



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.30 p.m. – 5.19 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 26th October 2016

Contents

Questions for Oral Answer	3
Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.....	3
Q589/2016 Approved care providers – Progress	3
Q590-591/2016 Floating attractions in beaches – Cost	4
Q592/2016 Visitors to Upper Rock – Methods of public transport	6
Q593/2016 Foreign licensed vehicles visiting Upper Rock – Number turned away	7
Q594/2016 Signage around Gibraltar – Plans to update.....	9
Q595/2016 Tourism policies – Publication.....	11
Q596/2016 visitgibraltar.gi website– Plans to make multi-lingual	13
Q589/2016 Approved care providers – Further supplementary questions	14
Q597/2016 Wifi hotspots – Tourism expenditure 2016-17	15
Q598/2016 Persons with disabilities – Accessibility signs and maps	16
Q599/2016 Shop Mobility Contract – Expenditure under Tourism	16
Q600/2016 Mons Calpe Mews and Beach View Terraces purchasers – Allocation of returned rental housing.....	17
Q601/2016 Tenants – Urgent decanting since April 2016	17
Q602/2016 Eviction of squatters – Legal costs since April 2016.....	19
Q603/2016 Repairs to rental homes – Details of pending works.....	19
Q604/2016 Reallocation of empty homes – Expenditure on repairs.....	21
Q605/2016 Rent relief – Levels awarded	23

Q606/2016 Children of separated parents – Housing requirements	24
Q607/2016 Drug addiction issues – Migrating Government responsibilities	27
Q608/2016 Drugs detoxification – Ocean Views and Bruce’s Farm	28
<i>The House adjourned at 5.19 p.m.</i>	30

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.30 p.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

TOURISM, HOUSING, EQUALITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Q589/2016

**Approved care providers –
Progress**

Clerk: We continue with answers to questions.

We commence with Question 589, the Hon. L F Llamas.

5 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Can the Government provide a list of approved care providers?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

10 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):**
Mr Speaker, there is no list of approved care providers.

15 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, I bring this question to the House because in the last Parliament session, I referred to a Government Press Release this summer, earlier this year, where the former Minister for Employment had made a suggestion that a number of recruits were being recruited from an approved care provider, and I asked for a list at that point, but because it was not actually connected to the original question, I was not able to obtain the list.

Would the Minister be able to explain why there is a mention of this in a Press Release, but I am not able to get the actual list?

20 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, I am not aware of the Press Release that the hon. Gentleman is referring to; it is a Press Release that was issued by the former Minister for Employment. While I am, obviously I read all Press Releases, but if it was issued months ago, I cannot be absolutely sure of the exact words that are referred to in a Press Release or not.

25 The situation is that, unlike in the construction industry, for example – and I am wearing my Minister for Housing hat – there is a list of approved contractors that the Government uses to undertake works. In order to be on the approved list of contractors, people have to meet a specific criteria.

30 We do not have an equivalent of that list or that system in Care. That does not mean that we do not use care providers, or that they are not approved, or that we do not monitor, as I have explained in previous sessions of Parliament, Mr Speaker, but technically it is not an approved

list of care providers in the same manner that we have other approved contractors in the Government.

Q590-591/2016
Floating attractions in beaches –
Cost

Clerk: Question 590, the Hon. L F Llamas.

35 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm the full cost of purchasing and installing the floating attractions installed in our beaches?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

40 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 591.

Clerk: Question 591, the Hon. L F Llamas.

45 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, can the Government explain how many floating attractions are in usable condition and why the decision to discontinue the use?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

50 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, the total cost to date, since the first attraction was purchased by the Gibraltar Tourist Board, in the financial year 2013-14, is a £182,795.

Mr Speaker, as the summer season has ended, no floating devices are currently in use.

55 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, obviously I would not expect for the floating attractions to be in use when it is not summer season, but I believe they have not been used throughout this particular summer season. I know that some of them are undergoing repair perhaps, due to weather, but nevertheless there is obviously a substantial investment by the Government, and I think Government should explain why they have not been used in this particular summer
60 season.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is wrong and they have; and precisely because it was this Government that made this investment, in order to provide access to the beach by users with disabilities.

65 Mr Speaker, we came into Government in December 2011; our first summer was the summer of 2012. There existed a system for bathing at the beach, which was a pergola at Eastern Beach, which of course is laudable that this existed as providing something for people with disabilities. I did not have the time in the first year to be able to improve it, but it gave me a year to lead up to the summer of 2013-14, where I worked very closely with my colleague, the then Minister for
70 Tourism, the Hon. Mr Costa, and what we did was, in that summer, Mr Speaker, we invested very heavily, in most of Gibraltar's beaches, so that they could be completely accessible to people with physical disabilities for the first time in the history of Gibraltar, Mr Speaker.

Now, to make those beaches accessible for people, Mr Speaker, we invested in infrastructure. You will recall Mr Speaker, that we have new ramps at Catalan Bay, we have
75 Mobi-Mats that take you to the sea shore, we invested in all new equipment and very

importantly, Mr Speaker, we have changing stations, which we call 'Changing Places', which allow people, adults with physical disabilities, who require a lot of assistance. We have track hoists in this place, Mr Speaker, in Changing Places, so we have completely revolutionised the way that people with disabilities and elderly people with mobility issues can bathe in Gibraltar.

80 Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman thinks that he can rewrite history, because one day this summer, on National Day, one of the flotation devices that we use, which is particularly used by people who are in wheelchairs to swim in the beach, suffered a puncture.

Mr Speaker, it was National Day, but that puncture was fixed within half an hour. But of course, the Opposition, who did not really do much by way of assisting people with disabilities, particularly going to the beach, want to make a big song and dance, because at the end of a summer season, because of wear and tear, one of the facilities had a puncture.

85 Bur Mr Speaker, what this Government has done and this Government's track record for people with disabilities is unprecedented, to the extent that we have physically changed the landscape of Gibraltar, particularly the beaches. Mr Speaker, on a particular day, one piece of equipment had a puncture and it was remedied very, very shortly after.

90 So, Mr Speaker, that is the state of affairs at the beach this summer.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, unfortunately I believe the Minister has gone on the defensive and misinterpreted my question. My question is about the floating attractions – the ones that you jump on; not the floating devices to assist people with disabilities.

95

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, unfortunately and regrettably, those were all vandalised, Mr Speaker.

100 It is actually quite *shocking*, Mr Speaker, that the Government goes and invests in these devices and every couple of weeks during the summer, we have to get people – life guards and sometimes divers – to patch these up. Mr Speaker, it is disgusting; and this summer, when we went to get them, they had all been absolutely destroyed, Mr Speaker.

105 So this massive investment – and I apologise, because the answer is in relation to what was interpreted as a different question – I do not know how much they cost, or how much the investment was initially, but certainly Mr Speaker, it is a combination actually of vandalism, and in some of the beaches that are not protected, then it is because of the exposure to the elements that it is not sustainable, and it costs a lot of money to repair and maintain continuously. While some of the damage is as a result of the weather, the majority of the damage, Mr Speaker, is literally when we see it, is that they become slashed. People go in the middle of night with, I do not know, pen knives or whatever, and slash, Mr Speaker. It is very sad and very regrettable that there are people with malice to that extent, and Mr Speaker, it was not feasible to continue.

110

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, I was completely unaware that that was the situation and that is the reason why the Government has discontinued their use. Obviously, on this side of the House we condemn any sort of vandalism imposed on these attractions, which obviously were enjoyed by so many members of our community, especially the younger ones.

115

Q592/2016
Visitors to Upper Rock –
Methods of public transport

Clerk: Question 592, the Hon. L F Llamas.

120

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, further to Written Question 47/2016, can the Government provide an updated schedule, together with a definition for the term 'other' contained in the previous schedules?

125

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the term 'other' refers to visitors made up of those accessing the Upper Rock through the cable car and those visiting the 100 Ton Gun exhibition.

130

The updated schedule requested is public information and is available online.

135

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, at the time of presenting this question to this Parliament, the information was neither in the same format as the schedules I have been provided by Parliament, nor was it updated, so that is the reason why I brought this question to Parliament, otherwise I would not be wasting her time and mine.

