-driven project?

1510 In relation to the municipal waste treatment plant, the Hon. Minister said at the last meeting of the House in May that a decision on the tender award would be carried out on this side of August. This is the latest of a long line of delays which started back in February 2013. Back then the Government chose to announce to the press of its decision to proceed with the municipal waste treatment plant, and throughout this period the public has been subjected to a range of excuses from the Government, ranging from the Government has been assessing the consultant reports, the technical personnel have been assessing the technical details of the new plant, and so on *ad infinitum*.

1515 If this is not a definition of doing things as one goes along then nothing is. What matters is providing a new plant given the Government desire to provide these services from Gibraltar and not, as is the case, from Los Barrios. More so in the context of impending compliance with the EU Landfill Directive for the amount of biodegradable waste that shall be allowed into landfill.

1520 So we look forward to seeing the Government stop assessing, the technical personnel stop assessing the technical details, and the changing of the goalpost in deciding what to do – and the works actually starting. One thing that I have noticed is that there is no provision within the Draft Estimate Book for this financial year for this project. Therefore, once again I would be grateful for the Chief Minister in his right of reply, to provide an explanation as to how this project in going to be financed and by whom?

1525 Mr Speaker, moving to fishing in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. (**A Member:** Ooh!) Three and a half years ago, the Hon. Minister for the Environment made a declaration of war in Facebook by stating that in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (*Laughter*) ‘*aqui no se pesca*’, only to find ourselves three and a half years on, ‘*aqui si se pesca*’! Worse than the use of pseudo-nationalistic rhetoric as it is, it has been a monument to plunging Gibraltar into one of the most diplomatic blunders in its history. Furthermore, it did

so without having anything in its place, without being aware of the consequences of its actions, and still less in being able to foresee how events would spiral out of control as a result of his decisions.

Such is the serious and ridiculous situation we are witnessing today that the newly created reefs are being used by Spanish fishermen who come to Gibraltar without having a local licence, without accepting our jurisdiction of our waters and benefiting from the catch of fish in the reefs by the use of nets which are prohibited by the Nature Protection Act, (*Laughter*) an Act drafted initially by the Minister when he was the adviser of the Government back in the 1990s, and thereafter with the current amendments to the legislation as the Minister for the Environment has sought fit to do lately. One cannot provide a higher accolade to the Minister for having achieved such a monumental failure in his responsibilities. This is the nearest one can come to a Monty Python sketch of the sublime and the ridiculous.

Yet in order to cover up his inexperience in this area, the Minister rushed to obtain, subsequent to the declaration of war, a fishing report in order to provide the mantra of science and data collection in order to justify the blunder of his judgements. Then, when these feeble appearances became hollow with the electorate, both the GSLP-friendly media outlets and prominent GSLP activists orchestrated a campaign to blame the RGP for not upholding the law within BGTW. This approach nevertheless becomes the opposite when the Chief Minister feels free to inform a Spanish Programme *Viajando con Chester* that Spanish fishermen are allowed to fish without any hindrance. So, we have statements of one kind for local consumption and another story for the Spanish media. The worse in this impasse now lasting three and a half years is that there is no resolution in sight, so the mantra of science and data collection will continue in order to provide cover for the Minister.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the Barbary Macaques. (*Banging on desk*) What I do notice from the figures provided by the Hon. Minister is that the population of the macaques from 2012 onwards are, broadly speaking, on a par with the ones of the last three years of the GSD Government. We have a figure of 158 monkeys for 2015, which is a drop from the average numbers of the last five years. This is probably due to the fact that in October 2014 we exported 30 macaques to Scotland and the fact that the true figure for 2015 is not yet complete for the year.

What we can say is that given the fact that there is not in the horizon any further initiative to export further macaques, and given that the rate of birth continues to be on a par with the figures when the previous contraception method was utilised, then in this scenario we can say that the population of macaques will continue to grow over the next few years, more so when culling has been ruled out by the Minister.

As I have stated for a number of years now, what the Minister will not say is what is the ideal number of macaques that can be sustained within the Nature Reserve, before we observe further packs from splinting and forming new groups outside the Nature Reserve and thereby continuing to have the problems and conflicts that exist between the local population and the macaques.

The Hon. Minister has spent well over two years in preparing a Macaque Management Plan, and has come with the most flimsy of excuses for not publishing the plan. The reason for adopting this attitude is obvious, he does not wish to be judged and measured against any targets and explanations for the policies he adopts. Once again, as with the subject of fishing, he looks for cover in the mantra of science and data collection, despite the fact that he has been doing this for the last 30 years on this subject! Yet, whilst the Minister adopts this attitude ordinary people are being attacked or their property stolen or vandalised. As I said to him some time back, it is only a matter of time when we have a serious accident to lament. Kicking the problem into the long grass is not the answer.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the culling of seagulls: in my Budget address of last year I criticised, quite rightly, the Minister for not having any sense of value for money with the decision to terminate the FERA contract for the culling of seagulls given that the company FERA was far more successful in culling seagulls than GOHNS. Despite this, what the Minister decided to do halfway in 2012 was to terminate the FERA contract and essentially forward the amount of the contract sum to GOHNS, notwithstanding the fact that even the figures for culling by GOHNS in 2013 was far less than those of previous years by FERA and of past performance of GOHNS itself as well.

