



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.33 a.m. – 1.03 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 27th June 2017

Contents

Appropriation Bill 2017 – For Second Reading – Debate continued	2
Procedural – Length of Ministers’ speeches.....	46
<i>The House recessed at 1.03 p.m.</i>	48

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.33 a.m.

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

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

Appropriation Bill 2017 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Tuesday, 27th June.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Albert Isola.

5

Minister for Commerce (Hon. A J Isola): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have the honour to present my fourth Budget speech, dealing with each of the areas that I have the privilege to have responsibility for.

10 Mr Speaker, before I get into the substance of what I would like to discuss and address the Parliament with today, I think it is important to touch on a number of areas which we have been talking about both at this time, the Budget session, but also in the immediate period where I think all Members of the House recognise the really quite challenging time in which we are living. I do not believe Gibraltar in recent years has had to face the challenges that we have had this past 12 months since the voting of the referendum, and consequently it is my view that as politicians we all have an extra responsibility in this particularly challenging time to take what we do more seriously and to look at and consider all the aspects of what each and every one of us does in our political lives – because the challenges are, Mr Speaker, serious.

15 When I consider some of the exchanges we have been having and I have been listening to in the last day and also in the last week – particularly, for example, the incident over the concern of the GSD on our security, and that concern was expressed by posting a photograph on the World Wide Web of a hole in our frontier fence which had been fixed three weeks before, is just not serious, Mr Speaker. Indeed, I do not believe that we are the only ones who were concerned and did not agree with that statement, because on the very Facebook page of the GSD that post, that press release, only had four likes, and when you think that there are six Members of the GSD Opposition, it is clear that not even they agreed with the very statement that Mr Phillips released. (*Banging on desks*)

20 Mr Speaker, we really do need to do serious politics. We really do need to be more mature in the way that we think, in the way that we operate. To express a concern about security and then to predicate on that a photograph on the World Wide Web of a breach of our fence – had it been real; thankfully it was not, because it was already blocked – and not to recognise the need that there is to maintain, especially at this time, security to the best of our ability, was in my view completely irresponsible and completely outrageous, as the Chief Minister himself described.

25 Mr Speaker, if I can move on to the contributions of the two big guns of the GSD who spoke yesterday – and I do not use the term ‘big guns’ because I believe them to be big guns but only because they are much bigger than the others that will follow them –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Because that's all they have left.

Hon. A J Isola: What it is it that they have told us? Well, in the same way as we have the
40 gimmick of the security fence – something that they think will resonate with people – we now
have the new gimmick, and the new gimmick is really to dramatise. Today's front page of the
Chronicle: 'Feetham denounces dangerous farce that undermines parliamentary governance'.
Another gimmick, Mr Speaker. The Opposition have demonstrated again, in my view, their
irresponsibility and their lack of serious thought and process, because what in fact they are
45 doing by voting against the Budget, because of what they call a farce, is voting against the
funding for our Health Services, our schools, our Police, our Fire Brigade, our ambulances, our
Civil Service – indeed, Mr Speaker, even this House.

Why? What is it we have done in the Budget book that is different to what has ever been
done before? **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)* You end up asking yourself is
50 this the same GSD that was in government for 16 years. Well, with the exception of the Father of
the Opposition, if I can call him that, it does not look like it. Yes, some have gone, and then some
more have gone, and then even more recently the good lady has gone, but how can a party that
has been in government for almost 16 years, with the trust of the people for that period, lack
the very basic element of consistency in philosophy and political belief? You have to measure a
55 party by its record, you have to measure a party by what it says in this House, and of course you
have to measure what they say as against what they have done, and when you compare the GSD
of today and the GSD of yesterday, let's look at precisely what they are complaining about.

I start with the use of companies. I contested the 1996 by-election with the Father of the
House, where the GSD spent the best part of a year talking about the secret web of companies
60 that the GSLP were managing and using to run this place. Mr Speaker, it was a suggestion of – I
will put it blindly – corruption, it was a suggestion of improper and inappropriate accounting, it
was a suggestion of many things but all relating to the use of private companies by the
Government for the manner in which they ran the administration. And so if you were going to be
consistent, the first thing you would do after you get into Parliament is stop the companies; but
65 of course, as we all know, for 16 years they ran the companies and indeed, if memory serves me
right, they actually expanded the use of the companies. But that is not enough, because when
they now come to this Parliament and talk to us about transparency, lack of accountability, isn't
it odd that in those 16 years in all of the companies that they operated to run the public
administration they never even filed accounts. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)** The accounts of these
70 companies were never filed in 16 years of them being in government – and they come and talk
to us about transparency, about accountability! Mr Speaker, these are just words which the
public will know – we have been there before – are simply not serious.

And the use of off balance sheet accounting, Mr Speaker: have they forgotten, for example,
75 the hospital, which is at least in leaseback so it is not debted to rent? Have they forgotten the
things that in 16 years of GSD were used and done every minute of the day? And that is exactly
what today they are complaining about. It is as if it is all right for them to do it but not for
anybody else to do it. So it is wrong when we do it, but it was absolutely fine when they did it.

And then of course the Minister of Finance should not be the Chief Minister. Well, that
perhaps could be the reason why Mr Clinton's life in the old GSD was short lived. I can imagine
80 him suggesting to Sir Peter Caruana *(Laughter)* that he should not be the Minister of Finance,
that it should be somebody else – it cannot be the CEO or the Chairman and therefore he should
move on. Never in a million years would the current Leader of the Opposition have had the
thought – or courage, better said – to suggest to Sir Peter that he should move on and let him or
another become the Minister for Finance. We know the function of the Minister of Finance and
85 we know that it has always been, certainly since the new Constitution, in the domain of the
Chief Minister and it is absolutely right and proper that it is.

Mr Speaker, all of these things when they qualm them up together lead them to the
conclusion that we should have a Public Accounts Committee. Well, again, when you have been

90 in Government for 16 years *surely* you might have mentioned it in the 16 years. Surely you might
have said, 'Maybe we should consider ...' – not like now when they are in opposition, they
demand that we have a Public Accounts Committee. So, again, what is it that has changed since
2011 to today that makes them believe that we should have a Public Accounts Committee, that
we should have civil servants in here cross examined by Members of Parliament as to why they
95 have taken decisions? Surely politicians are here to take responsibility. We have no fear in taking
responsibility for absolutely everything that we do. And indeed, for those who will remember
political history, this Parliament has had a Public Accounts Committee before and it was
stopped. It was stopped for good cause, and when the review was carried out more recently it
also did not recommend a Public Accounts Committee. So why now? Well, the answer is simple.
100 If they were in government I have absolutely no doubt that we would not have a Public Accounts
Committee. And interestingly, whilst we were in opposition we never suggested to the
Government at the time that they should have a Public Accounts Committee – because we do
not believe it works in a community like ours. Consequently, my plea is let's be consistent, let's
think through the things that we need to be dealing with, let's look at the challenges, but let's
stop the drama – or, I would call more appropriately, the farce that we have heard in the past
105 day as to how this Opposition believes this Government should be running its affairs.

Mr Speaker, moving on swiftly, I would like to start with financial services.

The result of the Brexit referendum in June 2016 was not initially viewed as a positive
development for Gibraltar or indeed its financial services sector, as the loss of our EU
passporting rights was unwelcome. It became clear to us in the months following the
110 referendum that the actual volume of business being conducted throughout the European Union
was actually small, and we were predominantly a jurisdiction which worked strongly with the
United Kingdom, the World's fifth-largest economy.

Mr Speaker, I must pause to mention, applaud and commend the exceptional work of my
friends the Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia our Deputy Chief Minister, and Mr Michael Llamas QC our
115 Attorney General, for their precise, detailed and methodical work in preparing our "Heat Maps"
of our entire economy which enabled us to engage quickly with others with accurate, factual and
compelling data. The many months of very hard work have been invaluable and they should
both be most seriously commended for this work. (*Banging on desks*)

I must also mention my friend the Chief Minister, who has, since the referendum,
120 demonstrated and proven himself to be a remarkable leader. We needed calm action,
intelligence and strategic thinking at a time when we were facing our most uncertain period in
recent history. He led the team with our Deputy Chief Minister and Attorney General which met
with the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign Secretary, Secretaries of
State, Ministers and officials, and secured by last October a commitment from the United
125 Kingdom government for UK access, which has enabled us all to focus on the opportunities that
this will bring. I cannot stress enough the importance of his work this past 12 months, and on
behalf of our entire business community I thank him for his staggering effort and leadership,
which has much strengthened confidence in these difficult times across the entire business
community. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

130 Mr Speaker, in considering opportunities and the relevance of UK market access, we must
remind ourselves that there are a large number of financial services firms that passport their
services into the UK from continental Europe. Whilst most of the UK press has been about UK
businesses needing to plan their post-Brexit strategies in order to protect their existing markets,
there has not been so much press about passporting services into the UK post Brexit. Gibraltar's
135 unique trading relationship with the UK allows us to position ourselves as a gateway to the UK
and the world's fifth-largest economy both today and post Brexit. This is especially true in the
insurance sector, where we continue to work with firms considering Gibraltar as their base for
business, complying with EU legislation and regulatory standards but with a pro-business
friendly approach and culture.

140 Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister has already mentioned on a number of occasions the 26
licences that the FSC has granted since the Brexit vote and the 20-odd that are in the pipeline. It
is important to reflect as to why this is happening and to obviously welcome and encourage
more to come. Of course there are also a number that are not within those lists which are at
145 what we call the pre-application stage – in other words, in discussions but applications not
formally submitted.

We continue to work with delivering Part VII transfers from the UK, and recent court
decisions will, we believe, facilitate this and in further developing other structures which we are
working on with the Gibraltar Financial Services Commission and the professional sector. In the
last 12 months we have worked with a number of parties about establishing new life insurance
companies in Gibraltar, in particular for pension transactions such as bulk annuity transfers and
longevity swaps. The number of these types of transactions has been gaining momentum in
recent years and the expectation is that this sector will expand considerably over the next five to
10 years. We intend to position Gibraltar as a domicile for this type of insurance activity.

150 Mr Speaker, the new personal pensions regulations were introduced at the end of March
2017 and were drafted to ensure that the Gibraltar Qualifying Recognised Overseas Pension
Scheme (QROPS) continued to meet the requirements of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs,
which were due to change with effect from 6th April 2017. There have been a number of
profound changes to the QROPS sector over the last 12 months, with HMRC removing a number
of jurisdictions from its recognised QROPS list and introducing, to our surprise, a new 25% levy
155 on pension transfers from the UK, which whilst not affecting all transfers is likely to lead to a
significant reduction in QROPS business for Gibraltar and many other QROPS domiciles. Having
worked with HMRC since December 2015 in this area, the result was deeply disappointing and
we continue to work to explore opportunities in this space. We remain committed to supporting
the pension sector as it seeks to introduce new pension and savings products and to begin to
160 reposition itself following the unexpected introduction of the 25% levy on pension transfers.

Mr Speaker, we are also exploring further improvements to the PCC legislation with the
sector to enable their further use and we expect these to be considered fully with the GFSC very
shortly.

165 The insurance and pensions sectors are very well represented by Mr Michael Ashton, who
has the energy and drive of a teenager but the knowledge and experience of a master. It rings
similar, Mr Speaker, although not comparable to the Father of the House. We are indeed
fortunate to have him – and, of course, the Father of the House.

170 Earlier this year we completed the review and implementation of what has become known as
"STEP legislation". The enactment of the Private Foundations Act completed the delivery of the
STEP Gibraltar wish list submitted to Government some years ago. I am grateful to the private
sector and in particular the STEP association for their support in helping us to complete this
process.

175 Family offices is one of the areas that we have particularly focussed on and continues to
provide successful outcomes, impacting favourably across a number of specialist practice areas
for local professional firms. We have agreed a way forward with the Philanthropy Forum and will
continue the good work they have started in reviewing our legislation and making it fit for
purpose.

180 In May we published for extensive public consultation a document entitled – and I agree with
my friend it is a mouthful – 'Proposals for a DLT Regulatory Framework', the result of a huge
amount of work undertaken by Government, the Cryptocurrency Working Group and the
Gibraltar Financial Services Commission, as well as a number of leading representatives in this
field. The consultation period ended in early June and we are currently considering the feedback
received. The interest generated by this proposed regulatory approach has been significant and
we hope and expect to introduce this framework in January 2018. We believe Gibraltar is well
185 placed to move swiftly in this interesting and fast-moving area. My sincere thanks to the

Cryptocurrency Working Group, the GFSC and Sian Jones, our consultant, for their professional and dedicated work, which of course is ongoing.

190 Mr Speaker, the Fintech space is a fascinating area and although, as the hon. Member mentioned yesterday, there is risk attached, it is an area which is attracting considerable interest. The framework that we have proposed is innovative, it is new and no other jurisdiction has approached regulation of this sector in quite the same way. As a consequence, we have been delighted to receive the interest that we have. The framework will actually seek to regulate people for DLT where they are not already regulated. So, if somebody already has a banking licence or Mifid licence or a funds licence, they will not actually need to obtain a new licence –
195 they will simply need to add on to their existing licence the fact that they will be engaging in DLT. This will mean that it will shortcut and short-circuit the need for many of our financial services professionals today to specifically apply for new licences. And similarly, if we have people exclusively engaged in DLT they will be able to obtain their own licence.

200 Mr Speaker, our Category 2 and HEPSS products continue to provide effective solutions and are attractive to the international client. As the Chief Minister announced recently, we will reconvene the Cat 2 Working Group to further consider their proposals.