140

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I specifically checked, obviously, before answering, preparing the written answer. When it was answered it was prepared in this manner and I was told that the information was uploaded online a week before the question was asked.

145

Clerk: Question 593, the Hon. L F Llamas.

150

Hon. L F Llamas: Can I just come back to that question? I have just managed to log in.

The information provided on the actual website is not the one that I have been getting through Parliament; it is actually consolidated, per month and per year.

155

The one I am always asking for in Parliament, since the new Policy on the Upper Rock came into place, was a breakdown per public service vehicles, walking tourists and any other tourists going up the Nature Reserve. That is the difference between the schedule I get in Parliament and the schedule that is on the Government website, so the information is not in the public domain.

160

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I have the schedule that is in the public domain. If he wishes to have a further breakdown, then I am happy to provide him with a further breakdown, but, Mr Speaker, the answer that the hon. Gentleman seeks is not obvious and apparent from the question. But if that is what he is seeking, Mr Speaker, then that is not an issue. It is information that has been provided in the past, information that I am happy to provide if he were to request it clearly, which I am sure that he is doing it now, and it is information that I can provide.

165

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, I have asked for the schedule twice, since we started the summer policy and I am actually referring to the written question for December 2016, where the schedule is ... I am asking for an update as one on that schedule, so if I need to actually spell out what is in the schedule, then I will have to, but if I think I am referring to a previous question on a schedule, then I do not think I have to spell it out each and every time.

170

But that is my position.

Q593/2016

**Foreign licensed vehicles visiting Upper Rock –
Number turned away**

165 **Clerk:** Question 593, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, can the Government provide statistics of how many foreign licensed vehicles have been turned away at the entrances to the Upper Rock Nature Reserve?

170 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): No Mr Speaker, the Government, does not keep a record of this.

175 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, I would like to know how this Government actually analyse its sustainable tourism policy, if it is not monitoring the results and the consequences of this policy.

Sustainable tourism is composed of three important factors: it is the economic, the environmental and it is also the social. I think Government would have been wise to actually monitor the situation at the point of entry and understood whether the policy that is being implemented is being well received by the tourists.

180 For example, if we take into account – which is quite astonishing – an increase in reviews on a forum such as Trip Advisor, which has 70 reviews on Gibraltar rating it as terrible, 35 of which are from the last six months, I think Government would do wise in monitoring what the situation and the consequences of this policy, because obviously, I think the social aspect and what people are saying on these public forums should be monitored at inception, rather than wait for people to drive up, to be told they cannot go up the Rock and then plaster it all over the internet.

190 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, the way –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Where is the question?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: There was one at the very beginning, before the ramble.

195 **Hon. L F Llamas:** How would the Government analyse the sustainable tourism policy (*Interjection*) if it is not monitoring the results of the policy? (*Interjection by the Hon. Chief Minister*)

200 **Mr Speaker:** Perhaps I should remind hon. Members, the purpose of questions is not just to seek information; it is also to urge the Government to adopt a certain course of action on a certain policy. Perhaps what the hon. Member is after is precisely that.

The hon. Lady has said, 'No, we do not keep such a record'. You are making the point that it is relevant to do so. In that instance, I would suggest that a proper supplementary would be to urge the Minister to pursue the line of policy that you would like her to.

205 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will explain to him how the Government monitors how successful our tourism strategy is. This, Mr Speaker, is as a result of an unprecedented investment in our tourism product and in particular, in the Nature Reserve and in the Upper Rock.

210 Mr Speaker, I have the schedule that I was referring to before – the one that I said is available publicly online – and these figures show that for the last few months, our average number of

visitors to the Upper Rock ... not our average number; our *total* number, to the Upper Rock are on average, month on month, 10,000 visitors up from the same month last year.

215 So that is how we quantify it, Mr Speaker: hard facts, hard figures, our tourist numbers are up. Our visitor numbers to the Nature Reserve are up.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, the numbers may be up, but if you take, for example, a review of somebody – and I will quote this one – a driver in Gibraltar in a Spanish-plated car, gets told 220 50% up the Rock, that the entrance is only available to locals, and you have to go find an alternative route. ‘Bearing in mind that I have a British passport, we had to walk 50 minutes to find loads of cars parked around and we were left with no alternative but to pay 12 euros to be able to walk up. The only positive out of my trip to Gibraltar was the cheap fuel’. So, even though I appreciate that Government looks at its statistics, and statistics speak for themselves, but I do believe and I would urge Government to see beyond the figures and analyse what 225 people are taking back with them.

Will the Government change its view and actually analyse what people are taking back with them home to spread to their friends and families?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is reading. I 230 do not know where it is from, I do not know who reads it, I do not know what date it is.

Certainly, of course, there has been a change in policy and there are people who visit Gibraltar and may be getting used to the new policy. Certainly the Tourist Board makes every effort to be able to communicate that policy. On occasions there may be people who may not read the policy, who may not learn the policy and find themselves up the Rock.

235 But Mr Speaker, Gibraltar’s not the largest country in the world – all they need to do is drive down and park and they would be able to find other means of accessing the Upper Rock, Mr Speaker –

A Member: In the 1,000 car parks. *(Interjections)*

240

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the important thing here is that this Government had a very clear vision and a very clear strategy in relation to tourism in Gibraltar and the figures; particularly in the Upper Rock, speak volumes.

245 And Mr Speaker, I just want to add to that one final point that wherever you go, there will always be good reviews, positive reviews, negative reviews. I am sure, Mr Speaker, if one were to go to Disneyland and then look on the various websites where people are given the opportunity to comment, I am sure that among the lots of positive ones – as indeed, we do receive a lot of positive ones about Gibraltar – there will be negative ones. That’s life, Mr Speaker. The world is not perfect and you cannot please everybody all of the time.

250 But of course, if criticisms are brought to our attention, we will always look at them and we will always strive to improve, Mr Speaker, but the figures and the facts show that we are improving, and that we are improving significantly.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, on that point the hon. Lady has said the figures prove that 255 we are improving significantly and indeed she also said that the figures are on the up and up.

Mr Speaker, can I draw the hon. Lady’s attention to the Tourist Survey Report 2015, and in particular page 5, which is Tourist Expenditure in Gibraltar, from 2005 all the way to 2015, and if she looks at the amount of money spent by tourists in 2011, it was £279.79 million. Today, it stands at £199 million, it is actually gone up from the 2014, where it dipped at a £168 million.

260 Therefore the figures *do not* show an up, certainly not in tourist expenditure, and can the hon. Lady confirm that some of the decisions that the Government has made in relation to the Upper Rock are not seeping into these figures that we see here, or are they attributable to something else?

265 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** No, Mr Speaker – and that question is somewhat far removed from the original question, which relates to visitor numbers in the Upper Rock, and whether we monitor people who are turned away. Because if we were, from that, were to follow through to a logical supplementary, Mr Speaker, it would be whether people are spending less money on the Upper Rock and, Mr Speaker, what we are looking at is the figures.

270 I am perfectly aware of the survey. I am perfectly aware that obviously what we need to do is make sure that ... Our primary objective has to be to ensure that we have more visitors to Gibraltar. When visitors come to Gibraltar, we need to ensure that they spend as much money in Gibraltar as possible, but Mr Speaker, one thing is the report and the content of the report – but I would not, Mr Speaker, relate that to the policy in relation to the Upper Rock whatsoever. In fact, I do not know what report the hon. Gentleman is referring to and what the date of that report is, but I doubt that that has any connection with the policy, given that the policy that we are referring to was introduced recently and I think that that report ... I am not sure which one it is, but it may be that it predates the policy. (*Interjection*) Therefore Mr Speaker, it predates the policy.

Q594/2016

**Signage around Gibraltar –
Plans to update**

280 **Mr Speaker:** Question 594, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, does the Government have any plans to update and renovate the signs in Gibraltar, in particular tourist sites, parking areas and last but not least, the Royal Anglian Way Suspension Bridge?

285 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, signs in Gibraltar are updated and renovated as needed.

290 In respect of the Windsor Bridge at Royal Anglian Way, a new sign is being produced and should be in place in the next few weeks.

295 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, I do not know how well they are renovated because some of them are quite appalling – due to vandalism, because they are outdated, for whatever reason – but they simply do not seem to be maintained. Actually, they seem to disappear when they get too bad and they do not seem to actually be replaced. I have seen that happen on one occasion.