So, we have gone from paying GOHNS £84,005 in the financial year 2012-13 to an estimate of £230,000 in the current Draft Estimate Book – that is an increase of 270% – and from culling an average of 3,020 in 2012-13 to culling 2,617 in 2014. No doubt, Mr Speaker, a good deal for GOHNS in getting more taxpayers' money for doing less, but the Hon. Minister seems to be unconcerned about taxpayers' money. Last year the Minister saw fit not to address this issue in his budget address, and he has done so also this morning. Perhaps the Minister is thinking about launching another management plan that will examine the science of culling and data collection in order to justify such an increase for doing less. Yet all it takes is to ask the people living in places like Catalan Bay and they will certainly provide him with the data he needs in order to see the massive overpopulation of seagulls we have and how the Minister has failed to tackle this issue.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the state of the Botanical Gardens: once again, in my Budget address of last year I rightly criticised the Minister for having allowed the state of the Botanical Gardens to fall so drastically. Subsequent to my speech, I raised the matter in one of my questions to the Minister last year, and the Minister acknowledged that there was a need to inject a substantial amount of money in this new financial year in order to carry out the necessary works that are so vital to the gardens. Yet, when I look into the new Draft Estimate Book for this new financial year there is no financial provision for the kind of works that the gardens desperately need. The only provision is one of £50,000 for a dog park at the Alameda Gardens. What is becoming clear, Mr Speaker, is that the Botanical Gardens is being abandoned as a priority by the Minister, whilst at the same time more and more money and resources are being made available to the Commonwealth Park.

Today, the story of the Botanical Gardens is one in which it is in a deplorable condition particularly in relation to the pathways and the whole area in Grand Parade Walk. What we have is one description, as we have seen this morning, about the state of the gardens given by the Minister in Parliament, and the very opposite when one goes to the gardens and witnesses the state of disrepair onsite as I did last Sunday.

Mr Speaker, moving on to landscaping and planting of trees. Once again I need to reiterate, as I did last year, that what Gibraltar is lacking is a coherent plan for landscaping throughout Gibraltar particularly when it comes to the planting of trees and the maintenance of such once placed at different areas. What we do have is a situation in which trees are being planted in an *ad hoc* manner with some already dying and some already dead, due to the fact that no proper forward planning has been done for ground preparation, use of organic materials, soils, manure, irrigation, etc. – all important components for the successful life of the trees.

It is a pity that in a large measure the success or death of a tree planted in Gibraltar will depend on whether such a tree is located within a defined area under contract, such as the Botanical Gardens and Commonwealth Park which do have personnel and resources to support the young tree, or whether such a tree is located in an isolated area without an existing contract in place that would look after the tree. What Gibraltar needs is a Landscaping Management Plan in order to plan and implement proper procedures when planting new trees and safeguarding existing ones throughout Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, moving on to the Barbary Partridges, the importation of 270 partridges from Morocco was a knee-jerk reaction by the Hon. Minister given what was the imminent disappearance – (*Laughter*) I think I had better repeat this, he seems to have liked it! (*Laughter*) The importation of 270 partridges from Morocco was a desperate knee-jerk reaction by the Hon. Minister given what was the imminent disappearance of the local stock of indigenous partridges in Gibraltar, due to the fact that no action had been taken by the Minister to tackle the natural predators of partridges and their chicks, which are in the main feral cats and seagulls in the Nature Reserve.

Whilst it is good to note that the 270 imported partridges seem to have settled well in their new habitat and are laying eggs and young chicks are sprouting around, I have to criticise the Minister again because he is incapable of taking long-term action to tackle the source of the problem of dwindling numbers of partridges in the Nature Reserve. The Hon. Minister knows that unless and until the problem of feral cats and huge numbers of seagulls exist, it will be only a matter of time when, as a result of his inaction in this matter, that we will have to import further partridges from Morocco in order to commence the cycle *ad infinitum* for failure to do the right thing for political expediency in being all things to all people. The Minister needs to decide whether the conservation of the partridges is paramount or pleasing individual groups that have a sectoral interest in the environment, here the Minister cannot have it both ways, as they conflict with each other.

Mr Speaker, moving on to transparency and accountability. The concept the Government has in relation to transparency and accountability rests in the numerical occasions in which Parliament meets and being able to access Hansard in a short period of time. That is the extent to which their much-flaunted 'New Dawn' era would usher from a GSLP/Liberal Government. I am not going to dwell with the elephant in the room as far as transparency, accountability and openness in relation to Gibraltar's finances, the Hon. and Learned Leader of the Opposition has masterfully exposed the Government for driving a coach and horses in opaqueness from the duties towards Parliamentary standards of accountability that the Government has been involved in since its commencement. (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker, for years I have been asking this Government to provide Parliament with a copy of the Gibraltar Climate Change Programme, and all I have received from the Hon. Minister is evasive answers wrapped in spurious science talk in order not to provide the report. The irony here is that the only document available in the Department of the Environment website is the one placed in 2008 under the GSD Government. The Gibraltar Macaque Management Plan never gets to see the light of publication in order for people to judge the Minister's policies in this matter. True also with the minutes of the Nature Conservancy Council for Gibraltar, while anybody can access the UK equivalent body through the internet.