We also continue to grow our social media presence as a method of increasing awareness to a wide yet appropriate audience at a very low cost. Our database stands in excess of 5,100 individuals, which we interact with almost on a daily basis. Our electronic bookshelf hosted on
205 ISSUU.com now has 137 publications covering the full range of topics that are of interest to our readers. These include self-generated fact sheets, articles, manuals and guides created by private sector firms. Our audience has read these publications more than 11,150 times.

210 Mr Paul Astengo has driven all these important projects forward – as well, of course, as dealing with the continued business development throughout the United Kingdom and Switzerland. He is a joy to work with and ever dependable in the many areas we have asked him to work in: a true and trusted professional.

In the area of funds, we have worked more closely than ever with the Gibraltar Funds and Investment Association (GFIA), reviewing our legislation, considering improvements and new innovative changes which will serve us well in the future as we face the post-Brexit era. As the
215 Chief Minister announced at the recent Accountants' Dinner, we expect to have the first phase of changes in our legislation in early July. I am most grateful to Mr Adrian Hogg, its president, as well as Jay Gomez, Joey Garcia and James Lasry, all of whom work closely together with the executive to deliver the best for their sector and Gibraltar plc. I must also thank Sarah Hall and Julian Sacarello from the GFSC, who have made this happen.

220 Mr Tim Haynes, working at Gibraltar House in London, continues to support the funds and private client space in London, where his extensive knowledge and contact base in this sector have contributed to the success of events hosted at Gibraltar House, and this will continue as we now start, with GFIA, in hosting monthly seminars in London targeting the professionals in this area.

225 The time dedicated to business development remains strong, with Mr Astengo and Mr Haynes focusing primarily on London and the UK generally, and Mr Ashton focusing in Asia, together with Mr Jason Cruz, whose sterling support continues to open up opportunities across all sectors of our business community in Asia.

I am pleased to update Parliament on the progress of the Gibraltar International Bank. I am
230 delighted to report that the bank continues to deliver above expectation in both its performance and its service levels, and this is especially pleasing as we have witnessed the unfortunate further reduction in the provision of banking facilities in Gibraltar. We were right to have decided to set up the bank in 2013, right to have established an independent board of directors and right to have allowed the executive team to get on with the job of driving Gibraltar
235 International Bank forward. The results speak for themselves: just two years after its doors opened, the bank has over 10,000 accounts opened, £440 million deposited and over £90 million

in loans. I must again thank the board of directors, Lawrence and Derek, and each and every member of the team at the bank for their spectacular work.

240 We have also continued the excellent work on our Legislative Reform Programme, which we expect to complete early in 2018. This will have a significant impact on both the regulator and private firms and I am confident that this will be most welcome by all. The first sector consultation will commence on 12th July and continue for the rest of the year. I am grateful to the Finance Centre Council for agreeing to be actively engaged in this process. They have agreed to set up a dedicated subcommittee to consider and consult with us on all the pre-consultation
245 documents that we will be sending them on a very regular basis for the remainder of this year. Sarah Hall and Ernest Lima have driven this project with us and I am grateful to them also.

The quality of the work of the Financial Services Commission in all of these areas is also worthy of mention. Each of the members of the many teams I have worked with have delivered professional, dependable and expert advice and support to a high quality, from its Chairman
250 Jonathan Spencer and its CEO Samantha Barrass to all the other individual members of the team. My sincere thanks to them all.

Mr Speaker, Government is most appreciative of the work of all private sector firms, associations and individuals who work with us throughout the year. The list is endless but we are grateful to each and every one of them, as we are especially to the members of the Brexit
255 Working Group, who have excelled in their detailed work on the best way forward for our jurisdiction.

Mr Speaker, before turning to gaming, I must thank Mr Jimmy Tipping, the CEO and my right hand man in this area, and his fantastic team at Gibraltar Finance for the superb work they deliver every year and with such calm and ease. Jimmy has inter alia driven our complex
260 discussions on the UBO register, which was launched yesterday, and will perhaps be best remembered for his outstanding performance in defending Gibraltar's corner at the often hostile PANA Committee hearings in Brussels.

Mr Speaker, in turning to gaming, I would say that notwithstanding the tumultuous political year in Europe and especially the UK, some in the popular media wish to find bad news stories
265 about the remote gambling industry rather than the good news it remains. I will take this opportunity to confirm that none of our licensees is currently undertaking a Brexit-based restructure that might see its Gibraltar establishment transplanted to a different jurisdiction. Both my staff and myself are in regular liaison with all of our licensees. And yes, while the shape and features of Brexit create uncertainty and licensees change the nature, size and shape of their operations as markets, products, technology and the political landscape develops, Gibraltar licensees are looking at the mitigating factors that they may need to apply should some of the Brexit risks materialise. That is not planning to leave Gibraltar, but sensible and prudent scenario planning by sensible and prudent companies, the type of company we are keen to license and welcome to Gibraltar.

None of us here can predict what a 2019 Brexit will look like – indeed, whether it will be in
270 2019 or we may only have clarity of what it will look like in 2019 – but what I can assure Members is that as those details do become clear this Government will still be pressing for measures and taking its own measures to ensure that the Gibraltar arrangements remain the most attractive and supportive in Europe, if not the world.

The major players in this industry continue to beat a path to our door to invest here, to
275 operate here and to be associated here as they have done for the last 20 years and more. As in previous years, there remains a constant flow of highly credible and respected names in the remote industry engaging in discussions with our licensing and regulatory teams about Gibraltar licensing.

Such enquiries and developments have been taking place at a time of unprecedented mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in this sector. We are now in the fourth year of escalating M&A
280 that far exceeds the impact of Brexit, and M&A is not going to end soon. M&A has affected over half of all our licensees and 15 of the current crop of 30 licence holders. In four years it has seen

285 nine licensees absorbed into bigger companies and those nine licences expire, and six other
licensees become significant parts of bigger companies. This consolidation means that the total
number of licensees is standing still, despite the new arrivals. In the last 12 months, from April
2016 to March 2017, we have seen five new operators issued with licences, whilst five existing
licence holders have been surrendered, with two of our biggest licensees merging. Where there
were 31 licensees at this time last year, there are now 30, but I anticipate a possible four more
being issued in months to come as licensing plans come to fruition, but likewise consolidation
and the apparent loss of licences will also continue.

290 Correspondingly, employment in the sector has seen continued growth of 101 posts during
the year to a new high of 3,353 as at 31st March 2017, and as the Chief Minister has already
mentioned, an increase of 9% from October 2015 to October 2016. We must not forget that staff
can be hugely unsettled by the wave that industry consolidation may bring. However, this is the
nature of this incredibly dynamic industry and we are happy to work with the industry and their
295 staff to ensure that the Government can play its part in supporting this sector, which continues
to thrive.

Mr Speaker, Government receipts from the industry – charges, taxes, fees – continue to
increase significantly as the industry grows, and will be reported separately. However, the
closure of the GBGA POC tax case does create the opportunity to review and reshape the way in
300 which the gambling industry contributes to the revenues of Government. I plan to discuss with
the industry in months to come how we can both modernise and consolidate the current
charges into a simpler and more consistent model of taxation and fees. It is incumbent on me to
make clear that this is not a proposal to implement a structural increase in those charges, but
look to bring them up to date and better reflect the revenues and costs of the industry some 20
305 years since they were introduced. This work will also allow us to resurrect the review of the
Gambling Act, initiated in 2014 but deferred for 12 months following the Brexit vote.

Perhaps the biggest change this year will be the retirement of our Gambling Commissioner
and Head of Regulation, Mr Phill Brear, at the end of this year. Phill will have served a full
10 years in his posts here in Gibraltar and seen through a transformation of the industry
310 between 2007 and 2017, a transformation that he believes is yet to end. The process for the
appointment of his replacement, indeed likely replacements, is now underway and I am
confident we will have a strong new team identified and in place by the time Phill's tenure
comes

to an end in October. Phill's contribution to this sector cannot be underestimated and it will be
difficult to replace him. He has been an exceptional servant to Gibraltar and I repeat my view
that he is one of the best – if not the best – online gaming regulators in the world (**Hon. Chief
Minister:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) and we are most fortunate to have had him here. His
contribution is recognised by the industry, regulators and governments and I am equally
confident we will soon conclude arrangements that ensure both a smooth transition for
the new team as well as, I am delighted to report, his continued involvement in the
development and oversight of the gambling industry in Gibraltar.

Likewise, another stalwart of the Gambling Division has recently moved on. Lorraine Britto
315 has been the driver of the engine room of the Gambling Division for some eight years and is
soon to be replaced. I take this opportunity to thank once again the outstanding efforts of
Lorraine and thank her for her work with us, and indeed the licensing and regulatory teams, in
maintaining Gibraltar's reputation as a first-tier jurisdiction. Their work continues to be
exceptional.

320 Mr Speaker, I will end by emphasising that Government remains committed to a strong and
supportive legislative, regulatory and taxation regime for the gambling industry, remote and
non-remote. I will continue to meet with industry leaders on a regular basis to ensure their
interests and concerns are properly understood and Gibraltar remains the preferred jurisdiction
for their operations.

325 I must also thank the Brexit Working Group for their continued expertise and support as we jointly plot the exciting future for this sector.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the Liaison Department, which was set up in September 2013. Its function has evolved over time from its original concept – to facilitate and support the gaming and finance centre industries with their interaction with all Government Departments. Their work is constantly recognised by these sectors as they continue to provide necessary support to them. The unit also provides invaluable assistance to my Ministry in a number of different areas as we work towards developing a new framework for interaction between citizens, businesses and Government. I am most grateful to Lizanne Ochello and Tania Pereira for their work in all of these areas and more.

335 If I can move to commerce, it has been a pleasure working this year with the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses in meeting their members' needs. They are always forthright, honest and well-intended and, although we may not always agree, we certainly make progress for the benefit of Gibraltar plc. We have worked on many areas this year and we will, as a result of this close working relationship, shortly be consulting on further improvements to our business environment as a result of that close working relationship.

340 Mr Speaker, if I may turn to the Office of Fair Trading, or the OFT as it is better known, I am happy to report that the OFT has finished its first full year of operations, making substantial advances in the manner in which it delivers its services for the benefit of businesses and consumers alike. During this time the Office has settled well into its new regulatory role and has made noteworthy progress in trying to meet the ambitious objectives and responsibilities set for it by the Fair Trading Act 2015. As with any new project, it has been a steep learning curve for the Office and its staff, particularly with the addition of new responsibilities, and consequently this project remains very much a work in progress.

345 We are working on a review of the Fair Trading Act, together with the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce, which will make the process of setting up business in Gibraltar even simpler and more efficient while at the same time bolstering the protection afforded to consumers.

As an aside, Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that the OFT was introduced by my good and learned friend, Minister Costa, really at the request of the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. They, in fact, drove the detail of what Government was seeking to achieve and it is right that we review the steps that we have taken with them, and ironically at their request a change in the number of the things that they originally asked us to implement in the legislation. So it is an example of that continuing partnership that we enjoy with both business associations. I have no doubt that once these changes are drafted and announced they will be most welcome by the business community.

350 The OFT has been given the responsibility of regulating high value dealers and real estate agents in Gibraltar from an anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing perspective. On 15th September 2016, the OFT was appointed as a supervisory authority under the Proceeds of Crimes Act 2015 with the objective of preventing the laundering of illicit funds using these businesses. This is a substantial new role, working relentlessly to set up new, practical anti-money laundering measures and procedures for the effective regulation of high value dealers and real estate agents. All this is also being done in anticipation of Gibraltar's upcoming Moneyval assessment, which is due to take place at the end of next year.

365 I now turn to the OFT's consumer protection responsibilities. The nature of the work carried out by the team, which was previously the Department of Consumer Affairs, has shifted from a mediatory role to a regulatory one. The ultimate aim of the current protection team is therefore to prevent significant harm to consumers in Gibraltar and not to offer redress.

370 I now turn to business licensing. Since the introduction of the Act which extended the requirement for licensing to service providers, the number of licences issued by the Business Licensing Authority has more than doubled. There are now approximately 2,000 licensed businesses operating in Gibraltar. The Office has been extremely busy dealing with a constant

stream of applications. This surge, while expected, has led to very high workloads as the previously unlicensed businesses have been applying for their new licences – unlicensed not
375 because they were in breach, but because they were not required to. I am happy to say that the team has dealt with this extra work well.

In terms of tackling unlicensed businesses, a strategic programme has been introduced to tackle this issue on a sector by sector basis. The business licensing team has the ability to deploy its consumer protection enforcers to investigate businesses that it suspects or is informed are not in possession of a valid business licence. I must thank Mr Francis Muscat and his team for
380 their superb work in making a success of this new and exciting project. We have lots more to do in streamlining and improving these processes, but this is only possible because of their commitment and ability to respond to these challenges and to embrace further responsibility in the manner that they have. I am grateful to each and every one of them.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to my responsibilities for the Royal Gibraltar Post Office (RGPO). I am
385 looking forward this year to engaging with the management and staff of the RGPO, together with UNITE, to review all aspects of the postal service. There is no question that as technology reduces the use of ordinary mail, and the global economy and in particular online purchasing significantly increases the quantum of postal purchases and parcel deliveries, there is an opportunity to review how we operate and serve the public's needs in the best way possible. I
390 intend to work through all of these areas with the team at the RGPO and Unite and am confident that we will together agree a sensible and fair way forward for all parties concerned. These discussions will start immediately. I must thank the entire team at the RGPO for their continued work and dedication in meeting the needs of our community, and I know they will be willing partners in this process.

Last year the RGPO announced that it was the first postal service to launch the UN Universal Postal Union Customs Declaration Kiosk System, which sends advance electronic information to other countries. As from 1st January 2020 it will be a mandatory requirement for all postal items containing goods to send advance electronic information to all the other authorities around the world.