But referring to what I was saying before, when tourists go up the Rock and they get turned away and they say, ‘Well, Gibraltar is a very small place, they just need to turn back and find parking’, one particular place, which is the 1,000 parking space area built in the Midtown, does not actually have a parking sign to direct you to it.

300 If you come from the frontier, unless it has happened within the last couple of days, but if you come from the frontier, you get directed to Ocean Village parking and then eventually you get directed to Alameda Estate parking area, but there is no sign in between to tell you to turn left at King’s Bastion and park in that public parking area. So will they actually be updating these signs any time soon; or are people expected to carry on second-guessing and hoping that they have an updated TomTom?

305

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, as I said originally, signs are updated and renovated as needed. Clearly one was needed for the new car park and I understand from the Minister for Transport that it is now up – it is already up. *(Interjection)* It is about to be put up.

310 Mr Speaker, the thing is that when we need signs, it is not like one can go to a supermarket and buy a sign. Signs need to go before the planning authorities and they need to be procured and it is the whole system that needs to be in place, Mr Speaker, but I understand that it will be in place very soon.

315 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, of course they need to go to planning and through the planning process, but one would think that if you are building a bridge, you go through the planning process and you include a sign; and if you are building a multi-storey car park, you go to the planning commission and say, 'By the way, I want a sign', and you implement everything at the same time – *(Interjections and banging on desks)*

320 So, can we have a date, by when these signs will be up?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, it is in the process. I understand that it will be ready very soon.

325 But Mr Speaker, it is actually quite funny, because I was in touch with someone who was asking me, particularly for a traffic sign, who told me that he had been chasing the Government for a traffic sign for in excess of ten years. So while the hon. Gentleman may wish to pontificate as much as he does in relation to traffic signs, it is something, Mr Speaker, that seems to be something that historically has not been as straightforward, but certainly Mr Speaker, I can assure everybody, that in terms of, particularly in terms of signs that will impact and assist
330 tourism, that these are being reviewed, as I said initially Mr Speaker, to make sure that we have as fluid a system as possible.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, with your leave, I have a supplementary. It is on signage and it does relate to the Upper Rock, but it relates more to the previous question, but I think that
335 there is relevance as well, when we are talking about signage to the Upper Rock in general.

Mr Speaker, I obviously live in the Upper Rock. I drive up to the Upper Rock and through the Upper Rock every single day and I can tell the Hon. Minister that at times it is absolute pandemonium at the entrance to the Upper Rock, because of the fact that mainly Spanish registered vehicles get to the Upper Rock, get to the barrier at the Upper Rock and then they are
340 forced to turn back. If there were proper signage – either at the bottom, at the actual Mount Alvernia entrance, or elsewhere, that foreign registered vehicles cannot drive into the Upper Rock, then it would prevent that kind of pandemonium from occurring. Certainly it would prevent irate tourists as well, whose opinion may be seeping in and are being expressed in Trip Advisor, as the hon. Gentleman alluded to earlier, because of course it is very frustrating to drive
345 all the way up there and then, at the barrier, be told that you have got to turn back. A simple signage would deal with that and I would commend that to the Hon. Minister.

Does she not agree with me?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Of course I agree that we can always look to see to facilitate
350 processes, Mr Speaker.

Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, if I may, as signage can always be a frustration when you are in a strange town and do not know quite where you are going, often it has happened to me in Spain, so I can imagine it is similar for tourists in Gibraltar, despite the small area.

355 Can I just ask if the Minister, or if the Government would consider actually conducting a review of the signage in general, just to ensure that it is providing tourists with the necessary information and probably at the same time alleviating traffic, to some extent, by not having them stopping in the middle of the road and causing disruption?

360 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Yes, that is already happening. In fact I requested one a couple of months ago and I expect it shortly, but now I expect it to be handed to my colleague, the new Minister for Tourism. But I did request that a while ago, because what I want to see is a more holistic approach to the system.

365 When it was highlighted to me by this gentleman who had been asking for this sign in excess of ten years, that is when the penny dropped.

370 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, just returning to my supplementary – we are not, on this side, actually on this, politicising this particular issue; what we are trying to do is to make constructive suggestions for the improvement of the service – the hon. Lady has said yes, we can strive to improve, but the question that I have asked related to the signage for tourists to be told at an early juncture that they cannot drive into the Upper Rock, and is that within the plans of the Government to include such signage, either at the bottom of Sunset Close, or alternatively ... well, actually *and* on the other side, which is the Mount Alvernia side, in order to prevent those kind of scenes that I have alluded to?

375 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the question of signage, as I have just said, is part of a wholesale review that I requested.

380 But having said that, Mr Speaker, the Tourist Board, at the outset, when the change of policy was introduced, *did* employ people to give out leaflets, not only at the entry points to the Upper Rock, but also at the frontier, and have people actually be down the hill in the area where the hon. Gentleman is referring to, in order to direct tourists to the change of policy, initially when the policy was changed.

But in terms of the signs, as I said, I commissioned a report to look at a more seamless way at having signage in Gibraltar.

Q595/2016
Tourism policies –
Publication

385 **Clerk:** Question 595, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, can the Government explain what tourism policies are currently in place, and whether these will be clearly set out when appropriate on its website, brochures, etc.?

390 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the Government's tourism policy is very clear: to attract tourists to Gibraltar.

395 We achieve this by: investment in Gibraltar as a destination, which we have at unprecedented levels; by marketing the destination; working with, and continuously developing relationships within the industry; and with events-led tourism, on which we co-operate with other Departments and in particular, the Ministry of Culture.

Our strategy is working extremely well and the figures speak for themselves.

400 I will forgive the hon. Gentleman, as his clear lack of experience in these matters is obvious, but it is not normal or customary for such policies to be on a tourist board website or brochure.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, obviously the basic policies that one would expect should not be ... I have actually put there 'when appropriate'. You would not expect what the Minister has just said to actually be on a website. That would make common sense to just implement them.

405 I am referring to policies such as the Upper Rock ban, that for example when you go to the visit Gibraltar website, you are greeted with, and I quote, and this is live:

No unauthorised private vehicles are permitted in the Nature Reserve, however a number of walking, taxi or bus tours are available.

410 So, this website omits to tell you that you can go walking without having to go on an actual tour, because it is implying that you can go on a walking tour, and it is also omitting the fact that if you are in any way disabled, and either have a blue badge or a doctor's letter – I do not know exactly what the policy is – that you will be exempt from this policy and you will be able to go in your own vehicle to the Upper Rock.

415 So, it is this type of policy and any other one which may be implemented, but we do not know, because obviously we got to find out about this policy through sheer hit-and-miss and rumours going round town that this policy had come into place. It was nowhere on the website and it was nowhere to be seen.

So I am asking whether these types of policies will be updated and will be made clearer on websites. And I appreciate her thinking that I am being foolish in asking this question, but I am looking at this from the point of a tourist who goes into the official website and gets this policy to read and does not get the full length of the policy.

420 Will she be updating this any time soon?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I think I just heard the hon. Gentleman say that he was reading live from the Tourist Board website. It means therefore, Mr Speaker, that the policy is live on the Tourist Board website. The Tourist Board website says that no unauthorised vehicles are allowed in the Upper Rock.

425 Clearly, I think it is pretty clear that a tourist will not assume that they are authorised to go into the Upper Rock. The message is on the website, Mr Speaker, it is very clear. I honestly do not understand: the website is live, so a tourist who wanted to go into the Visit Gibraltar website this afternoon because he wants to go to Gibraltar tomorrow will have a notification on the website that says that unauthorised vehicles are not allowed in the Upper Rock.

Hon. L F Llamas: So, can the Hon. Minister then explain how somebody who wants to go hiking up the Upper Rock is supposed to derive that they can go hiking up the Upper Rock, without having to go on a tour, through the website, because it is not clear; and how somebody who suffers from disabilities, or is disabled in any way, can be exempt from this policy? That is not either clear on the website.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: I do not understand the first supplementary, Mr Speaker, because what the website has is a prohibitive notice relating to vehicles. It does not say that you are not allowed to walk. I do not understand the first supplementary.