What is astonishing here is the level of excuses the Minister is prepared to indulge in, in order not to provide the information on the basis that the Council is an independent Statutory Body; yet the Minister is

1650 content to abrogate political responsibility for the advice given to him on such important environmental matters from a Council whose existence stems from the Nature Protection Act, and for which the Minister is responsible. Neither has the Minister provided the Upper Rock Management Plan, that the Hon. Minister has decided now to change the title to The Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan – no doubt in order to provide further excuses to delay providing the information to Parliament.

1655 The last available annual report of the Department of the Environment in their website is 2012. So the 2013 and the 2014 are still not available to either members of the public who do have an interest in the environment, or to Parliament. Notwithstanding that in reply to one of my questions the Minister did say that the 2013 has now been finalised and that it would be sent to me electronically – something which has not happened.

1660 In addition to all this the spectrum of treating Parliament with such disdain ranges from refusing to provide Parliament with copies of the Health & Safety Executive and the Health & Safety Laboratory in relation to the proposed LNG facilities in Gibraltar, the safety report requested in relation to the ship-to-ship trans-shipment of LNG that has taken place in Gibraltar these last few months, or to the health and safety reports and audits conducted in the Health Authority or the Education Department.

1665 Even last week, when I asked for a total of eight reports to the Minister for the Environment paid for by the Taxpayer, and the Minister responded that he would only provide five of them within 24 hours of replying to my questions. Well, Mr Speaker 120 hours later I have received four of the five reports promised on the same day as Budget Speeches commence – meaning yesterday. How convenient. The one that has been promised but not given is the Climate Change Strategy and Implementation by Geoff Lye. Furthermore, one of the reports that I did ask for named, Renewable Energy Strategy will also not be provided because the Minister has decided that the report needs to be reviewed by the Department of the Environment.

1675 Well, Mr Speaker, if I would have asked for a review of the report written by New Resource Partners by the Department, I would have asked that question, but I did not, all I want is the report for which the taxpayers have paid, and which I am entitled to have both as a Member of this Parliament and because of the right to environmental information law that the GSD Government implemented and for which the Minister is adamant not to respect. All these are good examples of the 'New Dawn' Government in ensuring that access to information to Parliament gets blocked despite being paid by the Taxpayer, and being entitled to it, as I said, by the right to environmental information legislation.

1680 Lastly in this area, the non-completion of documents as is the case with the Transport Climate Change Strategy Project by Mott MacDonald Ltd, seems to be holding back other important pieces of the jigsaw as far as the Sustainable Traffic, Transport Management and Parking Plan and the completion of data for the National Renewable Energy Action Plan for Gibraltar.

1685 Mr Speaker, I now turn to health and safety. One of the best ways to describe the attitude of the present Government towards health and safety in this term of office can be by saying that they simply lack a willingness to engage with the subject in order to develop this area of responsibility or to provide the unit with any kind of resource, planning, management, support, direction, cohesion, or even lacking any coherent policy – or even a policy at all – in this matter.

1690 During this term of office we have had three Ministers holding the responsibility, the first being the Hon. Paul Balban. He started his tenure by saying early in 2012 that, 'The problem with health and safety practices is that it is very reactive and not pro-active' in a prepared speech on the occasion of the ISOH inauguration in Gibraltar. Yet his passage as Minister for Health & Safety is clearly worse than being reactive, because at the very least being reactive means that one reacts to events once it has happened, the Hon Minister did not even do this!

1695 His time as Minister can be defined as the Minister who did not even react either to the statements made by professionals in the field, nor to my suggestions on how to develop health and safety policies for the good of all those that rely on having such a Department. When the second reshuffle came, the Chief Minister placed the Hon. Joe Bossano for this responsibility, and from the very beginning I knew that health and safety would be abandoned to its fate, because if there is one consistent thing about the Hon. Joe Bossano over the years in relation to health and safety is that he has had no problems in hiding the fact that he thinks that health and safety should be done away with, because in his opinion health and safety only wrecks business and employment opportunities.

1705 It did not take long to see that the then Minister adopted his habitual style of ambiguous, longwinded, and meaningless answers to the subject of health and safety, often playing to the gallery rather than attempting to provide Parliament with reasonable answers to reasonable questions. It is a scandal that the then Minister for Employment, Training and Health & Safety did not know or care for the strategy fact whilst placing the so-called training providers with any particular form of training at all, while being on site.

1710 This is something that I had to wrestle with him over a period of time in Parliament, in order to find out. His answers to Parliament were riddled with evasive statements, which are surprising given the duty of care

to young trainees within the working environment in which the Minister had decided to place them. Even to this day, there is not in place any form of proper procedure to record, even less to judge the quality of training inclusive of health and safety given to trainees – if any at all! Trainees are being left to their own devices without any kind of proper, supervised and recognisable training; it is a cynical ploy by the Hon. Mr Bossano to hide young persons from the unemployment list without any meaningful training leading to jobs. It is back to the days in which the Hon. Minister decided in his period as Chief Minister to close the two Training Centres from the AACR period and create the VCTS in its place.