Mr Speaker, in April this year the RGPO signed the new multilateral agreement in respect of a new tracked packets service and in September the RGPO has planned negotiations with Royal Mail to discuss the introduction of the new International Merchandise Returns Service (IMRS), which is a tracked postage-paid returns service designed to meet the demands of bulk mail operations. Growth in this area may present significant opportunities for the RGPO to grow its business. The Government is looking at ways to adapt its products and services to make bulk mailing operations based in Gibraltar more attractive.

We are also working with British Airways World Cargo on the possibility of introducing radio frequency identification transponders to give 100% visibility of mail bags in the BA cargo shed at
395 London Heathrow to create more visibility of the transport of mail.

Mr Speaker, since 2013 the Post Office has co-ordinated a local letter-writing competition with the Department of Education. Each year the winning letter is forwarded to the UN UPU International Letter Writing Competition. In 2016, Anna Grech from Westside Comprehensive School became the first Gibraltarian to reach the top 13 out of 980,000 applicants, for which I
400 presented her with various prizes donated by the UPU – a remarkable achievement and a real attempt to preserve the magical art of letter writing.

Mr Speaker, my thanks to David Ledger, Sabina Pitaluga, Joe Brosco and all of their teams for their hard work during the course of the year.

I now turn to ITLD. HM Government of Gibraltar aims to be the leader in providing digital
405 electronic services by making the best possible use of information and communication technologies, to bring interactive Government counters to the doorsteps of citizens and businesses, providing services anytime, anyhow and anywhere. But that is easier said than done, especially when you are simultaneously engaged in keeping the entire Government network

410 working and dealing with supporting, designing and caring for every single Government Department – and, to boot, dealing with the ever-increasing threat of cybercrime.

I must thank the IT team for their excellent work in dealing with recent well-reported cyberattacks which have seen them covering our systems 24/7 to ensure we are as best protected as we can be. They have served us well and we are truly grateful to them. There is much work to be done in the area of cybercrime and we will continue to develop our plans for this. I would like to thank Tyrone Mañasco and his team of professionals in the IT Department for all their hard work during the year. I have personally seen the extent of their remit and am most grateful for their commitment to serving our needs.

420 Mr Speaker, Government is committed to delivering e-Government and a huge amount of work is being undertaken to deliver this. Yes, this is taking longer than we would have liked, but I am confident that we will deliver a service which the community will appreciate and be proud of once it arrives.

We are reviewing every single aspect of our IT systems, including all arrangements with the existing suppliers of services in this area and the internal arrangements within Government Departments in what our needs are and how we operate. All of these are being audited, as are our intended digital strategy. We are taking time to verify our systems and our needs to ensure compatibility and functionality across all our services. In brief Mr Speaker our Digital Strategy will deliver:

430 eAdministration will provide the entire Government with an operational system that will revolutionise how we work. The first phase, our procurement system, has already been introduced and suppliers are registering as we speak and we expect to go live very shortly. Any provider of goods or services to Government, its agencies or its companies will require to register on our system.

eCitizen will provide all citizens with a secure online portal to co-ordinate their entire interaction with Government.

435 eBusiness will provide a secure online portal for businesses to transact their business with Government directly and indirectly.

Mr Speaker, this resumé belies the extent of the change and the efficiencies that this will provide us with. There are a number of workflows running in parallel which will deliver a new way of doing business with Government, all built on a stable, robust and resilient network.

440 This is an enormous undertaking and I am grateful to all the many parties who are assisting us in making this a reality. Mr Stephen Ramagge and Cristabelle Barnett from our Procurement Department are currently working on the procurement system and I would especially like to mention them and thank them for their work in bringing this project in that phase to its fruition. I must especially thank Mr Julian Baldachino, who is driving this project across Government with an enthusiasm and energy which is critical to the success of this project. His determination matches Government's desire to make this a reality and he is ably supported by Mr Karon Cano, on secondment from our IT Department for this project.

Mr Speaker, a truly exciting time for the Government. I am very excited about the work as I believe this process will bring about perhaps one of the largest transformational changes the Government has seen, and certainly in the last generation.

450 In closing, I would like to thank my Secretary, Lourdes Piri – who incidentally had her husband and daughter receive medals at the Island Games in Gotland yesterday – and all the team in my office who are always there for me, providing a professional service and always supporting the work I do with a smile and a grin on their faces, whatever the challenge. They are a credit to the Civil Service and I am most grateful to each and every one of them.

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

455

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes.

Minister for the Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Dr J E Cortes):

Mr Speaker, during the first seven months of the last financial year I was Minister for Health; and
460 so, while my friend and colleague the present Minister for Health will of course cover this
period, it would be remiss of me not to highlight one or two of the significant developments
during that time.

To my mind, the one most worthy of mention was the opening of the chemotherapy suite,
which counted on the significant support of Margaret Ayling in memory of her late husband
465 Leslie, known to many in this Chamber.

Also of note were the introduction of a full acupuncture service by chartered
physiotherapists, and the extensive preparatory work for the opening of both Bella Vista and
Hillsides at the former Royal Naval Hospital site, which my colleague has now very successfully
opened.

470 Above all, I would like to thank all the staff and management of the GHA and ERS who
worked with me at the time, for the support and loyalty they gave me during my five and two
years respectively as their Minister and for their dedication and professionalism. I wish them and
the new Minister every success in the future.

Mr Speaker, in that reshuffle I retained responsibility for public health. By promoting public
475 health and health awareness we aim not only to improve people's health but as a result reduce
the cost of healthcare provision for conditions that can be prevented or improved.

In 2014 I announced the second Health and Lifestyle Survey, to take place in 2015. This was
successfully carried out by the Public Health department in 2015 and published last year. The
report contained a wealth of information about the health and lifestyle of the Gibraltar adult
480 population, including some sobering revelations for our society: the levels of obesity remain high
– three out of five adults in Gibraltar are overweight or obese; smoking levels are high, higher
than in the countries chosen for comparison. The good news was that alcohol consumption is
generally low at all ages and Gibraltar people have a generally healthy attitude towards
sunbathing behaviour and cancer risks.

485 Key events in health promotion have included participation in awareness campaigns for
World Mental Health Day, stroke and stroke prevention; World Diabetes Day; World AIDS Day;
support for Childline; World Cancer Day and No Smoking Day.

The Public Health department teamed up with GHA professionals to present a five-week
teaching programme on sexual health for the older Bayside students and it is planned to extend
490 this programme to Westside School.

The department teamed up with the Care Agency and the Police to deliver a series of
presentations on binge drinking, alcohol awareness and addiction at Westside and Bayside and
with the College to discuss the delivery of sessions on personal health and wellbeing.

495 There has been collaborative working with the Breathe Easy Society, Clubhouse, the Gibraltar
Alzheimer's and Dementia Society, and the Environmental Agency, among others.

The Public Health department, soon to be rebranded as Public Health Gibraltar, has published
numerous articles and video clips and is working with the Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park to
discuss promotion of a reduction in the consumption of meat on both health and sustainability
grounds.

500 A new Health Improvement Strategy will be launched by the end of this year for the next
three years, commencing January 2018. It will continue to build on the priority areas identified
previously, including healthy eating; reducing the harm from tobacco; exercise; preventing,
detecting and reducing the burdens from diabetes; improving sexual health; and promoting
mental health and well-being. In addition, the new strategy will aim to make progress on two
505 key manifesto commitments of the Government: lifestyle improvement and the 'Health MOT'
programme; and the self-care approach, encouraging all citizens to take control of their health
and develop self-care awareness.

According to the World Health Organisation, childhood obesity is one of the most serious
public health challenges of the 21st century. The Faculty of Public Health warns that unless these

510 trends are halted, being obese substantially increases the chances of serious medical problems. The Public Health department analysed data from the heights and weights of reception year children in Gibraltar over the years 2011 to 2014 and found that nearly one third of children were overweight; over the three years the pooled prevalence of overweight and obese children was around 26%; and there are more overweight boys than girls in all three years. To tackle this
515 emerging and serious problem of childhood obesity, the Public Health department has been participating in a new initiative aimed at developing joined-up strategies through a multi-disciplinary group, the Children Healthy and Active Multi-Agency Panel (CHAMP) led by a consultant paediatrician. The group has a wide participation across agencies and departments, including the GHA, Education, Social Services, Sports and Leisure and Youth Services. The group
520 will collaborate to produce a Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategy and will be making recommendations. It is not intended to pre-empt these, but one recommendation that has been consistently made in recent years is likely to be raised again: that of reforming school tuck shops.

Mr Speaker, I am still Minister for the Environment. As a passionate environmentalist as well,
525 I will never feel that enough has been done for the environment. That of course protects me from possible criticism from Members opposite should they say that I have not done enough, as I will happily agree!

These last six years have seen the Department of the Environment and Climate Change network regionally and internationally. We have proudly flown the flag of environmental
530 governance and leadership, leaving our mark in the international arena. The continuing attendance of our scientists at UN and Mediterranean Conferences of Parties highlights the valuable contribution that Gibraltar makes and the recognition it receives at an international level. I am proud to have co-chaired the second meeting of the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council in Alderney in April. The meeting was a
535 resounding success as we discussed areas of common interest and concern, most notably climate finance, the Paris Agreement, Brexit, environmental funding and the role of Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom in environmental protection within the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies where it has a role. We have set ourselves targets upon which we aim to deliver by our next meeting in 2018 in the Isle of Man.

Mr Speaker, the devastating effect of plastic on the marine environment is a subject which has come to wide public attention in a big way only in the last few years. We all know now how plastic kills whales, dolphins, turtles and seabirds. It is likely also affecting human health as it insinuates itself within our food chain from plankton through shellfish and other molluscs to fish and hence to us. In this context I must highlight our work with the Gibraltar Federation of Small
545 Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in banning plastic bags and the use of microbeads. It is very encouraging to see how businesses of all sizes, in responding to us and to the Nautilus project, are acknowledging the issue of plastic bag pollution and are voluntarily moving away from plastics. We will continue to work with them to develop this initiative further until we fully achieve our aims.

Mr Speaker, the green filter within the much improved electronic planning process is constantly proving to be an effective environmental screening tool. To highlight this point, departmental scientists and technicians have attended 26 tender boards, reviewed 650 building applications and assessed a myriad of EIAs. The Department, in conjunction with Town Planning and NGOs, is currently working on a guidance document to increase biodiversity in Gibraltar's
555 urban environment. This document complements the policy of installing bird and bat boxes within the urban fabric and to encourage green and brown roofs. By introducing and progressing this filter, we are ensuring that development continues in Gibraltar in an environmentally considerate manner, with many projects improved environmentally before they enter the formal planning process, hence facilitating their acceptance.

560 Moving on to waste management, recycling figures show an increase of approximately 59% in recycling of mixed packaging waste such as plastic and cans, and an increase of 120% in

cardboard and paper, thanks to the support of the public and commercial outlets. Additional recycling bins for various waste streams will be provided in the very near future to further increase our recycling rates. Waste electronic recycling figures also continue to improve with a further 68% increase during 2016. Overall, therefore, there has been an 88% increase in our recycling rates, which reflects also the success of the eco-park. Gibraltar's waste cooking oil bins are also proving successful with a 600% increase in collection rates. In the light of this, the Government expects this year to achieve total self-sufficiency in the handling of waste, increasing local recycling and processing further, introducing new streams, including treatment of organic waste, significantly reducing the amount that needs to be exported, and so moving away from any form of incineration.

The work of the litter wardens continues and, as a result, the number of instances of fly tipping continues to reduce as the use of time-lapse cameras helps us to tackle the problem. 'No dumping' signs continue to be placed in hotspots to further remind the public that, in Gibraltar, bins are only a short distance away. There still are a few significant problem areas, where we will be increasing our efforts. These matters form the main subject of discussion at the Litter Committee, but we must recognise that the solution to the problem of litter rests not with those who clear it but with those who deposit it. Litter awareness will therefore be another strand of work for the coming year.

As the House is aware, we are also in the process of reviewing the provision of the main cleaning services in Gibraltar, something that we will do with the certitude of achieving a cleaner and tidier Gibraltar while ensuring that the interests of employees are protected.

Mr Speaker, as I stated recently and as was the subject of a recent Government press release, in the light of the European Court of Justice judgment over our lack of sewage treatment, I can confirm once more that the Government is fully committed to a sewage treatment plant and is about to enter detailed discussions with a view to achieving completion within the next 30 months.

Collaboration with NGOs continues. Regular meetings take place, involving both departmental officials and myself, with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and the Environmental Safety Group, notably but not exclusively within the Brexit and the Environment Working Group. Meetings with the Nautilus Project, a more recently established group, have also begun and I am very pleased that all the Gibraltar environmental NGOs work together in many areas. This can only be good for our common aim of improving our environment.

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

Work continues within schools to promote environmental concepts, to encourage recycling and help urban wildlife, and this will be developed much further this coming year. **(Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Hear, hear.)**

The Department has also embarked upon the ClimACT project with the University of Gibraltar and institutions in Portugal, France and Spain. This has resulted in environmental audits of eight schools, looking at energy use, water, transport, procurement and green areas. The project will continue into the next school year, when reports on each school will be delivered.

The Government's geoportal continues to be well used. This interactive portal is being updated and now provides a great deal of electronic spatial data for Gibraltar; this was unheard of before we came into Government. The Department of the Environment continues to spearhead the use of GIS. To date more than 23,505 geoportal visits have been registered from 150 countries. The geoportal continues to support the local public and especially the private sector, which continues to be the largest user of our geographical information system assets. This year the Department has relied on GIS to support and develop innovative wildlife awareness-raising programmes such as the Pallid Swift cameras and the Vulture Tracking

Programme, which have a great following and are placing Gibraltar in the spotlight of regional wildlife conservation efforts.