440 And insofar the second supplementary, Mr Speaker, there is always an ideal level of information that one wants on a website, but the website also has a space that invites you to contact the Tourist Board if you want any particular details, or an email can be sent and the details are on the website.

445 If somebody, on the website, were to reach a particular site on the website and wants further information, then that information could be sought and that information would be available. But having said that, that the website can have a little bit more information: I will look at the website again and see what else we can do to update it, because that is the beauty of a website, Mr Speaker, it can be updated very quickly if there is any need for improvement.

450 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Yes and obviously this is only one form of or one way of communicating with tourists abroad. There are people who may not have access to online and will come as they have come in the past and find out, but obviously we cannot pre-empt every occasion.

But what I am trying to get at is the wording – it is not making a song and dance on the website of what the policy is. It is the actual wording which says:

... however a number of walking, taxi or bus tours are available.

455 So there is nothing in that wording that allows you to interpret that if you want to go walking by yourself, you can still do so; and obviously I think the disabled exemption should also be on there.

460 **Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, I know that we are using our old portfolios during this session in Parliament, but clearly it is a matter I have an interest in as the new Minister for Tourism. It just seems to me that the interpretation that the hon. Member is giving to that is plainly wrong. It talks of walking; it talks of taxi – it does not necessarily have to be a taxi tour; it can be a taxi ride; and then it talks of bus tours. So the reference to ‘tours’ is bus tours. So you can go by walking, you can go
465 by taxi, or you can take a bus tour. It is simple – plain language!

Mr Speaker: I just wonder what one can do, when one does not have any access to websites, like myself! (*Laughter*) I do not seem to be able to do anything these days! (*Interjections*)

470 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the question has been asked in good faith. I now have it in front of me:

No unauthorised private vehicles are permitted in the Nature Reserve, however a number of walking, taxi or bus tours are available.

I think it is ambiguous. Can the hon. Lady take it from us that if we find it ambiguous, somebody who does not understand the English language, or the English language being a second language or a third language, is also going to find it ambiguous?

475 All we are trying to do, from this side of the House, is to be helpful in relation to this. We are not trying to catch the hon. Lady out and therefore to ask a question, otherwise I am in breach of the rules, will she at the very least look at this, consider it and then come to a conclusion, based on what she has heard today, about whether this is or is not ambiguous? (*Interjections*)

480 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, I said before that things would be looked at, but in relation to his question, well no, because I will not be looking at it. I will leave that to the hon. Gentleman to look at in future!

But of course, I will, of course – (*Interjection*) This hon. Gentleman, who is now responsible for the Nature Reserve and for the sites, Mr Speaker.

Q596/2016
visitgibraltar.gi website–
Plans to make multi-lingual

485 **Clerk:** Question 596, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, what plans does Government have to make the visitgibraltar.gi website multi-lingual?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

490

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the website and its content are being reviewed.

495

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, what plans does Government have, in terms of when the review will take place – well, it is under review, but – when it will actually go live? Is it in talks with service providers to provide the new platform? How far in the process is Government actually involved with updating the actual site?

500

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I was looking at alternative proposals for the website. I cannot give more information than that, because it has not been developed that far yet.

Q589/2016

Approved care providers – Further supplementary questions

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, am I able to come back to Question 589, the list of approved care providers?

505

Mr Speaker, the original question I asked back in September was Question 484, and I asked whether Press Release 371/2006 could be elaborated a bit further in giving us further details of what Government had done in order to create these 50 new care worker vacancies. With the answer from the Hon. Mr Costa, a Government-approved care services provider, Grand Home Care, had been engaged in providing, at that point in time, 20 of the vacancies. So as a result, I asked a supplementary of: who were the Government's approved care service providers? And obviously, the Minister, at that point, did not have the information – *(Interjection by Hon. Miss S J Sacramento)*

510

I said that the Minister Costa, in his reply to my original question, mentioned Government-approved care services providers, so knowing that there should be – deducing from that answer, that there is – an approved care service providers list or schedule, if the Minister, if she has not got the information today, will forward it within the next couple of days, after this session is over?

515

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: No, Mr Speaker, because my answer does not actually change, because that answer given by Minister Costa is not necessarily incompatible with the answer that I have given, for the same reason that I gave when I answered and for the same reason that I have given the Parliament in the past.

520

In terms of the mechanics, it is not like there is a list of endless providers as we have in the construction world, or we may have a list of a variety of people. We know, from previous answers we have given in the Parliament before, there are only a couple of service providers who provide care, and what I think is meant by that, is that it is approved in terms of the care that is provided, for the reasons that I have given in the Parliament in the past, as opposed to having a list of contractors.

525

A care provider, when it provides care to the Government, has an arrangement with the Government and the Government has to be satisfied with the level of care that they are providing, and that is what makes them approved. If something were to not satisfy the Government in the care, then they would not be approved. And that is the difference, I think, of what is intended, as opposed to having a list of care providers.

530

When I said that there is not a list of care providers, there is not a list of care providers. Because there is a word or that wording appears in a press release does not change the answer

535 that I have given. It is not that there is a list that exists that I am not aware of or I am not familiar
with; there is not a list as such.

Hon. L F Llamas: So would I be right in saying, in this case, that all care services providers are
Government approved, and that there are none which are not approved? (*Interjections*)

540

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr
Speaker, I think, part of the reason for the confusion in the point that the hon. Member is
making, is that he may be aware that originally, the approved contractor list was limited to
certain activities and that earlier this year, we extended it effectively to anybody selling, or
545 supplying, or doing work for the Government. That is not approved by the Department that uses
the contractor; that is approved by the Department that had the original list, which originally
consisted of construction companies, cleaning companies and security companies. I think at one
stage, I gave the Leader of the Opposition the list and I said to him it was being added to, not
because there were more of the same activities, but because there are new activities that are
550 being added to it, in the sense that the logic is, look, given that the original list, which was
started by the previous administration, included a condition, for example, that people have to
be up to date with their social insurance, up to date with their tax, have to give first
opportunities in vacancies to people who are registered unemployed, it makes sense to extend it
to as many activities as we can, because it is clearly a useful thing to have, to monitor whether
555 the people that are being paid by the Government are actually paying their due things.

But I think that is where the approved list concept comes from.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, given that the Minister has said that they get approved in the
sense of the level of care that they provide and there is only a number of care service providers,
560 I think it would be beneficial for the community, given that there is nobody who regulates them,
other than Government, when they use them, that the names be listed of who has been
approved as a Government care service provider, for the sake of those in the community who
may think that all of them are approved, and there may be one which is not being used by
Government because the standard of care falls below the level expected.

565 I would urge the Minister to provide us with a list of Government-approved care services
providers, in order to reassure the community that the care provider that they are using is also
approved by the Government, given that there is no regulatory authority in Gibraltar to regulate
these companies.

570 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** There was no question –

Hon. L F Llamas: Will the Minister look into this and provide Parliament with a schedule of
the Government-approved care services providers?

575 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, there is no such schedule.

Q597/2016
Wifi hotspots –
Tourism expenditure 2016-17

Clerk: Question 597, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, can the Government explain what the expenditure of ‘Wifi
Hotspots’ contained within the Government estimates 2016-17 under Tourism is in relation to?

580 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, this relates to Wifi hotspots provided at various locations in Gibraltar where visitors and residents can access certain websites for free.

585

Hon. L F Llamas: Does the Minister have a list of where these hotspots are?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, these were covered in the recent sitting of this House, but again, the locations are: the Apes' Den; Cable Car Top Station; Camp Bay; Casemates; Catalan Bay; Coach Terminus; Cruise Terminal; Eastern Beach; Europa Point; The Frontier; Garrison Library; Gibraltar Museum; the Great Siege Tunnels; John Mackintosh Square, Little Bay; Moorish Castle; 100 Ton Gun; Ocean Village, Queensway Quay; Sandy Bay; and St Michael's Cave.

590

And the websites that can be accessed are: Visitgibraltar.gi; Gibraltar Airport; Government of Gibraltar; Gibraltar Bus Company; and Gibraltar Port Authority.

595

Q598/2016

Persons with disabilities – Accessibility signs and maps

Clerk: Question 598, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, does the Government have any plans to update signs and provide accessibility maps for persons with disabilities on how to move around in Gibraltar?