A clear example of the Hon. Mr Bossano relinquishing his duties as Minister for Health & Safety is the fact that he did not even mention a word, let alone policies, in his Budget address on this subject, something which in 20 years in this Chamber I have not seen by anyone on either side with responsibility on one of their portfolios.

With regard to the third and current Minister for Health & Safety, I cannot judge him as critically as the two before, given that he has only been exercising this responsibility for a short period of time. I think that he does have the potential for doing the kind of major overhaul Health & Safety requires, (*Banging on desks and interjections*) given – wait for it! – that he is an energetic and intelligent person. (*Banging on desks and laughter*) But in truth he simply does not have the time to do this kind of review, (**Several Members:** Ah!) less, implement the necessary changes, as he is even having problems with getting the staff to place the Health & Safety statistics on the Government website – a set of statistics that, had I not bothered to ask from the beginning of this term of office, not even this would have been carried out.

Mr Speaker, this Government's performance on health and safety over the last three and a half years has sadly lacked vision, enthusiasm and knowledge of the issues that need addressing. During all these years when I ask my questions about which industry groups have been targeted for inspection, the practical totality has been to the construction industry. There seems to be no desire, willingness or concern about using the existing resources available to be spread more evenly across the whole spectrum of all industry groups, giving the same treatment for inspections across the whole breadth of the legislation that they need to monitor. It is as if the Government is signalling to all other industry groups, other than the construction industry, do whatever you like, legal or not, because the policy of the Government is to turn a blind eye.

The pathetic answer I have received to this question has been that there are construction sites all the time commencing and need the kind of supervision shown in the figures presented. It is as the Government expects with this explanation for anyone listening to say, 'Oh yes, that is true', without realising that the statistics provided do not support the proposition that this is necessary at the expense of all other industry groups. It is the kind of analysis that even children doing statistics for their A-level would understand: an answer that says more about how the Government treats Parliament with such disdain, than getting on with doing the overhaul health and safety so desperately needs in Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, despite all the artificial obstacles placed by this Government to provide Parliament with Health & Safety reports, I have tried from the beginning of this term to be constructive in this subject by suggesting policies that would be beneficial to the development of health and safety. Of course, they are free to reject them, but what is not acceptable is to bury their heads in the sand in the hope that the subject-matter will go away. I have told them that if they wanted to be proactive they could well have started by looking at the policies that I developed, between 1996-2000, (*Laughter*) as Minister for Health & Safety – indeed, indeed! In that period, I constituted a Health & Safety Advisory Council with specialised practitioners who used to advise me as Minister for the Development of Government Policy.

We started doing Codes of Practice in order to self-regulate specific industry groups or activities, we held annual Health & Safety seminars in which large numbers of organisations and trade unions participated, and we applied a holistic approach to Health & Safety legislation across the whole spectrum of industry groups. In a nutshell, there are three pillars to a proactive approach to health and safety: the first, up-to-date legislation; second, proper monitoring and enforcement across the whole spectrum of all industry groups; and thirdly, ongoing training and awareness to all industry groups and social partners. Yet the Government ignored this and have done nothing at all for three and a half years. (*Interjections*)

Mr Speaker, this is a Government that, when I ask for Health & Safety reports on Government Departments, Authorities or Agencies to be provided for in Parliament, they have no qualms in saying that they will not provide me with such reports, as they state that such reports are internal documents; therefore, for the current Government, Parliament is not paramount to the actions or inactions exercised within the competence of individual Government Ministers.

This is the Government that promised openness and transparency, and what they have practised is opaqueness and unaccountability. This is the Government that, when I have asked if they will provide the names of the companies that have breached the Health & Safety legislation the answer was, 'No we will not provide you with the information', despite the fact that this is available in the UK by searching the Health & Safety Executive website for UK offending employers. This is the Government that, when asked if all Government Departments, Authorities, Agencies and Government-owned companies have available an accident book, the answer was, 'The situation is the same as it was when we got into Government'. Here,

the then Minister Joe Bossano was not even willing to tell his officials to send an email to all Heads of Departments and Chief Executives requesting to know what the situation is – a clear example of the attitude that he could not care less.

1775 This is the Government that, when I have asked how many health and safety committees exist in Government Departments, Authorities, Agencies and Government-owned companies, the answer was, ‘None, as was the case with the previous Government’, without even knowing or bothering to ascertain that in the Health Authority there was one which was constituted in the period of the GSD Government.

1780 This is the Government that, when I have asked how many Codes of Practice have been done since getting into Government, the answer is ‘None’. This is the Government that cannot say how many working days have been lost through accidents at work either in general terms, or within the various industry groups in order to assess the nature and occurrence of such, thereby allowing greater knowledge for directing resources and provide better-targeted policies on such industry groups.