615 Government remains fully committed to tackling the causes of climate change and last November requested from Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom the extension of the Paris Agreement to Gibraltar. A reply is awaited.

620 As part of its obligations under the Compact of Mayors, Gibraltar now provides a city-level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. Gibraltar is one of only a handful of cities that have reported a fully complete inventory and has in fact been commended by the Carbon Disclosure Project for the completeness of its submission.

625 Mr Speaker, I am particularly delighted to inform this House that air quality in Gibraltar is the best since records began 12 years ago and probably the best for decades. (*Banging on desks*) (**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Hear, hear.) We now have the lowest ever levels of PM10 particles, with the level even at the traditionally polluted Rosia Road now below what we recorded as background levels at Bleak House when recording began. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.) PM2.5 particles are also at their lowest ever. Significantly, both are below the EU maximum permissible levels. Following a spike in 2014 when the fire at the moribund Waterport Power Station required the use of the just as moribund dirty diesel power stations in the South District, I am
630 happy to report a rapid drop in pollution levels of nitrogen dioxide since 2015. This downward trend continued in 2016. Concentrations for Rosia Road were compliant – that is, below the EU required level – for the first time in the 12-year history of air quality monitoring in Gibraltar. (*Banging on desks*) This is a tremendous achievement and proves the determination of the Environment and Climate Change department, the GEA, and the Department of Transport in
635 achieving better air quality. It also shows that the Opposition has been totally unjustified every time it has tried to cast doubt as to our intentions and our ability to improve Gibraltar's air quality.

640 Government is now setting itself an ambitious target to reduce emissions from manageable sources by 50% by 2030. This will be achieved in large part by the improvements derived from the new gas power station, but other measures to tackle building efficiency and transport emissions are also planned. Emissions from ships, for example, will be greatly reduced via the provision of shoreside power. Traffic will be tackled through the implementation of the STTPP, with the Department of the Environment assisting in particular with the development of electric vehicle infrastructure and improving electric and hybrid vehicle uptake. The Department will also
645 be working with the Ministry of Traffic and Infrastructure to roll out other measures in the plan, such as those which encourage walking and cycling throughout Gibraltar.

650 Targets for building energy performance were made more robust at the start of this year. This effectively means that developers will be improving their standards in order to meet the minimum requirements, and this is being reflected in the increased number of applications going forward to the DPC which include solar PV and solar thermal installations as a matter of course. This is most important and not just another regulation. Energy efficiency reduces costs to developers, occupiers and taxpayers, reduces demand on power generation and also benefits air quality.

655 Mr Speaker, London is a city challenged by air quality issues, and the Mayor of London's team is making huge efforts to improve this. I am happy to report that, following the initial contact made by the Chief Minister, I have been in contact with Sadiq Khan and that his environment team and mine will be pursuing contacts aimed at exchanging information whereby we will no doubt benefit from the experience of London in this field.

660 The GHA solar project has now become a reality and will use energy from the sun to provide hot water throughout St Bernard's Hospital. Initial estimates suggest it could result in fuel savings of approximately £50,000 a year. Other renewable energy projects will also come to fruition over the course of 2017 as the Government remains committed to producing 20% of its energy from renewable sources.

665 The Energy Savings Opportunities Scheme was launched towards the end of last year. This requires large organisations to conduct energy audits every four years with a view to improving their performance over time. I urge all businesses to make use of the services now available from energy auditors to tackle unnecessary energy use within their organisations.

670 The last 12 months have seen a huge effort going into the new power station project, the associated new high voltage distribution centres, infrastructure, the new high voltage cabling network and the adjacent LNG facility. The new generators are in place. Construction of the LNG tanks is progressing very well and they will be arriving in Gibraltar in the coming months. Meanwhile, the GMES ex-MoD power station is now only on stand-by mode, resulting in the great improvements to air quality that I have already reported.

675 Improvements to the public lighting network continue with replacement of street lights with LED or low-energy lanterns reducing overall consumption. The programme of installation of smart meters will continue to be rolled out.

A total of 181.1 million units of electricity were billed last year, with the total amount collected being £25.65 million. The total installed generating capacity at the end of the year stood at 76.98 MW.

680 The number of consumers rose by 622 to 20,427. Despite this, CO₂ emissions saw a slight decrease from 161,543 tonnes in 2015 to 161,358 tonnes in 2016, reflecting the impact of the use of energy-efficient devices and increased energy awareness.

685 The Authority continues to upgrade and expand the network and the SCADA control unit that is used to monitor the generation and main distribution system, thus providing a better and faster response when dealing with power outages.

Training and development of technical staff continues this year with an emphasis on the new power station and its new technology.

690 Work is also programmed to continue on the replacement of substations, which now will be replaced to increase the reliability and robustness of the high voltage network. I am pleased to report no power outages due to problems of generation and the only case to report being one caused by the severing of a cable at a building site. How different the situation, Mr Speaker, to that which we inherited in late 2011, when power cuts were the order of the day due to old and insufficient plant, and when pollution was rife. In this context I would also like to express my gratitude to the CEO of the GEA and his team for successfully managing the major challenge of commissioning our new gas-fired power station.

695 AquaGib Ltd has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance indicators in respect of the provision of potable and sea water, and sewerage services in Gibraltar. The company has continued to invest in capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving the water infrastructure. The current approved investment plan is set at £3.2 million over the five-year period to 31st March 2020. During the last financial year, capital projects included: replacement of potable and sea water mains, and of customers' water meters, meter cupboards and meter manifolds; replacement of saltwater pumps at Moorish Castle Reservoir, North Mole, Gun Wharf and Haynes Cave; and replacement and installation of new Programmable Logic Controllers for Governor's Cottage reverse osmosis plants. Projects planned for this year include continuing the replacement of pipes and equipment and replacement and installation of new membranes for Governor's Cottage plants A and B, which will increase their efficiency. In addition to the above, AquaGib will invest approximately £650,000 in this period in replacing the high-pressure pump, variable frequency drive, energy recovery system and booster pump on each of the four reverse osmosis plants at Governor's Cottage. This investment has a payback period of around two years and will result in an energy saving of approximately 30%, worth thousands of pounds per annum.

710 Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment's coastal and ground water monitoring programme continues to operate smoothly in conjunction with the Environmental Agency. Samples continue to be collected on a weekly and monthly basis from coastal monitoring sites, groundwater aquifers and from all of our designated bathing areas. The Department also

collects and monitors marine sediment, phytoplankton, fish and shellfish tissue samples. In addition, this year the Department has begun a marine litter monitoring programme. Through the use of these data, both Gibraltar's coastal and ground water aquifers are seen to be meeting the objectives set out in the Water Framework Rules and the Marine Strategy Regulations. I am
720 pleased to confirm that our coastal waters are currently achieving good chemical and ecological status.

Almost all of our beaches have seen an improvement in water quality under the classification of the Bathing Waters Directive. Eastern Beach, Little Bay and Camp Bay have gone from good in 2015 to excellent in 2016, Catalan Bay went from sufficient to good in 2016, and Sandy Bay went
725 from poor to sufficient. Western Beach kept the same status of poor in both years. We all know the story of Western Beach well and the Government will not stop lobbying in Brussels, beyond Brexit, until Spain puts measures in place to resolve this problem.

Mr Speaker, until last year our beaches were only under my remit from an environmental perspective but after last year's Cabinet reshuffle beaches in their entirety, that is to say as a public amenity, now fall under my responsibility. I am most grateful to my friend and colleague the Hon. Samantha Sacramento for her work and dedication in this area in her time there. Similarly, I would also like to thank the former head of the Department, Nicky Guerrero, for his
730 work in managing one of our most popular assets. The Beaches Division now forms part of the Department of the Environment. Although I have only been working with this team for seven short months, I am delighted to welcome this very professional and dedicated group to our Environment and Heritage family.

We have begun work in earnest and are already making changes to the lifeguard service with our primary responsibility to ensure that people in the community enjoy swimming in a safe environment. This year the lifeguard induction course was expanded considerably. New
740 resources have been purchased, including observation chairs for all our beaches and the bathing pavilion, as have new RLSS regulation rescue boards, to ensure that these individuals have the tools they need to perform their duties efficiently and professionally. We will have a total of 42 lifeguards this summer and a total of 13 accessibility attendants. We will take stock after this year's bathing season and develop an induction manual with an exam to be completed by all
745 future lifeguards.

Further to all this, beachgoers this year will have the added facility of an extra beach storage unit for public use at Sandy Bay, Eastern Beach and Catalan Bay. This will greatly improve the free storage capabilities already in place at these beaches. Unfortunately, the weather delayed our pre-season works programme slightly, but I am happy to inform this House that all works will
750 be completed within the next few days.

Our beaches have suffered greatly this winter as a result of increased storm damage. We have had 10 episodes of adverse weather, which have affected all beaches to varying degrees. Four of these were severe. The beaches which suffered the most structural damage were Camp Bay and Catalan Bay, with Eastern Beach and Sandy Bay having the highest deposition of marine
755 litter as a result of the storms. In addition, the northern end of Eastern Beach had the added inconvenience of the adjacent tunnel works. This said, the department has worked tirelessly to ensure all repairs were carried out efficiently and I must also thank our colleagues in the Technical Services department for their assistance and support in this respect. Catalan Bay in particular has undergone a major renovation, not only in structural repairs but also in the removal of approximately 3,600 tonnes of rocks and the deposition of close to 10,000 tonnes of
760 screened sand as part of much needed beach regeneration. The Government will now consider, in consultation with residents, how best to protect this beach in the future, as the predicted increase in storm surges will undoubtedly threaten serious detrimental impact on this beach and could threaten the integrity of the sea wall.

Mr Speaker, this year saw the publication of the revised programme of measures on marine surveillance which has been submitted to the European Commission. The document sets out measures that will help to achieve and maintain Good Environmental Status in British Gibraltar
765

770 Territorial Waters and so fulfil the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, consistent with the Government's commitment to a clean, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine environment.

In parallel with this work and with monitoring of marine litter and marine noise, the Department's scientific divers, now formally qualified as such, continue to monitor the progress of our restoration efforts, including the oyster and seagrass regeneration projects. Monitoring invasive seaweed has also become the remit of the Department's scientific team, in addition to protection of marine fauna such as cetaceans, sharks and seabirds.

775 The underwater camera continues to be very popular with the general public and is receiving widespread attention from citizens and scientists alike in Germany, the USA, the UK and other parts of Europe.

A salient example of the success of the Government's creation of marine conservation zones is Seven Sisters Marine Protected Area. This designation has helped preserve an expanse of natural reef habitat that was becoming increasingly difficult to find in the Bay of Gibraltar. A wide variety of marine life can now be seen flourishing in this area, and evidence suggests that the populations of some fish species, such as breams and groupers, are increasing there. The protected area in the new offshore reef at Sandy Bay is yielding similar results.

785 Mr Speaker, Gibraltar is now a world leader in protection of sharks, rays and skates, having become one of only three countries in the world to provide near complete protection to these in a move that has received worldwide attention and the praise of many international organisations and individuals, including UN Patron of the Oceans Lewis Pugh. According to the latest assessment of sharks in the Mediterranean carried out by the International Council for the Conservation of Nature, at least 53% of the sharks and rays native to the Mediterranean Sea are at risk of extinction and require urgent action to conserve their population. This latest move by the Government of Gibraltar will help ensure that British Gibraltar Territorial Waters are a refuge for these species and is in keeping with the Government's wider mandate to become a leader in the application of regional marine protection conventions such as the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea.

795 Mr Speaker, Government's commitment to the protection of marine resources and fish stocks is undeniable. We are clearly beginning to see the results of our conservation measures despite the hyperbole associated with foreign fishing vessels. Angling is now licensed and the problem of dozens of non-resident anglers lining our shores has completely disappeared.

800 The Fishing Working Group continues to meet on a regular basis to discuss the sustainable management of marine resources in our waters. Once again, I want to thank all of its members who give their free time for this vitally important role. As an example of the Group's work, a temporary ban on octopus fishing was implemented from 15th April to 15th May this year, a pioneering measure in the history of marine conservation in Gibraltar. The aim of the ban was to improve breeding success by protecting octopus when they are laying eggs. Similar bans are regularly implemented throughout the Mediterranean but no previous Government of Gibraltar has had the courage and commitment to do this. Other bans, targeting vulnerable species and areas over defined periods of time, are also being considered by the Group, along with reviewing new and additional minimum sizes for fish in BGTW.

810 Mr Speaker, we are now well into Gibraltar's third Bluefin tuna fishing season. This continues to be managed exceptionally well with officials from the department and the Landing Point staff monitoring and recording catch data.

815 I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this fisheries work. As the status of our waters within the EU changes with Brexit, it is hugely important that we show the world – which is watching closely – that we are perfectly able to manage our waters environmentally and that our waters are indeed ours to manage. Any relaxation of our efforts at protection, or of the seriousness with which we regulate tuna fishing, would be jumped upon by our enemies to make a case against our jurisdictional authority. This is why we will continue in this and other areas of environment to not only keep to EU standards but to surpass them too.

820 Mr Speaker, having a dedicated environmental enforcement division has demonstrated to many, including other governments, the EU Commission and the Secretariat of the International Convention on the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, otherwise known as ICCAT, that Gibraltar is serious about environmental protection. The Environmental Protection and Research section has been working 365 days a year to ensure that environmental legislation is adhered to. In 2016, 825 the team reported 24 individuals for process in connection with offences against the marine regulations. Dedicated operations targeting specific breaches of the legislation are now occurring. Operation Spearfish, for example, proved extremely successful and has practically resulted in the cessation of the once-rife illegal spearfishing activities in BGTW.