600

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the Department of Equality is already working on a holistic programme with the Gibraltar Tourist Board and the Technical Services Department.

605

Hon. L F Llamas: Does the Minister have any idea whether the plans will be implemented before Christmas, after Christmas, in 2017 – is there an actual timeline?

610

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, it is part of a bigger accessibility project, so it is unlikely to happen before Christmas, but it will happen as soon as it can possibly happen.

Q599/2016

Shop Mobility Contract – Expenditure under Tourism

Clerk: Question 599, the Hon. L F Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, can the Government explain what the expenditure of 'Shop Mobility Contract' contained within the Government estimates for 2016-17 under Tourism is relation to?

615

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

620 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):**
Mr Speaker, this relates to a maintenance contract for the provision of what was previously provided at the Shop Mobility Centre.

625

Q600/2016
Mons Calpe Mews and Beach View Terraces purchasers –
Allocation of returned rental housing

Clerk: Question 600, the Hon. E J Reyes;

630 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, sir, can the Minister for Housing, provide details of how many rental homes have been allocated and/or assigned by Government, inclusive of room composition of said homes, from the stock returned by purchasers of both Mons Calpe Mews and Beach View Terraces?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

635 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):**
Mr Speaker, 16 flats have already been allocated or assigned by Government from the stock returned by purchasers of both Mons Calpe Mews and Beach View Terraces.

The room composition is as follows: six 2rkbs; eight 3rkbs; and two 4rkbs.

640 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware if there are still any other Government rental homes to be returned, because the purchasers are still in the process of doing that; and if that is the case, does she have at least an approximate estimate whether it is going to be just a small handful or in the 20s?

645 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** There are more than 16 that are returning; it is just that because the question was in relation to those allocated or assigned. More have been returned, but they are in the process of being cleaned and refurbished.

650 Now, off the top of my head, I do not think that there are ... I think most people have completed and if maybe there are a couple who have not completed, I do not think that those will be returning more to the housing stock. This is a different question.

There are more coming into the housing stock, but not because of completion: because they are still in the pipeline, they are being refurbished and they are being cleaned.

Q601/2016
Tenants –
Urgent decanting since April 2016

Clerk: Question 601, the Hon. E J Reyes;

655 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing provide details of how many tenants required urgent decanting from their homes since 1st April 2016, indicating the reason why, the date when said decanting became necessary and the date when the tenants were able to return to their home?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

660

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, since 1st April, six tenants have required urgent decanting from their homes: one in June, two in July, one in September and two in October, five as a result of flooding and one as a result of a fire.

665 One tenant returned to their flat in June, two returned in July and one in September. There are two tenants currently in hotel accommodation.

Hon. E J Reyes: And may I ask, arising from that, Mr Speaker, the decision that the flats, or the homes, that required to be decanted on an urgent basis, who certifies or who decides when the said home is ready to return?

670 There seems to be ... I am not trying to attack Government; I am trying to come to an understanding with them that there seems at times to be tenants, who say, 'Government has said the temporary accommodation is going to cease to be available for me as of Friday, they want me to move back', but yet, they claim that the housing official or whatever has still not been able to sign the papers certifying that the house is now suitable, re-habitable and some are claiming that their electricity supply is not available and so on.

675 Is there someone or a system whereby certain certificates of re-fitness for habitation is available? Does the Minister have some information in that respect available?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the situation that the hon. Gentleman is alluding to is very unusual because what we do is, in the normal course of things – because we are talking about repairs – regardless of the reason for the repairs, whether there is decanting or not, so repairs will be sent to be repaired, whether it is by the Housing Works Agency, or by a sub-contractor, depending on the works that are required. Once the works are completed, they will then be certified by the Inspector and Housing Department, then the person will be asked to move back in.

680 It is the Housing Department that decants the person and provides for the alternative accommodation. If the Housing Department has now remedied any defects in the flat or in the premises, then the person will be asked to move in. You do not do one without the other, you cannot – if you have decanted the person, you cannot force the person back in, unless the premises are fit for them to return, but clearly, at the same token, if the premises are fit, then the person needs to return. But then, that is an internal process that will be dealt with by the Inspector and then by the Housing Manager, but I have never heard of any gap in between.

Hon. E J Reyes: No, the gaps that I have heard, Mr Speaker... We are talking about urgent decanting, yes? So, I think the Minister gave me the good examples before: flooding or fires, things that are unexpected, it happens. We react on humanitarian grounds, we decant the family, we carry out the repair works.

695 There are claims, and I ask the question, Mr Speaker, because over the course of the last few months, there have been more than one that says, 'I've been told that I can go back, but my house still doesn't have electricity supply because no one has certified that the electrical circuit is now available for use', and so on, and I am trying to determine, so that in many ways I can work alongside the hon. Lady for when these constituents come up and say, is there someone who ultimately has to sign some certification? When there are new constructions – and Minister Bossano can certainly guide on this one – someone has to sign and say, 'Right, it is certified that they've now met the conditions, and so on. We accept it and therefore the houses can be issued.'

700 I am trying to apply a similar sort of situation in these cases, where unfortunately, urgency has required them to be decanted, and some tenants are claiming, 'I've been pushed back, because they say that the accommodation is only temporary, that has to be returned to the

710

stock and so on' – all that is acceptable, but ultimately, whose responsibility is it for signing on the given dotted line, saying 'this house is now in a condition where you can move back in'?

715 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, any works are verified, certified by or on behalf of the Housing Works Agency. I certainly have never been called because of a situation like that, but if something odd like that were to arise, then I would ask the hon. Gentleman to call me and I am sure we can find a solution, but certainly nothing of that nature has been brought to my attention.

720 Maybe that sometimes, Departments may have slipped, somewhere along the line, but that is certainly not the policy and not the practice as far as I am aware. There may be an exception, it may have happened to somebody who went to see the hon. Gentleman instead of going to the Department, who would have reported it, but surely, as the hon. Gentleman says, I am happy to work together if this were to happen.

725 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister has said, should I come across a situation, I can then approach her, so I think that should settle the matter for today and we will continue working jointly for the benefit of tenants.

Q602/2016
Eviction of squatters –
Legal costs since April 2016

Clerk: Question 602, the Hon. E J Reyes.

730 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing say how much expenditure has been incurred in respect of legal costs relating to the eviction of squatters from Government rental homes since 1st April 2016; providing a breakdown showing the number of homes involved and to whom payments were made?

735 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, since 1st April 2016, a total of £2,585 has been paid to Triay & Triay in respect of five eviction proceedings.

Q603/2016
Repairs to rental homes –
Details of pending works

740 **Clerk:** Question 603, the Hon. E J Reyes.

745 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing provide details in respect of pending repairs to rental homes, indicating the dates when there reports were made by tenants and stating how many will be repaired by (a) the Housing Works Agency, (b) sub-contractors, and (c) the assigned tenants themselves?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):

750 Mr Speaker, there are currently 273 pending repairs to rental homes. The date in which these were reported were as follows: there were 28 in May; 42 in June; 35 in July; 40 in August; 47 in September; and 81 in October

Twenty-seven of these will be repaired by the Housing Works Agency; 246 will be repaired by sub-contractors; and one is on a self-repair basis.

755

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, from the answer the Hon. Minister has given to me, the dates given by ... If I heard correctly, so that the one that is longest outstanding dates back to 28th May. Can the Minister reconfirm that there is no reports prior to 28th May still pending to be carried out?

760

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: That is what I am told, Mr Speaker.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, can the hon. Lady come to some sort of agreement with me? If I can produce to her, on behalf of a tenant that claims to have reported matters that require repairs, dating way back to February and there were matters that arose as a result of refurbishment works or being carried out at Laguna Estate and therefore problems that did not exist before, have now come in; water seepage and so on and this constituent even showed me photographic evidence and so on, claiming that the reports were made way back in February and as a concerned tenant, the summer months have helped to dry it a little bit, but as soon as the first rainfalls come, they are expecting a really pretty bad winter. How can we ensure that the Hon. Minister has the total and correct updated information? Unless I am being misled by constituents, but certainly the reports seem to have been – or the repairs seem to have been requested way before May of this year.

775

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, it may be that there is a case that has slipped. It may be that there is a mistake in the system, but certainly if there is someone who has an outstanding report, then I am happy for the hon. Gentleman to give me the details and I will look into it.