1785 This is the Government that, on every occasion they listen to the speeches at the Workers Memorial Day in the lobby of Parliament by Trade Union Officials and professionals, in terms of the need to have better statistics or annual reports, the Government Ministers nod their heads in agreement only to do nothing after the ceremony has finished – not least to have the decency of allowing the Leader of the Opposition to place a wreath in the ceremony. (*Interjections and laughter*)

1790 This is the Government that, when I have asked for annual reports to be re-commenced again, have stated that they could not do this because the old software package is no longer suitable, some three and a half years ago. Worse still when, with great laughter, Minister Bossano said ‘No, we will not!’ failing to understand that the purpose to have annual reports is for the benefit of professionals, businesses and Trade Unions.

1795 This is the Government that, when I have said that the Factories Act needs reviewing and consolidating, the two previous Health & Safety Ministers have said that there is not a need to do so. This is the Government that, when I have asked in Parliament if a review of all current practices, policies and procedures in relation to health and safety is being conducted, the answer has been to say, ‘No’, whilst on-going discussions between the Chief Minister and Trade Unions are taking place, thereby not providing Parliament with details of such.

1800 This is the Government that, on the one hand issues a press statement as they did on 23rd February 2015, under the heading ‘UK Health & Safety Executive have approved the LNG Power Station’, and when the Opposition repeatedly ask in Parliament for copies of the reports, it is denied at point blank with all sorts of excuses. It is the same style of that of a *República Bananera*, which treats their Parliament with arrogance, opaqueness and disdain for the democratic process, more so in a matter of great public importance.

1805 In concluding this aspect of my speech, Mr Speaker, one has to say that given the systemic failure to do anything positive on health and safety on the part of the Government, the jury, if this was a song contest, would automatically give the Government, a ‘no point’ verdict for non-performance.

1810 Mr Speaker, on 14th May I proudly attended the local IDAHO events just beneath where we are right now, and after the event I answered some questions from Steven Neish of GBC. One of the questions in particular was if I felt that equality issues have been advanced more in the period of the GSLP/Liberal Government than it had been under the GSD Government. Regrettably the answer I gave was to say that this had been so.

1815 I say ‘regrettably’, because my mind in that moment in time was fixed on the IDAHO events and the Civil Partnership legislation that was brought to Parliament by the present Government and passed. However, with hindsight, I have to say that my answer then was erroneous. It is easy for any politician at times to answer the wrong question when in a split of a second in front of a camera we are expected to be infallible; nor am I the only politician to have given the wrong answer in the history of politics, at one moment in time.

1820 Given that this is an important matter, and given that I have now had the time to do the research, it is clear that equality issues when observed objectively have been advanced more in the period of the GSD Government (*Laughter*) than in the present one. In order to support this assertion we need to compare the achievements in this area. First of all, the very first thing the GSD Government did on arrival in Government was to reverse two fundamental instructions by the previous Chief Minister before 1996. This was to disallow Moroccan kids, many born in Gibraltar, to attend schools in order to obtain an education as this was denied by the GSLP Government then.

1830 The second was to reverse the instructions of the then Hon. Joe Bossano to the then ETB in not allowing Moroccan Nationals who had been working and living in Gibraltar some 25 years to have their new employers’ terms of engagement accepted, thereby placing them in a position of illegal work without having social security cover for accidents at work or from contributing to the Social Insurance Pension Scheme. On arrival into Government that decision was immediately reversed and some 300 Moroccans who had been working illegally had their working relationships acknowledged and legalised. In addition to this

we also took the opportunity to extend to Moroccan workers equality of treatment for the services of the then ETB along with Gibraltarians, notwithstanding the fact that they were then Non-European Nationals for the purpose of applying European legislation in this field. This was also extended to a number of other Non-European Nationals, mainly Hindus, given their number of years in Gibraltar.

Other areas covered were maternity leave entitlements, which went beyond the EU threshold by having the Government pay for maternity leave entitlements both in the public and private sectors. These allowed all small businesses to provide such an entitlement without causing them to absorb the payment as this was done through the Government. In addition to this an enhanced paternity leave entitlement in the public sector for fathers to spend quality time with their new-born children.

A Minimum Income Guarantee Scheme was introduced which allowed hundreds of elderly persons to receive, for the first time, either an income or an enhanced income in retirement so that they could live with dignity in being able to purchase the essentials of living adequately. Another set of measures were, to allow for the first time divorced women pro-rata old age pension rights, and also married women to be given 'rate contributors' to get an old age pension in its own right.

At the time of arrival into Government only a handful of women civil servants enjoyed the position of Executive Officer due to the lack of professional training given by the previous GSLP Government. As a result of this, the new GSD Government embarked into a massive professional programme which has managed to push women civil servants beyond the 'glass ceiling' of the Executive Officer posts into higher management inclusive of some Heads of Department now being led by women for the first time.

An area of regret seen since the present Government is in office is the diminution of women's presence in the various statutory bodies of the present Government. Here we have observed a rolling-back of the numbers of women's participation of essential statutory bodies which are thereby excluding an important sector of our community into the life of such bodies.