Ensuring that vessels comply with the cetacean protocol is another important part of the section's remit. Whales and dolphins are fully protected under local and international law and it is in our best interest to ensure that maritime activities, including the activities of tour operators, are consistent with the conservation objectives of the Government. In connection with this, the Department is considering designating an area within our waters as a dolphin reserve.

835 The team also carries out an important role when it comes to marine research and wildlife rescue. This year, turtles and numerous birds, including Griffon Vultures, Short-toed Eagles and Gannets, have been rescued. The release rate is high, thanks to the sterling work carried out by the GONHS Raptor Unit and the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic.

Moving on to environmental health, the Environmental Agency continues to work and advise 840 me in the areas of nuisance, building control, waste regulation, ship sanitation, COMAH, food inspections, food import controls and much else. Work last year included 1,200 inspections to ensure hygiene in food premises and 109 ship sanitation certificates, a relatively new service in our Port.

The Agency services and calibrates our three air quality monitoring stations, liaising with 845 pollution specialists, and continues to form part of the European Network of Drinking Water Regulators (ENDWARE). It continues to participate in the EU Vectornet programme, which is studying the distribution of the mosquito, tick, sand fly and other disease vectors.

The Agency's new website has been launched, providing easier access to users for the dissemination of environmental information, and in the next few weeks all forms within the 850 website will be able for filling in online. The mobile App 'Gibenviro' continues to be improved and provides information to the public on a variety of environmental topics, including bathing waters and recycling.

The Agency continues to advise the Government on all relevant legislation. Currently it is doing sterling work with the Health and Safety Laboratory in the UK as the process of designing 855 and constructing an LNG plant at the North Mole proceeds.

Mr Speaker, the state of the North Front Cemetery was the subject of a motion debated in Parliament some months ago. I was very pleased that we were able to come to a consensus during the debate and agree on the final motion. I am conscious that some time has elapsed, but things can take time if we want to get them right. I am more than happy to announce that a 860 contract has been awarded to an experienced contractor for the upkeep and maintenance of the planted areas of the cemetery. Discussions are advanced and work is due to start on 1st August. A maintenance programme has been prepared by the Department of the Environment in consultation with the Botanic Gardens, who have provided their input pro bono. This will ensure that areas of vegetation are maintained and not allowed to become overgrown and create 865 problems of access to visitors. There will also be a programme of planting of shrubs that are attractive and can survive the sometimes harsh conditions of the site. In addition, a Bill for an Act to replace the current outdated Cemetery Act will be published shortly. All told, the coming financial year will see great improvements to the state of the cemetery and I am confident that it will finally cease to be a source of embarrassment and consternation.

870 Mr Speaker, green spaces are a great benefit to our environment, with Commonwealth Park providing what most, even the erstwhile critics on the other side of the House ... an essential

area for leisure and respite from the stresses of city life as well as a filter for pollutants. We continue to plant trees wherever possible and we are seeing that we are victims of our own success – we cannot find places to plant them – as last year’s output of 193, although higher
875 than it ever was pre 2012, is considerably less than that reported in previous years. That said, we will continue to explore areas where trees can be planted and, in so doing, increasing habitats for birds and insects within the urban environment, providing shade and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens at the Alameda continue to grow more beautiful and at the
880 same time expand their work on taxonomy, ecology, conservation and, very particularly, education. Its partnership with the University of Gibraltar resulted in the University’s first Erasmus student, Elizabeth Ulloa Chaura from Chile, doing a three-month traineeship at the Alameda. April 2016 saw the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Gardens, marked with the opening of a tropical glasshouse. The gardens continue to raise their profile as a centre of
885 excellence for the study and cultivation of succulents. The gardens’ curator has hosted visits to Gibraltar from high-profile succulentists, keen to view the Alameda’s important work in this field. Other work by the curator has included the exploration of new habitats for cacti in the Caribbean and visiting other botanic gardens to advise on succulent plant curation. The children’s education programme continues to go from strength to strength, with the
890 gardens’ education team further improving its links with local schools and capacity to advise and assist these with the development of their own gardens.

The International Garden Photographer of the Year is arriving in Gibraltar for the first time next month. This promises to be a world-class outdoor exhibition that will undoubtedly attract considerable attention from residents and tourists visiting the Rock. To mark this occasion, the
895 Department of the Environment and the Gardens have teamed up with the Photographer of the Year to introduce a new award known as Green Gibraltar, details of which will be announced shortly.

Mr Speaker, so much has changed in the Gibraltar Nature Reserve since I came into office in 2011, but it is also true that there is still so much to do. As part of the Government’s
900 commitment to improving the value of the Nature Reserve, the Department published the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan as a consultation document in September. The plan contains a wide range of action points for the Upper Rock and other areas of ecological importance that were afforded protected status in 2013. Providing new facilities, improving existing sites and reintroducing species all form part of the numerous measures included in the
905 consultation document. Many of these are well underway.

Perhaps more importantly, Mr Speaker, building on the success of the consultation process, I will shortly be making major strategic changes to the management of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve. These changes, informed by the draft management plan and by experience in protected areas elsewhere, will come at little financial cost but will project our Nature Reserve,
910 with all its various types of heritage, well beyond our borders. Meanwhile our day-to-day work continues, with habitat management and creation being carried out in key locations and a number of initiatives to re-wild the reserve.

Mr Speaker, it is fair to say that the collaborative work of the Department and the GONHS has saved the now not so secretive Barbary partridge. I remember when the Opposition used to
915 goad me with accusations that I was going to be singlehandedly responsible for the extinction of the Barbary partridge. How wrong they were yet again, Mr Speaker!

Our efforts are now focused on more ambitious initiatives. Earlier this year, the Department began a project aimed at attracting the osprey, a spectacular fish-eating bird of prey, back to the Rock. A successful reintroduction programme is currently underway in Cádiz and the
920 Department of the Environment has recently joined the regional efforts to increase population numbers in consultation with the GONHS as well as regional experts from Andalucía. The installation of artificial nests with decoys is aimed at enticing passing ospreys to stay. Plans to reintroduce other species are also active.

925 We will continue to vigorously pursue our policy of improving the Gibraltar Nature Reserve. The beautification works currently underway at Douglas Path, Mount Misery and Europa Foreshore serve to demonstrate this ongoing commitment and there is much more to come.

Mr Speaker, tourist sites are another recent and welcome acquisition of my portfolio. Once again, I have acquired an excellent and dedicated team of administrative staff and site officers whose knowledge and experience in managing a tourist product are invaluable to Gibraltar.

930 The Tourist Board's past investment in its sites in the Upper Rock coupled with the transformation of the Nature Reserve have made all the difference in upgrading this asset. This year we will introduce an audio guide system at the World War II Tunnels. The feedback received from visitors to Windsor Bridge has been excellent and I have no doubt that the Skywalk will have similar success. It is due to be completed in a few short weeks and opened to the public shortly after as part of a larger renovation project within the Mount Misery area. 935 Other improvements will also be seen soon in the Europa Point area, including new viewing platforms and interpretation.

Mr Speaker, I can report that, as a result of the culling programme, the long-term trend in the breeding population of gulls in Gibraltar continues to be one of decline. Despite the limitations 940 in gull control that are imposed when working in an urban environment, surveys show that the urban population now appears to be decreasing as well. Indeed, the number of house calls received and attended by the Avian Control Unit decreased substantially during 2016 and this is most likely as a result of the sustained effort in controlling the gull population in built-up areas as well as elsewhere around the Rock. This often difficult and dangerous work, which includes 945 removing nests from tall rooftops, is one of the most valued services that is performed for the public by the Avian Control Unit, and their efforts and dedication deserve to be highlighted. Although the general trend of gulls in Gibraltar is one of decline, a small increase in breeding birds has been detected on the Great East Sand Slopes, where the topography makes control using the current methods difficult. Discussions are currently underway to explore other more 950 natural options for controlling nesting gulls on the eastern slopes, including the reintroduction of predators such as the red fox.

Mr Speaker, from the outset, our management of the iconic Barbary macaque has progressed in ways that avoid the need for extensive culls, such as used to be the case in the past. While contraceptive implants have been used for several years now, they are of limited duration and 955 sometimes not 100% effective. As of September last year, the Macaque Management Team, run by the Department of the Environment and which includes the GONHS and the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic, has introduced surgical contraception by way of laparoscopy. The Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic has so far treated 29 macaques from most of the groups, approximately a third of the females of breeding age. It is important to note that the animals that have been 960 contracepted are females which have already had one or more young in past years, so they are not denied the opportunity of becoming mothers. This is crucial in macaque society. The numbers of females sterilised in this way is also limited so that there will always be some within every group which will bear young. This method will have the long-term effect of stopping population growth, while allowing social structures to remain and not threaten the continuation 965 of the Gibraltar macaque population. All this is being monitored by the team in consultation with Prof. Agustin Fuentes of Notre Dame University, Indiana USA, a great friend of Gibraltar and Chair of the Macaque Research Panel.

As an additional management tool, this year has also seen the start of a programme to carry out genetic fingerprinting of the whole macaque population of Gibraltar. Correct management 970 of our Barbary macaques is essential, and not just to reduce the nuisance they can cause in built-up areas. This species is endangered, as reflected in the recent up-listing of the species to Appendix I of the Convention on the Illegal Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The up-listing, which was supported by the International Primate Protection League (IPPL) and over which I was consulted in my personal capacity as a macaque conservation biologist,

975 highlights the importance of the species and of Gibraltar as a refuge for this primate which is facing disappearance from its North African habitat.

Monkey Talk Gibraltar continues to work closely with the Department in all areas of education on the macaques, and I thank Brian Gomila for his energy in promoting responsible enjoyment of our monkeys.

980 Mr Speaker, I believe it is fair to say that the Government has largely resolved the problem of macaques impacting on our built-up areas in a large way, which, as I said repeatedly, would take a few years of patient work. We are in an exciting position where we can now fine tune our management methods so that all of us can once again start to think of our monkeys in a positive light and as an asset to Gibraltar.

985 Mr Speaker, the reshuffle also delivered Heritage on to my desk. I must start by paying tribute to the excellent work which my predecessor, the Hon. Steven Linares, carried out until I took over late last year. His exquisite restoration of Wellington Front is but one example of his achievements. **(Hon. Chief Minister and Hon. Miss S M Sacramento: Hear, hear.)**

990 I am excited at the prospects ahead, particularly in areas where Heritage, Environment and Education, all areas now under my responsibility, can come together. The expanded Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change now includes a Heritage Division with three officers, and is therefore more resourced than ever before. It is important that the different stakeholders have available points of contact and support within Government and with this comes a sense of common purpose.

995 Following consultation with stakeholders, a new Heritage and Antiquities Act is in the final stages of preparation and will be published as a Bill very soon. This will clearly define the responsibilities that will govern all Heritage matters, including an expanded listing of assets in its schedules. The Act will set up a Heritage and Antiquities Commission. I have additionally revived the Heritage Action Committee in a revised format as a smaller outfit of key players who can
1000 advise me when quick action is required. It will continue to function as it will complement and not be replaced by the Commission. I am pleased to report to having chaired two meetings of HAC so far and these have proved very useful and productive. The next stage is the development of a Heritage Management Plan, a tool to give effect to the requirements of the Act. The plan will identify those areas of heritage which we regard as important and value the most. It will also
1005 allow developers to have a clear picture of how their proposals might be viewed in the context of heritage, which will be useful for planners. In this way we will develop a coherent strategy, where development and heritage are de-conflicted at an early stage. Work has started on a draft and I will publish the final document after consultation with stakeholders, when it is completed.

1010 Over the coming year, I will be looking at further ways of managing and improving our heritage. We are blessed with a richness of heritage that is the envy of many, but this brings with it responsibility. Government cannot tackle so much on its own or at once, so we will be looking at ways in which we might attract outside investment. The Moorish Castle is one area that is being looked at after the World Heritage success. Its restoration is something that the Gibraltar Museum, currently the managers of the site, are keen to embark upon and I am
1015 discussing with them ways of achieving this goal in the medium term. Plans will be developed during the course of this financial year.

This is the first Budget speech after our success on the World Heritage front, so I feel it is essential that we should acknowledge this success, without doubt, as the most important achievement in Gibraltar's heritage history. I wish to record here the huge contribution made by
1020 my colleague the Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia, who steered the bid through to its positive conclusion, and once again my predecessor as Minister for Heritage, Steven Linares. *(Banging on desk)* The bid took many years to achieve and hurdles to overcome and we now look forward to the next chapter in the story. In recognition of the efforts made, I must also thank and credit the countless hours dedicated to this achievement by the team of professionals and support staff
1025 within the Gibraltar Museum led by Clive Finlayson, who helped not only with the research and promotion but the logistics and refurbishment of the site and its access. *(Banging on desk)*

I am pleased to announce that the new viewing platforms at the Europa Advance Batteries have now been completed and that I am currently finalising plans for their opening. From here visitors will enjoy magnificent views of the Gorham's Cave Complex, the imposing Rock itself and the Strait of Gibraltar and the north coast of Africa beyond. Access to the caves themselves has to be strictly controlled because of the nature of the access and also the sensitivity of the site, so the viewing platform will accommodate a large public. This type of solution has been applied at other World Heritage Sites with similar characteristics and we will strive to make the site as accessible as possible within its constraints. We have already improved walkways, which means that two levels of access down to the caves are now possible. One of these allows close views without affecting the site at all and will permit us to have more visitors going down to the caves than before to enjoying their splendour and majesty. We will always be looking at ways, especially involving new technology, of making the site accessible to the widest possible public. While on the subject, I am pleased to report that the Gibraltar Museum will this year be returning to the two months of excavation at Gorham's and Vanguard Caves, starting very shortly.