780

It would not be in the case like that, of structural damage or anything significant like damp, but the hon. Gentleman needs to be mindful as well, that as from the beginning of the year, non-urgent works, or non-fundamental structural works, are not happening if the tenant is in arrears. It would not be in the case where there is damage that would affect the integrity of the building, or may have an impact on a neighbour, but let's say that someone wants new tiles, because they have had those tiles for a long time, if those people are in arrears and there is no justification for the arrears, then people in arrears will not have non-urgent works undertaken for them, until they pay the arrears, until they settle the arrears – unless they are, of courses, themselves, having genuine reasons for being in arrears. *(Interjection)*

785

The hon. Gentleman may recall, I mentioned this at my budget speech and I have mentioned it before, when we have discussed the arrears and there was agreement across the floor of the House, that we would have support – and of course this relates to people who do not pay rent, because they do not want to pay rent, as opposed to people who cannot pay rent.

790

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Lady might recall that I have always supported her in respect that if a tenant wants the benefit of his rights as a tenant, he must also fulfil his commitments and pay the rent and so on.

795

I may have got a bit confused before, when the Hon. Minister was trying to explain to me the type of work and whether it impinged or infringed upon a neighbour and so on. From what I saw, the photographic evidence, this seems to be because of refurbishment works being undertaken at Laguna, there is now water ingress through the roof and down the walls and so on, that was not there before, so that home has now for months ... that dampness keeps on

800

805 increasing. I stress again, the biggest concern is the wet weather is soon approaching us. In Gibraltar, it does not rain; it pours and when it pours, that person really, really has a very serious and, in my opinion, genuine concern because of the amount of water coming in, the amount of buckets having to be put around the house, the amount of mops and cloths that one has to buy, to soak up this water.

810 I tried to explain to the hon. Lady before, there could be something that ... I don't know, maybe the system is such, that – the report was made as far back as February – they have started to work upon it by reporting it to the contractor, so therefore as far as the Housing Works Agency, it is ticked, action is being taken upon. But now, in the last days of October, certainly as far as the tenant is concerned, the repairs have not been undertaken.

815 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** That is precisely what it is, Mr Speaker, because now that the hon. Gentleman has explained what the works are, and if they are attributable to the construction works, to the refurbishment, those repair works, the remedial work will not be undertaken by the Housing Works Agency, or the normal sub-contractors. It will be referred to the contractor that is undertaking the refurbishment works, and that is why it is not in *this* schedule.

820 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, and just to make sure I do not give the lady the wrong impression, I am not only referring to or using the example of Laguna Estate. I can give her, perhaps later on, behind the Speaker's chair, even the name of the tenant, from Alameda Estate, who has been waiting for repairs since last November and it has not been started upon so it has not fitted into the category ...

825 I was giving the Minister the benefit of the doubt that work is ongoing, therefore it is no longer classified as outstanding to be done, so perhaps we need to find minutes over a cup of tea and a biscuit, and we can update ourselves for the benefit of tenants.

Q604/2016
Reallocation of empty homes –
Expenditure on repairs

Clerk: Question 604, the Hon. E J Reyes.

830 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing provide details of all expenditure incurred so far this current financial year, in respect of contracts awarded for making empty homes suitable for re-allocation; stating to whom payments were made, how much has been paid, the number of residential homes pertaining to each payment, as well as indicating the type/nature of repair works or cleaning services undertaken?

835 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):
Mr Speaker, Avanti, £17,545 for two properties ; Property Repairs Ltd £10,858 for one property; Liberty General Construction, £18,458 for two properties; Base Maintenance, £9,243 for one property; Sarah Jane Construction, £8,896 for one property; Ernest Lopez & Sons Ltd, £12,031
840 for one property; Ace Plumbing, £13,320 for one property; Eulogio Cruz Construction, £11,396 for one property; JI Construction, £19,950 for one property.

845 The works carried out by these companies were all general refurbishment works, such as plastering walls, ceilings, taking down walls, painting, replacing floor tiles, doors, plumbing, electrical works, etc.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, if I may, one of them – the £13,320, the name of the company was plumbing something. I automatically ... My brains – (*Interjection*) yes – Ace Plumbing. My brain automatically went into, ‘This must be some sort of plumbing repair’. I know plumbers, like most good craftsmen, are not cheap, but £13,320, for plumbing does, to me, sound a very, very big quantity.

850 Is it just the one residential home, or is it because there is a whole series ... they are refurbishing like a block or from source, or so on? Perhaps the Minister has a little bit more information in that respect.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the name of the company is Ace Plumbing and (*Interjection*) these figures represent refurbishment of homes, not necessarily and it is not ... Just because the name of the company is Ace Plumbing, it does not mean that it exclusively undertakes plumbing work. It undertakes general repair works, so a figure such as this is our average for the repair and the refurbishment of a flat. It is not just for plumbing. It is for the whole refurbishment.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, I understand that. In fairness to her, Mr Speaker, my question did end saying, ‘indicating the type/nature of the repair work’ and the Hon. Minister has given it to me in a very collective term, saying this or the other. Perhaps for a future session, should I come up with this question? She knows that I like to pose it at least quarterly and so on. If it is possible, and she is providing the information saying from this expenditure, well, look more or less so much was in respect of plumbing and so much in respect of the other. It gives us a better picture to see, because I know roof repairs, for example can be extremely expensive. Just the mere fact that scaffolding has to go up immediately shoots the price sky high, so some sort of break down might help, not only the Opposition, but will help Government tenants to better understand how money is being used for the refurbishment of homes.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, when the properties are handed back, as the hon. Member may know, from having been in Government, they are handed back in a certain state of disrepair. There is a standard set down by the Housing Administration – which I imagine was there before, it is not one that has been changed – which lays down to what level it has to be restored before it can be allocated. These properties are properties that come to me – ‘to me’ meaning to the people that are employed in Town Range – to distribute it and as he can see from the list, the policy is to distribute it amongst the local companies that can handle that level of work, but nothing much bigger, because they employ half a dozen people, and irrespective of a title, Ace Plumbing is somebody that tends to have more plumbers than other things, but it does not mean they cannot do anything unless it is plumbing. So, if there is an all plumbing job, they are more likely to take it, but they can still take on a house that needs re-tiling and re-plastering and maybe doing something because they have taken the kitchen sink with them, or something else, because they have taken the toilet with them – other things have happened.

885 But the actual level of work that is required is assessed by the landlord, the Housing Administration and they determine the price, which, if it is above £2,000, which it normally is above £2,000 for a refurbishment, is then given to the people in Town Range who get three quotes, which have to be below the figure that has already been determined as acceptable by the landlord. Out of those three quotes, the standard rule is that we give it to the lowest quote, unless there is only a couple of hundred pounds’ difference between the lowest and the highest, in which case we then look at which company is running out of work, because there is a dual purpose to this. One is to get the houses done and re-rented and the other is to keep people in jobs, so that they do not get laid off.

895 So in a sense, the distribution of the list is a reflection of those two policy objectives. One is that we give it, so that we get value for money, to the one that gives the best quote below the

ceiling laid down by the Housing; and the second is, that when they are very close – which they often are, because really, there is not much that they can ... that one can be much cheaper than all the rest, but there will be some people there that have got it, even though they might be a couple of hundred pounds higher than somebody else, simply because they are running out of work and we seek to avoid that.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes Mr Speaker, if I may, there was, in my subsection (c), under the assigned tenants themselves, there is one who is going to carry out that repair work – *(Interjection)* Sorry, I was referring to the subsection (c). The Minister said that one tenant is going to carry out that repair work themselves. How are the expenses towards that repair settled? Is it that the tenant buys the materials and gets given so much in compensation as well if he provides his own labour, or is there some other formula? Perhaps the Minister can enlighten me a little bit on how we estimate, or how we reach an acceptable estimate to both sides of the cost of that repair.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, this is a supplementary, not to this question, to another question, but generally when it is self-repair, the estimate at the Housing Works Agency will calculate the value of the works and its usually provided by vouchers, or the materials are provided.

Q605/2016
Rent relief –
Levels awarded

Clerk: Question 605, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Is the Government satisfied with the level of rent relief they are awarding at present?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, yes.

Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, there are many pensioners, and people living on the edge, shall we say, who consider that pennies off in rent relief – as I understand, in some cases, we are talking about 15 pence or 60 pence a month, 15 pence a week, something like that – really does not help in any significant way. So would the Minister be willing to revise the policy, or is the Housing Ministry undertaking ever a case by case process, to help those who feel that the rent relief awarded does not relieve much at all?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Well no, Mr Speaker, because the hon. Lady starts from the wrong premise, in that we are assuming that rent relief is only 15 pence off the rent.

The way rent relief is calculated, actually, is based on the income of the person, so if we are going to talk about figures, then I am going to give the correct figures and put it into context, because it is not that people have 15p rent relief.

There is a formula to calculate and the factor that is taken into account is the whole of the household income and marital status and whether there are children living there or if the person has a disability, because every case is assessed on a case by case basis and the applicant is looked at individually.

945 So, for example, if a single person were on the minimum welfare payment, or minimum income guarantee, then they would not pay rent, so the level of rent is commensurate with the income of the individual and this is a policy that has been in place since 2007.

But let's give another example: let's say if there is a single pensioner, who is on an income of say, £400 a month, then their rent would be £11.40. So if we look at an average rent – say, a 3RKB in Glacis has a monthly rent of £64 – then we are talking about a rent relief of much more in excess of 15p.

950 It may be that the hon. Lady has been given information by one individual, but that one individual does not represent the assistance that Government provides by way of rent relief and we look at the income and we look at the scenario and we look at the household income.

Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that answer and I know that the hon. Lady does a lot to help the vulnerable and the needy, because I have spoken to her about these situations before, but can I just ask if a member of the public comes to me and tells me that they really are finding it hard to pay their rent and that the rent relief they have been awarded just does not make a difference to them, how would the hon. Lady suggest I help that individual or those people?

960 There are a few people, not just one, but various, who have come to me with this situation – with this issue that they have. Where could the hon. Lady tell me to direct them, in these cases?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Well, Mr Speaker, my advice would be to look at the case as a whole, because maybe what needs to be looked at is the rest of the expenditure and not the rent relief, because the formula to assist the person by way of rent relief is already in place so the rent relief the person will get will be commensurate to their income. So if someone is in a very low income, then their rent relief would be a 100% because they do not have to pay any rent.

970 What I am trying to say is that there is a connection between the level of rent relief and the income that that person is receiving, so if the level of rent relief is low then it is commensurate to the income and it may be that that individual needs to look at other ways in which the income is distributed because the relief is commensurate to the level of the income, and if someone is on a very low income, then the rent relief is a 100% and rent due is zero.

Q606/2016
Children of separated parents –
Housing requirements

975 **Clerk:** Question 606, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: What is the Government policy on allowing parents who are separated and have agreed joint custody terms and conditions out of court in relation to housing requirements?

980 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, 'joint custody' is not a legal term since the introduction of the Children Act in 2009. What used to be referred to as joint custody is in law now parental responsibility. On separation, joint parental responsibility has not, and never has been the test for determining entitlement to housing composition, as most parents will have this in any event.

In cases of separation, the Housing Department requires proof that both parents have joint residence of the child, in addition to joint parental responsibility and if joint residence is established, then both parents are entitled to the same housing requirements for the child.

990

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, from what I understand in this area, it seems that the law discriminates men, in the sense that men actually need this shared residency order agreement which the hon. Lady has just mentioned, forcing them to have to go to lawyers and spend money to legally validate something that the mother gets naturally without having to provide this agreement. I have evidence of this, which I am happy to show her in private, because obviously it comes from different sources and different individuals who have suffered this.

995

Would the Minister be prepared to accept that this policy needs changing and reviewing to make it more egalitarian?

1000

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: No, Mr Speaker, because the policy is not as the hon. Lady understands it to be.

The policy applies to the child and it relates to the parent who has the residence of the child. If parents separate and one parent has the residence of the child, then the parent with the residence for the child will be given the room for the child, because the additional room is for the child and not for the parent.

1005

It has never been the case that when parents separate, the child is accommodated in both dwellings. There will be provision for the child to live with one parent or the other, but in exceptional cases, because it is in exceptional cases where both parents have joint residence – nothing to do with joint custody; joint custody is a different concept – but if both parents have joint residence, then a room for the child will be allocated with each parent. So the policy is actually very egalitarian. But it is based on the arrangement that is made for the child and I do not agree that lawyers need to become involved for evidence of that because there is no ... What I have said is that the policy is that the parties need to provide evidence. I have not said that the parties need to provide a court order, because in fact that was the position before, but because I do not believe that people should be spending money on lawyers and I think that – and in fact it goes against – (*Interjection*) in cases such as this – and particularly in cases such as this because the overriding objective of the Children Act is the ‘no order principle,’ it would be quite contradictory for the Housing Department to be asking people to go to court where the framework of the legislation does not want you to go to court.

1010

1015

1020

So what I did in the Housing Department to facilitate the process was to ask for evidence and evidence can be provided by way of a sworn statement; and a lawyer and therefore expenditure is not required.

So, Mr Speaker, in answer to the question, I think that the procedure, particularly the new procedure, is very fair.

1025

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker. May I? Because this is certainly a bugbear with me, and I don't mind my saying that it was a bugbear when I was Minister for Justice and this arose at Cabinet, because the hon. Lady is right: it does discriminate invariably against men.

1030

It does not discriminate objectively against men in this sense that of course a man or a woman can have residency in respect of the child and his or her spouse can then have contact. Effectively what the law does is that it affords either both parties joint residency, in which case there would be no problem, as the hon. Lady has rightly pointed out, because both of them would be entitled to the same Government housing; or the law provides for one of them to receive residency in respect of the child, with the other spouse or the other parent receiving contact.

1035

Now invariably, it is the mother that always ... well, not always, but the mother invariably obtains residency. It is the father that obtains contact, and in that kind of situation, you then

1040 have ... Government housing will go to the mother, so if a couple is living in a three-bedroom flat, for example, the mother will take the Government flat, then the father has to look for alternative accommodation. If the father cannot afford to obtain alternative accommodation, the state, the Government, will afford a Government property, but the Government affords a one-bedroom flat or a studio flat for those fathers and that is where, does she not agree, that the discrimination arises and the unfairness arises? If you have a large family in a 3 or 4RKB, it is 1045 unfair to then award the father just simply – who cannot afford private accommodation, let's not forget – a one-bedroom flat or a studio flat, where he is never going to be able to enjoy the contact with his children, because his children are never going to be able to stay overnight, it is impossible!

1050 That is the unfairness and that is what I would urge – and I have done so before to the hon. Lady in this House – for the unfairness to be considered by the Government. I have to say that these arguments are not new. I have already said that these arguments are what we had when we were in Government and I was not able to prevail upon my colleagues that the policy ought to be changed, but certainly I urge the hon. Lady to look upon this, because I certainly agree with the hon. Lady that it is a discrimination, of men in particular.

1055 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, when we are talking about Government rental stock, of which there is a limited amount available, then there needs to be certain criteria set, to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of rental stock to everybody.

1060 Now, if the housing stock is limited and a *child* – because the allocation really is made in respect of the child and not the parent; it is just that the parent will take the consequence of the room allocated to that child – if a child lives with one particular parent, for the majority of the time and will have contact with the other parent from time to time, say one night, two nights a week – then, in the context of the limited housing stock available, that is the rationale for this policy. That is the base line, Mr Speaker.

1065 However, having said that, there are always exceptions and avenues, where individual cases, which may be outside of the norm, are also considered, because we do have these social avenue or the medical avenue, which are open to people who necessarily may need to make different applications.

1070 The hon. Gentleman said that it is difficult for someone who is allocated a studio and then has three or four children, for them to have contact. First of all, there are very few properties which are studios, the majority of them will be ... Actually, there are more 2RKBs, which is actually a one-bedroom than there are 1RKBs which is a studio, so it is very, very rare for people to have a studio; we are talking about a 1RKB. And 1RKB, in terms of dimensions, is actually quite big and does allow for partitions, but if there is a case, a situation, where there is 1075 significant contact and the parent has a lot of children and there can be justification, then in cases like that, they will be considered by the committee and a view may be taken.