Other important paradigm shifts in equal rights were when we obtained constitutional human rights provisions up to date with the European Convention of Human Rights; and in addition for the first time ever an Equality Opportunities Act in order to stop discrimination in the field of work. The Equal Opportunities Act that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, belief, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, etc. in the place of work.

It is of public knowledge that Danny Feetham brought a Private Member's Bill when in Government, for the purpose of equalising the right to sex at the age of 16, but this was opposed by the then Opposition on a partisan basis with a few Members of the then Government acting freely and individually on conscious decisions. However, despite this the then Chief Minister, the Hon. Sir Peter Caruana QC, took the issue for a judicial review and today this right is enjoyed without discrimination. As a consequence of this, equality for sex has been achieved, and homosexuals are no longer criminalised for enjoying the same rights that others do.

Therefore, with such a positive track record, it is impossible that the present Government can come anywhere near in enhancing equality issues as the GSD Government has done.

Mr Speaker, during the passage of a politician either in Government or in the Opposition there are those moments in which, when looking back, we tend to cherish more than others. For me, one of those moments was when elected for the first time into Government in 1996 as Employment Minister, it was then that I was approached by the Moroccan Workers Association to inform me that as a result of instructions issued by the previous Chief Minister to the then ETB, staff were not processing notice of terms of engagements from employers employing long-standing Moroccan workers, thereby placing some 300 workers in a position of performing illegal work.

Upon being informed by the management of the Department of this being so, I took the decision of regularising this shameful act, so that Moroccan workers could be protected by the Social Security scheme in case of accident at work, paying taxes into Government coffers and paying towards their old-age pension.

The idea that a so-called socialist did instruct a Department to refuse to accept notices of terms of engagement of workers who by that time had served Gibraltar some 20 to 25 years, in order to force them to repatriate back to their country of origin, is in my opinion one of the most shameful and despicable acts in the employment history of Gibraltar; more so, when such a decision emanated from someone who called himself a socialist. Therefore, for a person like me to have been in a position to reverse such a wicked decision was a delight and an honour, given my ideological background. (A Member: Hear, hear.)

Yet, reversing the decision of the previous Chief Minister was not enough for me, so I went further and took the policy decision of allowing the unemployed Moroccan workers and other long-term non-European residing nationals, such as Hindus, equality of services at the ETB in order to assist them in their search for employment, inclusive access to new vacancies and the employment of an employment officer to assist in the bureaucratic process of registration. No doubt this was equality *par excellence* given that by virtue of their non-European status they were not legally entitled to do so.

Another thing that surprised me as Employment Minister was the lack of progress by the previous so-called Socialist Government in either furthering the interest of workers, or in reducing the huge weight of taxation as it affected inversely low income bracket workers. Again, it was a great pleasure for me as we transposed the European Directive on Maternity, despite the fact that the then Transport & General Workers Union had been requesting this to be done on numerous occasions over the years, to the GSLP Government.

Also, the fact that the GSD Government extended statutory redundancy rights and an insolvency fund to cover all workers in all industry groups as this was not the case before the arrival of the GSD Government. Again, something the TGWU had requested the GSLP Government to do on numerous occasions, only to be ignored by the then GSLP Government.

In the area of occupational pensions particularly in the recently-created private companies of the Government by the previous GSLP Government – that was non-existent. It took a GSD Government to address this matter in a decided way and provide the mechanism and resources to deal with this.

On the statutory minimum wage, the Chief Minister repeatedly mentions that the GSLP Government enacted the statutory minimum wage well ahead of the UK Government – in fact, he said it in his speech yesterday. This *cliché* is repeated *ad nauseam* in the hope of providing some kind of socialist backbone to the GSLP Government. The problem here is that the Chief Minister is prone to ride roughshod over the small detail of his great socialist mentor particularly how the scheme was introduced back in 1989, to the extent that the standard minimum wage was introduced in 1989 – that is certainly correct – but given the incomplete and distorted story given, it is important for the record to once again make sure that the small detail is examined and illustrate how rather than being a great social initiative it ended undermining some workers in the private sector.

In August 1989, the GSLP Government introduced the Standard Minimum Wage Order in Gibraltar for weekly-paid employees only. The only discernible reason for restricting the standard minimum wage generally was that at this time the administrative assistant hourly rate of pay was £1.68 for a 16-year-old person, £1.82 for a 17-year-old person, £2.22 for an 18-year-old person and £2.36 for a 19-year-old person. This obviously was less than the hourly rate of pay for the newly introduced minimum wage at £2.50. Therefore the GSLP Government designed a Minimum Wage Order in which the GSLP Government as an employer could use the deliberate loophole of not applying the minimum wage to its own employees because administrative assistants were paid monthly. (*Interjection*)

So we had a so-called Socialist Government deciding as an employer to keep its own administrative assistants below the minimum wage. Quite shameful. And to boot when private sector employers found out at the time that by transferring their weekly-paid employees to monthly they could pay less than the hourly rate of the new minimum wage, there was a movement to circumscribe the legislation thereby negating the minimum wage as a concept of a living wage.