The Gibraltar Museum recently boasted an attendance close to 2,000 people at their Open Day. It shows that heritage is very much alive in Gibraltar, and this House needs to be aware of this. The Museum has completed a full refurbishment in two years. Last year the Chief Minister opened a new wing on the ground floor which highlighted the now globally popular Nana and Flint. They have been a remarkable success. This year I was able to complete the circle by opening the brand new wing on the first floor dedicated to military and social history with a gallery which is very close to my heart: ornithology. We have a museum worthy of being called our national Museum, reflecting the diversity of our history, natural history and heritage.

The dissemination of heritage information at all levels is something that we need to encourage. I am pleased to confirm that steps are being taken in this area with the view of producing a series of publications, some of which will integrate heritage and the environment.

The Heritage Division has also participated in other projects of international importance, such as the restoration of the 16th-century Franciscan frescos discovered at the Convent. This project emphasises the importance of collaboration, as it was jointly co-ordinated and funded by the Convent, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the Friends of Gibraltar Heritage, and of course the Government.

Another milestone in the protection of our heritage was the relocation of the old MoD gatehouse at the entrance to the former dockyard. This clearly demonstrates that this Government will do everything in its power to preserve our buildings of historic importance.

The Gibraltar Heritage Trust enjoys a very good and open relationship with the Department. They are firm in their advice and we welcome this, consulting them on many matters and not just for statutory reasons. We believe in collaboration and common objectives and we should also include and thank all the volunteers who give of their free time. We value their support.

This year also saw the renovation of anchors by volunteer Bart van Thienen, of Europa Foreshore fame, come to fruition with a deployment at Ocean Village, with a number of others in the pipeline. *(Banging on desk)*

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, we are consolidating our mobile heritage asset register that will keep track of all our moveable heritage such as cannons, cannonballs etc. As part of this process, we intend to promote an initiative to encourage the registration of artefacts of heritage value that persons might have in their possession. The intention is that the individual would be allowed to retain the artefact after it has been recorded for posterity. We will also be concentrating on developing plans for the refurbishment and maintenance of the City walls and fortifications, amongst them the Northern Defences where, as the Deputy Chief Minister described yesterday, sterling work has been carried out over the past few years. But there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and many heritage assets that need repair and maintenance, such as the World War II structures in different areas of the Upper Rock or, as I have already mentioned, the old prison compound at the Moorish Castle. These should be seen as

opportunities for urban regeneration and new tourist attractions, enhancing walks and bringing these areas to life again.

1080

Mr Speaker, my responsibility for urban renewal is now integrated into my Heritage Division. The Urban Renewal Committee is now meeting and is reviewing legislation that will encourage renewal and protect the urban environment, and I want to thank once again my friends Samantha Sacramento and Paul Balban for their contribution to this committee. In this role, I seek to encourage the sort of development that will revitalise our urban areas while protecting their features. I am therefore pleased to see projects developing such as at Police Barracks and the boutique hotel in the Upper Town. Ways of formally encouraging such schemes are being considered. In collaboration with the Ministry for Culture and the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, we will shortly be launching a new street art initiative to also refresh some of our more drab urban areas.

1085

1090

The Garrison Library is another of my new responsibilities, and one that has changed considerably since it was handed over to Government in 2011. It is now used on a daily basis by local researchers and students alike, who make good use of its collections. The library has been building on its research output, with its focus on Gibraltar, through key projects, including an ESRC funded project together with the University of Essex on a major history of Gibraltar, with close to 400 interviews conducted which will be made available to the public. The Government funded the final conference for this project, which was a great success and which took place in the Garrison Library in February. Another major project, the Encyclopaedia of Migrants, is another example. Working with EU partners, funded by the EU with Government support, this has allowed this project to produce an important insight into migrations, including those in Gibraltar, and will culminate in a conference here in Gibraltar this week. Every year, together with the office of the Deputy Chief Minister, the Garrison Library organises an international symposium on self-determination, which is now in its fifth edition. Mr Speaker, as a former member of the Garrison Library Committee many decades ago, I am very excited to build on my new working relationship with the library team with a view to ensuring we protect it for future generations as the rich historical and cultural treasure that it is. I will be working closely with the team to assess ways of making improvements to the library, including increasing its revenue streams.

1095

1100

1105

Mr Speaker, I see the coming year as one of consolidating systems for the protection and management of our rich natural and historical heritage. While this is being done we will be looking at new tangible projects where we can begin to make a difference in terms of sites and attract investment.

1110

Mr Speaker, as you have seen, the daily work of the revitalised Department goes hand in hand with contributors from other Government Departments. Using our collaborative ethos, the newly constituted Department now works closely with colleagues in Town Planning, Land Property Services, Housing and the Technical Services Department. Preserving our heritage really is a team effort.

1115

I repeat: this administration's environmental ethics have always been deep rooted, from the days that the first GSLP Government created a Ministry for the Environment in the 1980s for the first time in Gibraltar, and have never consisted of doing the bare minimum in order to comply with law, whether it be local or international law. Our track record clearly proves this, as there can be no doubt that, based on the foundations of decades ago, this GSLP/Liberal Government has achieved more for the environment than any other in Gibraltar's history. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) And this is for good reason, Mr Speaker. Environmental issues are no longer fringe. Environmental stories now regularly make the headlines and are not just the cute and cuddly good-news story at the end of a bulletin, for climate change is the greatest threat to the world as we know it. Dare I say, Mr Speaker, in these difficult days of despicable, criminal, terrorist attacks, that in the medium to long term climate change is an even bigger threat. These are not my words, Mr Speaker. Richard Clarke, the former National Co-ordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the United States, surprised a TV interviewer when he stated just this on

1120

1125

1130

the day after the Manchester bombing. If left unchecked, climate change will result in more death and more suffering than the world has experienced in decades. Floods, drought, famine, extinction of crop species and migration en masse would all occur as a result. Is this the world we want to leave our children and grandchildren? We must all play our part. We must live more sustainably. We must reduce our consumption of electricity and power, our use of plastics and our reliance on meat products as food. Apart from environmental sense, it makes financial sense too. These are not examples of Kellyanne Conway's famed alternative facts. Each and every one of us has a duty to move firmly towards functioning sustainably; and as representatives of the people, for us this is especially relevant. As the great US equal rights campaigner John Lewis once said: 'If not us, then who? If not now, then when?'

Mr Speaker, as this House is aware, the University of Gibraltar is an independent entity, but I would not be doing it justice if I were not to mention at least some of the achievements of the past year and plans for the coming one. I will quote from a letter I recently received from Prof. Christina Slade, interim Chair of the Academic Board:

As Chair of the Academic board of the University of Gibraltar I am writing with the support of the Board to commend the work of the executive over the past eighteen months and to congratulate HM Government of Gibraltar for their initiative....

The complex policy frameworks necessary for a university are in place, including quality assurance, academic governance and higher degree and research procedures. In the first 18 months there have been 278 students (45% higher than expected) in 19 courses. 13 nationalities are represented.

The University is now recognised by and has associate membership of such major bodies as the Universities UK and the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Highlights over the past year have included the launch of the Commonwealth Scholarship funded by the Government, the doctoral programme, establishment of key advisory groups, establishment of Professional Certificates of Competence, and developing of external sources of income.

The University has ambitious plans, which include the construction of student accommodation, a new language centre and business school and, in collaboration with the Department of Education, the offering of a Gibraltar custom-made Postgraduate Certificate in Education. I would like to commend the board and the Vice-Chancellor for their work in driving the University forward with such commitment.

Mr Speaker, this is of course my first Budget speech as Minister for Education and I want to thank my predecessor, my colleague the Hon. Gilbert Licudi, for his great work in this area. It was from him that I inherited two new schools and the University, and also a most professional Department that functions extremely efficiently and well. I am also happy to say that now, as then, education remains a top priority for the Government.

Indeed the last financial year has seen substantial change and exciting developments. As we look into the future I am extremely confident in our ability to build on what we have already achieved, delivering on a change programme that will allow our youth to develop as citizens in an ever-changing world, ready to make an important contribution to Gibraltar's future and beyond. Investment in Education is what ultimately should allow Gibraltar to thrive as we face the challenges that will invariably be thrust upon us.

As my friend the Chief Minister mentioned yesterday, Government's commitment towards higher education is unparalleled. Financial year 2016-17 saw 318 mandatory undergraduate scholarships, 169 postgraduate scholarships and 28 discretionary awards. This amounts to a total of 515 new scholarships – a year-on increase of 89 awards. The number of students who have benefitted from higher education during 2015-16 amounted to over a thousand – 1,038 to be exact. Moreover, further opportunities for personal development continue to be accessible through distance learning courses and the highly successful Washington Internship Programme, which has now run consecutively for four academic years and has provided a total of 79 graduates with unrivalled professional experience and knowledge through select work placements.

1175 The proficiency of the public service has a direct impact on all the community, and as such it
is imperative to ensure that personnel receive continuous professional development and
statutory training to deliver an effective service. An investment of over £½ million was allocated
for this specific purpose and has, to name a few, provided specialised essential courses in the
1180 fields of Financial Services and Gaming, Tax, Archives, Maritime Law, Economic Development,
Technical Services and Town Planning. Professional development continues to be promoted
through management and leadership courses, teacher training programmes and accountancy.

The private sector has also benefitted from over £150,000 of central training funds, and
whilst accountancy and maritime operations continue to be the primary courses in demand, it
has also promoted other sectors such as the Gibraltar Dental Association, with dental nursing
1185 diplomas for nurses practising in this field.

The Student Support Homework club has been a resounding success and provides the ideal
set-up and environment for students to study after school hours.

The financial year also saw the launch of the new Project Search. This has been set up
specifically to assist school leavers with special educational needs to identify apposite
1190 employment and support the transition.

The minor works programme for financial year 2016-17 included external and internal
refurbishment works and was designed to complement Government's plans for the
redevelopment of various schools under the umbrella of Education, and primarily, but not
exclusively, targeted schools that are not earmarked for redevelopment. These included the
1195 continuation of the Design and Technology workshop overhaul at Bayside School and works to
improve accessibility at Westside School, which included constructing an extension to create
extra classroom space for the Learning Support Unit, the installation of a lift to access first floor
specialist rooms and the rendering of the external façade. Additionally, the Gibraltar College has
gained an extra ICT suite and the replacement of windows to improve ventilation. Rendering and
1200 painting works to the external and internal façade of St Joseph's First and Middle schools were
completed, thus extending the lifecycle and heritage value of this historical building and
providing a much-needed facelift. The reception lobby shared by both schools was redesigned to
improve security and control access. An elevated first-floor extension was constructed in
St Mary's School to provide an assembly/indoor activity facility large enough to host the entire
1205 pupil population, and a full double-glazing window replacement was undertaken in all communal
corridors to improve ventilation and building insulation. Works at St Paul's School included
repairs to part of the external façade, the refurbishment of the student library and removal of
timeworn skylights, with modifications to the roof structure and tile covering to improve
building insulation. Structural works were undertaken at St Bernard's Nursery to address water
1210 ingress and preserve the value of this old building. The window replacement programme was
sensitively undertaken to optimise the use of natural lighting whilst observing its unique
heritage. The final stage of the window replacement programme at Bleak House, another
heritage building, was completed, and all obsolete air-conditioning units were replaced to
comply with EU regulations.

1215 We are now about to embark on the works programme for 2017-18. This will include
redesigning the reception and lobby entrances to both secondary schools and relocating the
school secretaries' offices to augment student safety and monitor access. CCTV will be installed
strictly around the school perimeters. Some essential works will be carried out at Bayside and
Westside, primarily to ensure compliance with health and safety standards and to make certain
1220 that the premises are fit for purpose and the school continues to operate effectively until new
premises are delivered. Works listed for the Gibraltar College include reconfiguring the Resource
Centre. The John Mackintosh Hall annexe building will benefit from a much-needed sports hall
window replacement and overhead doorway canopies to protect students and the building
façade from inclement weather. The renovation of St Joseph's Middle and First Schools will
1225 continue on to the last stage of the external programme – the refurbishment of the Band Room,
housing the music suite of St Joseph's Middle School – and will commence the first stage of the

1230 internal refurbishment programme, that is all top floor classrooms, corridors and stairwells and
offices. In addition, the linoleum replacement schedule will also be continued and an extra area
of canopy roofing will be installed in the playground of St Joseph's First to provide shelter for the
1235 little ones. In the same vein, it is also sensible to continue investing in the preservation and
expansion of St Mary's School building to meet the increasing demand of pre-schooling and
growth in pupil population. This will entail part reroofing to address rainwater ingress, building a
ground level extension and covered play area to relocate the nursery area and enable additional
classroom space, and structural works to ensure the integrity of ground level flooring. A survey
1240 of the drainage system servicing the school and surrounding elevated areas is currently taking
place to identify an effective method of rerouting the excessive volume of storm water that can
collect in the area to prevent further damage to the school building and property during
torrential rain. Works earmarked for the Hebrew Primary School include repairs to flooring, the
refurbishment of the lobby area and refurbishment of the assembly hall. Varyl Begg Nursery has
1245 historical issues with humidity and water ingress, so the extension that serves as the
reception/lobby entrance will be renovated. Additional temporary classroom and toilet facilities
will be made available at St Martin's School to absorb the increase in pupil numbers expected in
September 2017. Plans for St Paul's School include the refurbishment of the pre-school nursery
facilities, the installation of a ramp at the school's main entrance to improve accessibility, damp
proofing and redecorating works to a number of areas and rerouting of storm water drainage.