1080 But certainly, if someone has a child and that child lives with their mother five days a week, if the Government were to be providing a bedroom for every child whose parents are separated, then we would have to double the housing stock that we provide because we are providing double for that child.

1085 The view that is taken, by the Housing Department and has historically been taken by the Housing Department, as the hon. Gentleman says, is of course in the context of the limited stock and but it is also consistent with the view that is taken by the courts when it is necessary for the court to take a decision. It is generally that the child lives with one parent and it is the view of the court, where the policy is then followed through by the Housing Department.

1090 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I just have one further question in relation to that, and I know that my learned and hon. Friend has experience with, for example, parental alienation syndrome, which is often the cause of separation and what happens when the children stay with their mother and there has been refused access and it goes to court and there is a dispute. But I think it is right

that the hon. Member should have an eye of that, because the number of instances of that occurring now, and men coming up to me and speaking to me about the lack of access, the lack of opportunity to spend time with their children and the effects thereafter on those children that cannot re-engage with their father, I think it is a really, really important fact. I think we should be looking at ways in which we can alleviate that problem by increasing the opportunities available to men, in those situations, to have further contact with their children, and overnight access.

I know the hon. Member knows about this and I appreciate that it is a balancing exercise insofar as the housing stock is concerned, but we may be dealing in the future with a generation of young children without proper access to their fathers and serious issues of parental alienation syndrome, which I know the hon. Member is aware of, through her practice in the law.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Yes Mr Speaker, and it is precisely because of my practice and my experience in a former life, that I have simplified the procedure to help cases where it is possible, but as I said, we have to live in the position where we have limited stock and if the stock is limited there is only so much that we can do. So it is all the constraints in relation to the housing stock.

It may be, Mr Speaker, that in the next few years and because everything is fluid, Mr Speaker, so in the next few years when we complete the new affordable housing that we will be constructing, because the housing stock availability changes, that the demands on the stock change and it may lead to a result ... it may result in a change in policy.

Of course, Mr Speaker, when I am looking at my Department, I deal with the immediate issues and I am looking at medium-term planning and at long-term planning because this issue precisely will probably only get worse, because that is a reflection of society going forward. They are things that I need to bear in mind in terms of my long term planning. Insofar as my immediate situation, I am constrained by the stock that is available to me.

Q607/2016
Drug addiction issues –
Migrating Government responsibilities

Clerk: Question 607, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Does the Government not think it is time to migrate drug addiction issues from the Social Services Ministry to the Health Ministry?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): No.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I noticed from a press release in today's *Chronicle*, an Inter-Ministerial Committee to take up work of studying possible changes to drugs policy in Gibraltar. Can I ask how often will this team be meeting?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Well, Mr Speaker, I am going to be the chairman of that Committee and I wanted to meet with regularity. The hon. Lady knows I want to do much of this work myself, but as I said in the context of the statement I made to the House last week on the reshuffle, it is not going to be possible for me to take the portfolio, but I want to stay involved with those issues and the Committee will also have the Hon. Minister for Care on it as well.

1135 So we meet every Monday, but as a Committee, we will probably meet once a month, I imagine.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: What major changes will be on the agenda and what is the timeline expected in the delivery of any changes?

1140

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think it is a question the hon. Lady might wish to ask us after we have met for the first time. I could share ideas with her here etc., but I do not think that Question Time is for that sort of discussion.

1145 I am quite happy to also have a discussion with her on any ideas she may have and if she wants to come to the Committee on a particular day and give us her views of things that we might be prepared to consider with her, which may be relevant of course, we would be happy to do so, or to write to me with those ideas, I am quite happy to consider anything which could be of assistance to the community in this respect.

1150 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** If I can just track back to the original question, I just wanted to ask: the World Health Organisation talks about drug addiction issues being a health issue. It is considered a mental, psychosocial and physical illness and there is plenty of evidence from the WHO to suggest this.

1155 So when the hon. Lady said, no, is it something that will not be moved at all, or will they not consider this evidence from the WHO and perhaps think about the possibility of migrating such an issue to Health?

1160 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I know she is asking the hon. Lady but the distribution of portfolios is down to the Chief Minister and I have determined that it should not be included in the amalgamation. The initial amalgamation at least of areas related to Care, which is now the responsibility of Mr Costa, who is dealing with all of the areas of Care, but not with drugs, although he is going to be involved in the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

1165 I am persuaded that the Health Services have a role to play. That is why I have created the Inter-Ministerial Committee, and the Minister for Care will be part of that Inter-Ministerial Committee. I am not persuaded that there should not be a separate ministerial responsibility to deal with these aspects – or the many connected aspects of issues that are related to the abuse of drugs – and that, at the moment, is not going to be something that changes. Look, it could be that the result of the work that we do together; it appears that there is more work to be done in respect to the control of the abuse of drugs and its misuse and their misuse, from the Health point of view, than from the Justice point of view or the independent portfolio point of view, but
1170 at the moment, this is a determination made a week ago.

Q608/2016
Drugs detoxification –
Ocean Views and Bruce's Farm

Clerk: Question 608, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

1175 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Would the Government agree that detoxification of drugs should be stopped being undertaken at Ocean Views and carried out in Bruce's Farm?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services.

1180 **Minister for Tourism, Housing, Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** No, Mr Speaker.

1185 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, from many of my conversations with many ex-drug addicts and their families, it normally takes weeks for a transfer between these two places and there is a lot of time lost in a system that at present is not cohesive and what is needed is a system that encourages the addict to get treated immediately, instead of wasting time in an environment which is not bespoke to the needs of the addict, only to have to face a new challenge weeks later, when they have lost much time.

1190 In light of this, is there anything that the Minister would consider in terms of changing the process?

1195 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker. There are different issues here. The issue of the question being asked is whether detoxification should take place at Bruce's Farm instead of at Ocean Views. Mr Speaker, detoxification from drugs, from someone who is a drug abuser, is a very serious matter and needs to be done and undertaken in a safe, clinical setting, such as Ocean Views. Bruce's Farm is not a clinical setting; it is a rehabilitation facility, which is more of a social therapeutic setting. What we cannot have is a structure that provides for one thing, providing a service which is complex and medical, and which is provided by the Government elsewhere, particularly given that Bruce's Farm is up the Rock.

1200 Imagine if someone is being detoxed, even if we had the structure and the staff – which of course in Bruce's Farm, the staffing there is related to the service that is provided ... It is not a clinical service, it is not a hospital, it is not a nursing facility. It is a rehabilitation centre – a *therapeutic* rehabilitation centre, because there are different types of rehabilitation centres.

1205 In fact, I have visited various rehabilitation centres and in none of those rehabilitation centres is the detox facility part of the rehabilitation facility. They have two separate functions.

1210 But let's imagine for the moment that we were to have the infrastructure, the nursing and the medical supervision that we have in Ocean Views, up at Bruce's Farm. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, if we were to have an emergency at the Bruce's Farm, having to transfer that person to hospital in the middle of the night from the Upper Rock? We would have to get the ambulance up there and then the ambulance back down.

1215 The reason why it is not done, Mr Speaker, is because detox is complex, there can be people who have multiple addictions. They can be addicted to more than one substance: usually it is to drugs and to alcohol together which makes detox more complicated and it is therefore important that we have it in a setting that has the adequate clinical supervision to ensure that detoxification is undertaken safely for the person.

1220 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** In that case, is the Minister therefore satisfied, at least at present, Ocean Views is the apt place to cater for the detox process, or does she believe that more can be done at Bruce's Farm to provide a better and more bespoke environment for the detoxification process?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I believe that detox needs to be kept separate and needs to be provided in a medical facility with clinical supervision, and Bruce's Farm is not that facility.

1225 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, with your leave, I do have a question that straddles both 607 and 60 ... and with your leave ... very shortly. Thank you.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, would the hon. Gentleman just give way for a moment?

1230 I am starting to run perilously late for a meeting. Can I therefore propose that the House now adjourn – and perhaps we take that supplementary tomorrow, if it is convenient for the hon. Gentleman – to 2 p.m. tomorrow afternoon?

Mr Speaker: The House will now adjourn to tomorrow afternoon at 2 p.m.

1235

The House adjourned at 5.19 p.m.