Mr Speaker, I am proud that in my first term as Minister for Employment, we closed the deliberate loophole created by the GSLP Government, thus making all employers in Gibraltar comply with the minimum wage both in the private and public sector and for weekly and monthly paid. This was set at the age of 16, thereby closing all the deliberate loopholes of the so-called Socialist Government.

The Chief Minister may claim that this initiative of the then GSLP Government is something that he can boost as being socialist, but I can assure him that it was not something to be proud of, even less by any socialist standard he maybe advocating from, if any at all – even from the ‘Champagne Socialist’ standard. Therefore, I take huge pride as an old fashion socialist to have taken the initiative to put right what was a disgraceful act by a so-called socialist government. (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker, another area of huge satisfaction is in the area of opportunities given to female civil servants. When the GSD Government arrived in 1996, we found that only a handful of EO posts were held by female civil servants, there were no HEOs, no SEOs, and certainly no Heads of Department by female civil servants. This was due to several reasons: firstly, there had been no provision by the GSLP Government for professional development of civil servants in order to allow opportunities to progress in what was a male-dominated environment. There was under-investment in the Civil Service and a clear plan to privatise large chunks of the Civil Service, something I was able to stop as a branch officer of the TGWU with the help of a prominent executive GSLP Member of the GSLP who passed to me secretly all the then Chief Minister’s reports and timetable for execution.

As a consequence, there was uncertainty, demoralisation and a glass ceiling which made female members of staff inaccessible to promotion based on qualifications. This brings to mind the famous words of Noam Chomsky, when he said:

‘The the standard technique of privatization: defund, make sure things don’t work, people get angry, then you hand it over to private capital.’

This situation changed with a massive introduction of professional courses leading to recognisable qualifications by the GSD Government which broke the glass ceiling and by the time we ended with our

1950 term in office in 2011, female civil servants occupied most of the EO posts, moved into the HEOs and SEOs and saw for the first time a female Head of Treasury in existence. A remarkable turnaround in equality of opportunities, when resources are channelled towards eliminating discriminatory practices, a practice that was not on the radar screen of a so-called socialist government.

1955 **Mr Speaker**, being controversial at times does not mean necessarily that the controversy is not one that is supported by good arguments and with the need to move from frozen *laissez-faire* attitudes that afflict political establishments at different times in their political evolution. One such occurrence was when I presented a private motion during the parliamentary reform discussion here in this Chamber in order to stop the practice of the recital of the Prayer before the commencement of proceedings – (*Interjections*)

1960 **Mr Speaker:** I have been amazingly liberal, but there is a limit. The Prayer has got nothing to do with the estimates of expenditure.

I will allow the hon. Member during the course of this meeting... On the adjournment of the House, I will allow him to raise the matter of the Prayer if he so wishes, but he is not going to do so during the estimates of expenditure. There is a limit to which a minority can have its will over the majority; there is a limit to that and I am not going to allow it. The Rules are the Rules and the established agenda of this House is not going to be put into question by the hon. Member as part of his valedictory speech before he retires from public life.

I hope that it is clear and I ask the hon. Member... and I will allow him on the adjournment, when the House adjourns *sine die* he can raise the matter of the Prayer if he so wishes, but not now.

1970 **Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, I will certainly bow to your decision, but from tradition and from the last 20 years in which I have been in this Chamber, whenever there has been a Member on either side of the Government or Opposition, in which they have stated clearly that is their last Budget speech, there has been a tradition, in the last 20 years, in which that particular politician has been able to make a kind of statement as to the issues they have felt proud about in the period in which they have been in this Chamber.

Now, if you do not want me to mention it, fine, I will just move on –

1980 **Mr Speaker:** Can the hon. Member state an occasion when, since the beginning of this legislature in 1950 any Member of the House has stood up in the course of a debate to question whether the House starts a meeting with a prayer or not?

Can he point to such an occasion? Can he point to an occasion during the 20 years that he has been a Member?

Why does he have a bee in his bonnet about this thing? It is not an imposition. It is for the Members here in the House to decide what should be in the agenda and what should not!

1985 **Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, it is not my intention to cause controversy. I am not questioning whether the majority are in the right and I am in the wrong – that is not the issue – I am not trying to make that point or to reignite the debate again. I am only stating the fact that I stood up on a Private Member's motion, but –

1990 **Mr Speaker:** This is not –

Hon. J J Netto: Mr Speaker, if you want me to move on, I will move on. I do not have a problem –

1995 **Mr Speaker:** This is not the first time that the hon. Member has raised the issue.

During a debate in this House, on a report produced by a commission of which I was the Chairman, during the course of a lengthy debate on the recommendations of that report, the hon. Member had nothing to say at all about the report. All that he spoke about was a prayer, on that occasion. That is all that he said.

2000 And now, once again, here we are... an important debate on the estimates of expenditure on the Appropriation Bill and he has the gall, the cheek, to raise this question of the Prayer, when he has other avenues. He can raise the matter in the House whenever he wants to. No Member in this House is debarred by bringing up properly and giving notice of a motion, bringing up such a question. He can do so, no-one is stopping him from doing so; though no doubt there will be people on Facebook, and what have you, who will say that the Speaker is ramming religion down the throat of hon. Members. And that is a fallacy.