1250 Mr Speaker, on matters relating to special educational needs it is crucially important to note
that the rise in the number of children requiring additional support is remarkable. Teachers and
learning support assistants have therefore received further training in special needs in order to
deliver the best provision possible. All six special educational needs co-ordinators, known as
SENCOs, successfully completed the National SENCO Award course. There have been organised
talks on Tourette's and autism from visiting speakers attended by teachers and learning support
assistants, and a number of teachers have travelled to conferences in the UK with the aim of
1255 increasing their knowledge and then sharing good practice with other members of the
profession. Furthermore, workshops have also been organised on different areas relating to
special educational needs.

The secondary sector continues to develop more vocational courses through ASDAN, the
Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, supporting children who perhaps
cannot cope with the demands of the GCSEs. This gives them an alternative pathway and an
opportunity to showcase their knowledge and skills.

1260 Last year a number of teachers completed the Dignified Care and Responsibility Train the
Trainer course; this year these teachers have delivered the course to a number of schools and
will continue to do this next academic year until all schools have been covered. Our teachers and
support staff need to know, and indeed feel reassured, that their safety and that of the pupils
under their care is paramount.

1265 On assessment of pupil learning, a change to the National Curriculum and the assessments of
pupils with the removal of levels has necessitated engagement in collaborative work with
schools, subject leaders and experts in the UK. Formative assessment refers to the part of
everyday teaching and learning that enables a pupil to build on their learning; summative
assessment gives information on a pupil's overall performance at a specific point in their
1270 learning. Both are considered crucial in order to guarantee that all children reach their maximum
potential. We have therefore invested a considerable amount of time and effort in order to
address these changes and come up with viable mechanisms to guarantee success.

1275 Teachers can and do make a tremendous difference in the lives of the young people under
their tuition and in their care, and as such can impact on the wellbeing of the children and their
families. Just as the reverse is true, so also the right teacher at the right time can define a child's
wellbeing and ability to fulfil his or her full potential. In fact, quality assurance is high on our
agenda. This year we successfully launched a revised code of practice for teachers in partnership
with the Gibraltar Teachers' Association. The main aim is for teachers to be well informed of

1280 what is expected of them as teachers. It affords us the tools to celebrate good practice and
challenge underperformance when this happens. The safety net of the code gives us the
1285 procedure whence to trigger disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures should this be
necessary. We will also be developing and enforcing a zero-tolerance policy to ensure the
profession is treated with respect and that teachers can go about their duties with confidence
that they are fully supported.

1285 We also have plans, in partnership with the University of Gibraltar, as I briefly mentioned
earlier, to produce a bespoke Postgraduate Certificate in Education, offering a single pathway
into teaching and making us the gatekeepers, assuring the quality of the product. This should
enable us to have more of a say in terms of recruiting the best teachers possible, using our
schools as teaching practice schools, monitoring student teachers at all times and guiding them
1290 through the process.

Mr Speaker, a post of Assistant Education Adviser has been regraded to full adviser, and the
roles of education advisers have been redefined to reflect our emerging needs. Areas such as
child welfare, staff management and curriculum development with quantitative and qualitative
quality assurance will now be the responsibility of the successful applicants, who will be in post
1295 by 1st September this year. We will also be moving in all areas relating to leading through
technology in education.

The focus on improving interactivity through technology and how to make this more effective
in teaching and learning continues to be the main driving force of the use of technology in our
schools. The initiative centres predominantly around access to handheld devices for teachers
1300 and pupils. Training on how to operate within this platform has been provided through an Apple
educator offering in-services and online access to teachers. What began two years ago as a
project pioneered at St Bernard's Middle School has been laid out to other schools to varying
degrees. Governor's Meadow First School and St Martin's Special School in particular have
received equipment and training that has allowed them to make significant headway in using
1305 these technologies. The planning stages to equip and train staff at St Mary's First School,
St Joseph's First School and Middle School are already arranged and set for the coming academic
year. As well as this, all other schools continue to develop this initiative within certain year
groups and classes and it is expected that the full programme will be rolled out in stages to all
schools. The technical infrastructure of schools is a key factor in the successful development of
1310 this programme. It relies on robust and secure access to the internet. This will be provided in all
schools this year, whether or not they form part of the new schools project.

The Department of Education has worked in conjunction with the Kusuma Trust, University
College London and the University of Gibraltar to provide training in programming and coding
for teachers. The course was taught by lecturers from UCL's Faculty of Computer Science.

1315 The Department of Education continues to develop and formalise an initiative started by my
predecessor to consolidate Gibraltar Studies. Much progress has been made, initially at first and
middle school level, and we will see important developments during the coming academic year.

A substantial amount of work has also been carried out in relation to child protection and
safeguarding. The Tier 2 Safeguarding course has now been revamped in line with the Signs of
1320 Safety model, and four of the designated officers from different schools have attended this. The
rest will be completing it in October. Since October, 86 teachers plus learning support assistants
have completed the Tier 1 Safeguarding course. Plans are well underway to ensure that more
teachers receive this training throughout the next academic year.

We are currently reviewing and assessing all our procedures in relation to child protection,
1325 revising our policies, training and retraining teachers, offering in-service provision, sending
teachers on conferences abroad, working closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police, Care Agency
and the Youth Service. We take these matters very seriously and will leave no stone unturned in
order to guarantee the protection of children at all times. Recent work on a Sexting Presentation
produced in partnership with other agencies and aimed at parents is testament to this
1330 commitment.

The addition of an auxiliary role to the team of educational psychologists (EPs) has allowed our existing EPs to engage in more in-depth complex work with our rising number of Special Educational Needs pupils. The assistant, a fully integrated member of the team, completed a Joint Council Qualification approved Certificate in Psychometric Testing and Assessment and
1335 Access Arrangements, which allowed her to cover all academic assessments, thus helping with the transition and exam access reviews. This year, the team of psychologists additionally benefitted from the support of an intern from the University of Louisiana. Plans are already
1340 underway to continue to afford other interns the opportunity of accumulating the necessary hours required in a professional setting and to take advantage of this in order to help and support our schools. The team of psychologists also continue to deliver on their drop-in evening clinics aimed at parents and carers who have concerns about their children's learning, development or behaviour.

Mr Speaker, child and adolescent mental health is a subject of great concern. I co-chair the CAMHS Committee with my colleague the Minister for Health and Care, and we will this year be
1345 making recommendations on ways to improve provision and to support the professionals, including the teachers so often in the front line in helping young people with mental health concerns.

The recently launched language school at the Gibraltar College continues to attract attention. There are currently 118 pupils enrolled – 95 reading Spanish and 23 French – across different
1350 age ranges, starting at the early age of six. The value of this initiative is more than significant: bilingualism is part of Gibraltar's very being. Research points at bilingualism giving both an educational advantage to children and delaying the onset of dementia in the elderly by at least five years. We will not let bilingualism die. Not only are we investing in the language school, but I am also commencing a dialogue with the Department and headteachers to study ways of
1355 actively encouraging bilingualism day to day through our schools.

Mr Speaker, changes are afoot in the way that we teach our children, and there are many more changes to come. This will include a review of holiday periods and term lengths, and of the provision of subjects such as religious education, languages and music.

One thing that will certainly not change is the commitment to charity work. Throughout the
1360 academic year schools have served the community, of which they are an integral part, tremendously. Numerous charities have been supported, thousands of pounds raised, countless hours invested in order to support those in need. Worthy of mention is the Holding Hands initiative held at Bayside, Standing Strong against Domestic Violence, and indeed the Mental Health Awareness Week organised by Westside.

We also continue to work in partnership with the Kusuma Trust and we are extremely grateful for their ongoing support every year in events such as the British Science Museum Outreach Programme and Maths Week. The ever popular university talks and interview techniques session or indeed the Excellent Students for Top Universities continue to be fully
1365 funded by the Trust. Additionally, once again this year their Firetech Coding initiative has been immensely valuable in showing young children how to code.
1370

Mr Speaker, it has been an absolute privilege to have worked for the past eight months in Education. I have loved every minute. I have met, and met again, so many people, teachers, support staff, admin staff, and of course the students themselves. In my visits to every school and college I have learnt so much, and realised so many things. We have a tremendous wealth of
1375 talent and absolute dedication to education and to our young people. I have seen that our education system is working well but that there is also huge untapped potential. I have every intention of tapping it and making it flow.

The 1974 Education and Training Act is absolutely out of date. Together with education professionals I am working on a thorough review of the Act, which I will be bringing to the House
1380 before the year is out. I will be reactivating the Advisory Council on Religious Education and reviewing its composition and function in keeping with Gibraltar's diverse society.

1385 Mr Speaker, in the context of widening the ambit of Education, I would like to highlight and thank the board and sponsors of the Young Enterprise initiative, and of course those participating students and the teachers. Year in, year out, our young people excel in the work that they produce and gain skills outside the classroom which will serve them well in later life.

Because education spills over into Culture and the services offered by the Youth Service and youth associations, and by dance, music and performing arts academies and groups, I work very closely with my colleague the Minister for Culture and Youth, Steven Linares, in building bridges between us all.

1390 Mr Speaker, as the Chief Minister announced in his speech on opening this debate, the recommendations of the working party on co-education have been accepted by Government. The working party believes that education should be much wider than the purely academic and the educational environment should reflect reality as it is – that is to say males and females going about their lives, socially and at work, side by side. It should nurture in children, from the very onset and throughout their schooling, belief in the self-evident fact that, although not the same, men and women are equal. This should also help them develop social skills with ease as they interact with members of the other gender on a daily basis under the supervision of their teachers.

1400 The deliberations, discussions and research lead to the conclusion that a smooth transition from single-gender to co-educational structures should see both social and educational benefits from a school environment that is more attuned to society than the mono-gender model, which, for a range of historical and other reasons, reflects past and not contemporary societies and their values. The interpretation of education goes clearly beyond schools as mere examination factories obsessed with examination results. Education is an open-ended process which works largely through conversation, example and relationships. It must be dialogical rather than just curricular.

1405 Schools should endeavour to aim at forming and educating the whole person in the belief that all persons should have an equal chance to share in the life of the community and the wider world. Education should lead children to seek and uphold the truth, to be critical and to be able to discriminate positively, to be respectful of others and of the environment; it should encourage interaction with others to arrive at informed, committed action. It is an ongoing cognitive, emotional and social process; a process of living in which the end is not the important factor, but the process itself.

1410 The working party therefore firmly believes that a co-education setting is the best way of achieving this vision of education. Government will therefore fully take on board these recommendations. The changes envisaged for the better are substantial as we will be taking this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reform education further.

1420 Once again the Chief Minister referred to some of these. In our proposals, all first schools take on children from pre-school to year 2, substantially increasing nursery provision and therefore operating the same system of catchment areas for nurseries as we do for schools, thereby eliminating the need to allocate places after assessing the individual needs of respective families. High attainment in first school should correlate with attendance at Government nursery. Furthermore, an additional and important advantage is that children move to middle school at the end of Key Stage 1; the formal assessment opportunities and quality assurance mechanisms are therefore improved as a direct result of this.

1425 Middle schools remain of similar size, taking children from year 3 to year 6, setting up a smooth transfer at the exit phase of Key Stage 2, with all the pertinent formal assessments completed across all our middle schools in line with what happens in England and Wales. This arrangement once again makes it easier to quality assure and track the journey of children. We place a very strong emphasis on added value; schools must ensure that all children develop their true potential. We therefore need the assessment structures in place to ensure that we can confidently measure this. This arrangement is expected to create a more standard entry into secondary education.

1435 Students then would commence their secondary schooling at Bayside and Westside at the start of Key Stage 3, at the beginning of year 7, with both schools operating on a co-educational basis. With GCSE getting harder, it is important to have the specialisation from year 7. A totally new Bayside and Westside School will be built and would accommodate the changes.

1440 Post-16 provision will operate completely under a consortium arrangement jointly administered by the two respective headteachers of Bayside and Westside and the Principal of the Gibraltar College, with the College additionally providing a completely revamped vocational framework. The Gibraltar College will continue to deliver on adult education and professional courses, with the recently established language school for children expanded to include Mandarin and computer programming, and the teaching of English as a foreign language enhanced.

1445 Vocational pathways will also be introduced at an earlier stage in the new Bayside and Westside at the exit phase of Key Stage 3 to include structured outreach work-experience programmes. This fills a big gap in our current education setup.

1450 Mr Speaker, I wish to thank all the members of the working group on co-education for the professional way in which they have tackled their task. I recall that the Opposition chided the Government with revealing the names of the members of the group, implying that this did not in fact exist, despite my predecessor having clearly stated that the group had indeed been formed. I am proud to name them all again by way of thanking them for the important task that they have performed. They are: Michelle Barabich, Headteacher of Westside; Michael Tavares, Headteacher of Bayside; Kenneth Saez, Headteacher of St Bernard's Middle; Dymrna Holmes, 1455 the SEO of the Department of Education; Stuart Borastero, the President of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association; Angelique Linares, a parent; Steven Reyes, a parent; and of course Darren Grech, accomplished swimmer and acting Director of Education, who pulled it all together and makes such a tremendous contribution to education day in and day out. Many professionals, groups and members of the public made valuable representations to the working group and I 1460 thank them all for this. Every single representation was given full consideration.

1465 Mr Speaker, as the Chief Minister also proudly announced, Government will also build a new St Martin's School, Notre Dame School, St Anne's School, Governor's Meadow School, Bishop Fitzgerald School, Bayside and Westside. (*Banging on desks*) Already a strong and dedicated team is hard at work in preparing these ambitious but perfectly achievable projects, which will be carried out avoiding disruption to the students. The details concerning all of these will shortly be announced. As you can imagine, it will involve careful planning to execute, and stakeholders, especially the teaching profession, will be fully and intimately involved in planning and rolling out these changes. Indeed, Mr Speaker, I intend to create a number of focused working groups to guide us through the details of the changes and the proposals announced today, in order to 1470 ensure that our children and our children's children reap the benefits of these exciting times.