2005 Hon. Members decide what are the Rules and I, as Speaker and the servant of Parliament, and as the servant of Parliament, I implement the Rules and I try to abide by the Rules. I have been very, very lenient this afternoon, I can tell the hon. Member, because I think it is a tradition – very, very lenient because I have never heard a Member of the Opposition in the 20 years that I was in this House, defending what he was doing in his first term of office 20 years ago. That is the extent to which I have been liberal, if he wants to know.

2010

But on the question of the Prayer, I am not going to allow him now to say another word; so would he please revert to his prepared speech and finish his valedictory speech as he should have done so in the first place.

Hon. J J Netto: Well, Mr Speaker, all I can say as I said just now, it was not my intention to reignite the debate. It was a passing comment, so I had no intention of reigniting the debate.

But I will carry on, Mr Speaker... whatever decision you take I will accept – I have to, in any case.

During my time as a politician in the GSD there have been some who have questioned my participation in what they say is ‘a right-wing government’. An interesting concept when one scratches the surface of the cliché. Yes, it is true that all political parties in Gibraltar revolve themselves in the centre of politics, yet during the 16 years of GSD Government we did not have any single privatisation. In fact we brought back some that had been privatised by the so-called socialist government before us; a so-called right-wing government that did much more than the GSLP Government to enhance protection of workers’ rights in the employment field; to reduce the enormous tax burden from the levels inherited during the GSLP Government and to foster greater equality measures for different groups in our society.

Yet my arrival in the GSD back in 1995 was due to an historical contingent fact. The Gibraltar that prevailed then was one of high levels of unemployment for Gibraltarians; privatisation; lack of protection for workers in redundancy and insolvency cover in various industry groups; lack of occupational pension schemes; no maternity cover with paid leave in the private sector; hundreds of elderly couples with no or insufficient earnings to live from; no financial help for divorced women, with hardly any decent service for elderly people; care in Mount Alvernia run by voluntary work with insufficient Government grants to maintain itself, less still to open the two-thirds of the building closed; services for the disabled run on a shoestring budget, or worse still having the Dr Giraldi Home closed because, in the words of the then Chief Minister, employing professional people would be too costly; a handful of Social Services personnel that was totally inadequate to provide the most basic cover to those in need of such services; a climate of fear and intimidation. A proliferation of the tobacco smuggling through ‘fast launches’ who, in the words of a head boy student of Bayside Comprehensive School within the Liberal Studies Programme of the school, named Fabian Picardo, asked the then Chief Minister, the Hon. Joe Bossano, ‘Legalism apart, was there not a moral problem for Gibraltar’s Government in the trafficking of tobacco?’ only to be told by the then Chief Minister, ‘There was no such moral problem in economics.’

To be fair to the then Chief Minister, he has always maintained the view that matters of economics are amoral, throughout his entire political life. This is where he never saw or understood the breakdown in law and order that ensured riots on the streets of Gibraltar; or even the fact that there have been many economies around the world who do believe in having high standards of ethics in the execution of economic policy.

Mr Speaker, a Gibraltar which had arrived at a crossroad, in which one option was to fall over the cliff face, and the other a call to duty by placing the interest of Gibraltar first and foremost, in order to execute a 180-degree turn and save Gibraltar from certain disaster. Thankfully, the arrival of the GSD Government and its passage has ensured that Gibraltar has obtained a high degree of prosperity, security and stability hitherto unknown in its history. That said, such advancement is now beginning to be rolled back, due to the present Government’s reckless policies on financial matters, the never-ending fishing saga, and the opaque nature of not providing basic information to Parliament, amongst others.

That said, I have been in public life since being a teenager and my upbringing has not been typical of such, as I have spent most of my time helping others whether as a trade unionist, or as a politician. I believe I deserve some time out from the day-to-day political arena. Yes, politics is in my DNA and at this moment in my life I do want to take a step back, catch up with my reading of books, observe politics more from an international perspective and perhaps one day be able to contribute at another level in the many concerns that this planet has, be they environmental or social.

I would like, Mr Speaker, to wish everybody well in this Chamber and that its deliberations may be for the good of our city and its people. (*Interjections*) Finally, once again... No it is part of it. It is part of it, not all of it – there are parts of it which are not.

To say, as I have just said, to wish everybody its deliberations for the good of our city does not mean the statement in itself is religious. It does not have to be.

Finally, once again, I give my sincere thanks to the staff in Parliament for being so helpful to me and the work they do in ensuring the excellent services they provide. Also, I would like to thank the many public servants who have worked so hard for me in all the various Departments that I have had the privilege to be in during my time as a Minister, their sense of loyalty and willingness to work positively when encouraged to do so, regardless of party political allegiances, is something that I have valued and encouraged.

Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

Hon. D A Feetham: Well done. Well done.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, given the soporific effect of that contribution, as head boy now of this place, can I pray to move that the House do now recess until 4.00 p.m.

2075 **Mr Speaker:** The House will now recess until 4.00 p.m.

The House recessed at 2.05 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 4.00 p.m.