1475 One important aim is the increased involvement of teachers outside the immediate remit of their schools and classrooms. There cannot be any distance between the Department and the schools. Teachers, especially heads and deputies, have a tremendous part to play in progressing education and they must play a larger part in this at departmental level.

1480 Mr Speaker, the perception of education is changing. It is much more than exams and much more than schools. It is how society prepares its children and youth to take their place in our beloved community. Today we have seen that huge steps are being taken to take this forward.

1485 Over the past eight months or so I have visited all the schools, most on more than one occasion. Most recently, over the past few weeks I have been to the comprehensive schools to see the students sitting some of their major examinations with great discipline and commitment. In a couple of months' time we will all be taking pride in the exam results of our students. I will be the first there to congratulate them, but at the same time I will be thinking of all those young people of the same age who did not do so well or did not take these exams because their abilities or their interests are in other areas for which we do not currently provide in the right way or at the right time. 'Education', said William Yeats, 'is not the filling of a pail, but the

lighting of a fire.' We will light that fire in each and every one of our young people, regardless of their interests, weaknesses or strengths.

1490 To end, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank all of the staff of the Departments, schools and colleges, the University, authorities, agencies, companies and contractors – too many to mention by name – who work in any and all of my areas of responsibility, for their contribution to making Gibraltar work. I want to thank all students, from the very youngest to those in higher education, and especially their parents for the interest they show in our schools. I want to thank the volunteers, from those who work on projects to those who serve on committees or boards without payment and without any expectation of recognition or reward. I want to thank the
1495 associations and societies with an interest in my areas of responsibility for meeting with me and pushing their subjects responsibly and with commitment. I want to thank the three Unions with which I work closely: the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, Unite and the GGCA. I would like to thank all those with the courtesy to invite me to functions, performances and events, and to apologise for those which I cannot attend, usually due to work commitments. I want to thank my
1500 CEOs, directors and other senior staff for putting up with my passion and with my wish to relentlessly progress our agendas and our manifesto. I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, and the staff of our Parliament, and of course my small but dedicated and loyal personal staff for their support, professionalism and friendship. And I would like to thank my family for understanding that I sometimes cannot be with them when I would really want to.

1505 Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the people who make my job worth doing: the people of Gibraltar. I was put here by them, I work for them, I do it for them. They make it worthwhile. (*Banging on desks*)

1510 **Chief Minister (Hon F R Picardo):** Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Paul Balban.

1515 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I wonder if that is a convenient moment to give you and the Clerk a –

Mr Speaker: No, we are all right; I would rather carry on.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, and everybody else can come –

1520 **Mr Speaker:** We are nearly at lunchtime.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, well, everybody else can come in and out, Mr Speaker, but I am conscious of your –

1525 **Mr Speaker:** There is no point in doing so now.

Hon. Chief Minister: In that case ...

1530 **Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as Minister for Infrastructure and Planning to give my sixth Budget address since this Government was elected into office in 2011.

1535 I will start with my ministerial responsibilities for Technical Services. Technical Services is truly an inter-ministerial Department that works throughout most other Ministries and Departments and whose responsibilities lie in providing technical advice within the disciplines of engineering, drafting, surveying, planning, construction, management and infrastructural maintenance and development. It is a vibrant and challenging Department where no two days are alike.

1540 Technical Services has now seen the development of a totally new discipline within it, that of
traffic planning. Technical Services has always had responsibility for roads and highway
1545 maintenance but traffic and transport planning management, which is a speciality of
engineering, is not a technical field that has existed within the Civil Service structure in the past.
As a result, this year will see the introduction of a new post, that of Transport Planner. The new
post holder will be responsible for all matters relating to the recently launched Sustainable
Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – or STTPP, which is how I will refer to the plan from here on.
1550 Therefore, Mr Speaker, during the past financial year the Department has continued to provide
technical support to Government Ministries and civil servant departments on a wide range of
construction-related matters as well as meeting its defined responsibilities for maintaining
public infrastructure, namely roads and highways and the sewer network.

1555 Mr Speaker, with respect to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects, during
financial year 2016-17 the Department was involved in the construction of a new high-capacity
rock catch fence on the Eastside slopes just to the south of Both Worlds. This represented
phase 1 of a larger project aimed at providing additional protective measures to reduce the risk
of rock falls in the area. During the current financial year, the Department will extend the work
carried out under phase 1 and provide an additional 60 metres of high-capacity catch fencing in
1560 the same area. Additionally, the Department will continue to monitor and develop cliff
stabilisation schemes in line with Government's ongoing cliff stabilisation and rock fall
protection programme.

1565 Mr Speaker, with regard to highway maintenance, the works programme has once again
been successful over the past year with ongoing repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls.
1570 In addition to the above, the Department continues to successfully manage road closures and
diversions on the public highway, both for its own in-house works and for all other utility
companies and contractors. All road closures are assessed and carried out in a manner that
allows essential works to be undertaken whilst allowing vehicles and pedestrians to circulate in a
safe manner with the minimum of disruption. The increased construction activity generated by
1575 new projects over the past few years makes this task increasingly difficult. In order to reduce the
impact as much as possible, road closures are avoided during peak times wherever possible, and
after hours and weekend work is a condition that is normally imposed on contractors in order to
minimise the inconvenience to the public.

1580 Mr Speaker, this year will see the continuation of the road resurfacing programme. Last year,
major resurfacing works were undertaken at Cumberland Road and at the Sundial Roundabout,
and recently Governor's Street was also resurfaced following the completion of the STTPP
project for that area. During the current financial year, funding is being sought for resurfacing
works at both Rosia Road in the area of New Harbours and along St Bernard's Road.

1585 Mr Speaker, I am pleased to state that the second phase of the project to fill the joints in the
paving on Main Street was completed last year. The works entailed the lifting up and re-laying of
the stone blocks and the filling and stabilising of all joints using a special polymer. In line with
our manifesto commitment, we are pleased to announce that phase 3 of this project will
continue this year and will see the filling of the joints extend southwards along Main Street and
its side streets.

1590 Mr Speaker, during the past year Technical Services Department was also involved in the
reconstruction of two retaining walls. The first works carried out were along Lower Castle Road
at the entrance to Moorish Castle Estate. The existing wall had developed a significant bulge that
was of growing concern to the Department's engineers as this could lead to internal instability
and ultimately collapse. A section of wall was therefore demolished and reconstructed using the
1595 same materials. The second retaining wall reconstructed was at the site of the City under Siege
exhibition within the Upper Rock. Following heavy rains in late November last year, a section of
retaining wall collapsed and led to concerns of further instability that could affect the entire
historical site. Technical Services developed a new design, and works were carried out as a
matter of urgency. In both circumstances the walls were found to have significant heritage value

1590 so works were carried out in close consultation with the Ministry for Heritage, once again demonstrating the importance of interdepartmental co-operation between Technical Services and other Government Departments.

1595 Moving now on to arguably one of the most important parts of our essential infrastructure, our sewerage system, during the past year the Sewers Section of the Department has been carrying out significant works to maintain the public sewerage network as part of Government's commitment in this area. A new storm water culvert, one metre in diameter, that doubles up as a combined sewer overflow, was laid at Europort Avenue from its junction with Queensway to the area of Charles Bruzon House. It was laid during the summer school break in order not to disrupt normal term-time school operations. This was successfully completed together with the construction of two deep access manholes to assist in future inspections and maintenance programmes. The project also saw the introduction of additional road gullies in the area to reduce the risk of flooding along Queensway in periods of heavy rain.

1600 Apart from the works at Europort Avenue, the Department has been working on a scheme for the relining of the existing foul sewer network along Devil's Tower Road. The increase in developments along Devil's Tower Road has required the existing network to be upgraded to cope with additional flows in the area. It is expected that these works will be completed during the course of the current financial year.

1605 The condition and upkeep of Gibraltar's main sewer and storm water drainage networks continues to be a matter of great concern for the Government arising from a lack of sufficient investment and neglect over many years. This Government is still playing catch-up as a result of these years of neglect. The Department, as part of its maintenance programme, will therefore this year be continuing its major desilting and cleansing works to the main sewer along Rosia Road and southwards towards Camp Bay. Other works will include improvements to the storm water systems at both Prince Edward's Road and the southern end of Main Street where flooding has become an annual problem during periods of very heavy rainfall.

1610 Mr Speaker, the replacement and enhancement of pelican crossing lights and equipment is a function of Technical Services' Department Highways Section and has continued in a number of locations working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. The provision of pedestrian crossings and their locations is now planned, taking into account the recommendations of the STTPP and the Traffic Commission. The programme to improve walking routes continued during last year with the installation of new pedestrian crossings at a number of key locations. These included a new crossing along Harbour Views Road, providing improved access to St Bernard's Hospital and a new light-controlled crossing at Europa Road to provide a safe crossing point for visitors to the recently inaugurated dementia unit, Ocean Views. The lack of a crossing in this particular location was something of great concern to GADA, the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Association, as the new facility would require a safe pedestrian access. This pedestrian crossing has probably been the most technically challenging crossing to deliver, given the existing geometry of the road. A series of traffic calming measures were also required to help improve both pedestrian and vehicular safety in this area, known for its many sharp corners, and especially taking into account the unique needs of the facility and its users.

1625 Mr Speaker, following the successful introduction of the initial pilot countdown timer at the Haven crossing on Line Wall Road, further countdown timers were recently installed at Waterport Road, at Queensway and at Europa Road adjacent to Ocean Views. These countdown timers inform pedestrians of the time they have left to cross and drivers as to when it is safe to proceed, therefore improving safety at these crossings. A firm objective of the STTPP is to provide safe pedestrian facilities to help encourage walking as the best alternative to motorised travel and transport. The Government will continue to provide further countdown timers at other crossings, and in future all new traffic light sets purchased for new locations or to replace existing sets will have countdown timers installed as a standard feature.

1630 During the coming year, the Department will continue to provide additional pedestrian crossings at a number of already identified locations, including Europa Road by Shorthorn Estate

and Rosia Road in the area of Bayview Terraces, as per the recommendations of the STTPP. The provision of these crossings is seen as important in the context of improving walking routes, as already mentioned, which is an important and fundamental element of the Traffic Plan.

1645 Mr Speaker, I recently announced the publication of the Government's Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan. This project was a key manifesto commitment for the GSLP/Liberal Government. A study of this magnitude has never been conducted locally with regard to traffic and transport, together with its effects on our environment as a whole, in a way that is both scientific and solid in its grounding. The Plan has seen a multi-departmental team approach
1650 involving the Ministries of Infrastructure and Planning (Traffic and Transport) and the Environment.

The research and preparatory background for this extensive document saw many months of painstaking groundwork and research, something which I am eternally grateful to those within the Traffic team, the Technical Services Department and also the Civil Service for, who embarked
1655 on weeks of data collection, questionnaires and surveys to be able to provide the solid groundwork required for such a plan. The work has encompassed very wide consultation. Opinions and feedback were sought from a wide sector of the community, including members of the public, NGOs, commercial entities and associations, tenants' associations, other interest groups, schoolchildren, essential services, and of course the road user, often each with very
1660 competing interests. Our traffic consultants, Mott MacDonald, who are worldwide professionals in this field, have provided the technical expertise to complement the wealth of local and professional knowledge that already existed within the Technical Services Department and have been instrumental.

The Plan has considered everything from the needs of children and vulnerable groups within
1665 our society to the needs of businesses and visitors alike. No plan will ever be able to satisfy every sector's interests and there will be a need to strike a balance between these, once again, conflicting needs.

Key improvements in the use of public transport will no doubt provide a more reliable service with improved journey times and higher levels of punctuality, which I am certain will be
1670 welcomed by its users. No stone has been left unturned in order to formulate a plan that we will be proudly able to call all of ours, Gibraltar's Plan.

Using the most innovative and latest techniques we have developed the tools by means of digital traffic modelling to help us predict the reaction and behaviour of traffic, following a proposal for change. In this way, we may now start to analyse what effect a proposed change
1675 will be likely to have with respect to traffic flow before we even carry it out.

Mr Speaker, this Plan is clearly a live document, one that will evolve and grow with us. As Gibraltar grows and our needs change, so will it too. It is our intention that the Plan will be a fluid plan, one that is malleable to our needs. I am personally satisfied that this has been in fact achieved and that all the work done will see a truly valuable result that we can all be proud of.
1680 Not all the concepts within the Plan will be achievable – some will require further work, others will be economically unviable and others may simply never come to be, at least not at this moment in time – but the Plan will hopefully open our minds to the vast potential that exists for improvement, and for the need to change our mindset in the future.

But, Mr Speaker, change is change, and human nature does not adapt easily to change at first. With time, I trust that we as a community will all be able to appreciate the bigger picture and will begin to understand that things have to change if we are to make inroads into our health, our environment and our wellbeing, making Gibraltar a more attractive place to live, work, visit and do business in the future. The Plan is hence simply that: a plan. There are general principals, aims and targets set, and ideas for potential pilot schemes for us to explore, some
1685 relatively inexpensive to carry out, others more ambitious. This is by no means a finite list and we will be developing further ideas and plans in the future as we evolve as a people. With time, it will hopefully change the way that we live so that we can improve sustainability.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has an extremely high vehicle occupancy rate per capita, yet our largest

1695 constraint is our size. Reducing our reliance on private transport, our beloved cars and
motorbikes, will be one of the hardest things to achieve; but through encouragement, education
and perseverance perhaps we may be able to achieve a change in the way that we move, sharing
vehicles, either by way of our buses, public services or through other more innovative ideas such
as car-sharing or car clubs, for example. We cannot forget the importance of walking and cycling
with regard to our traffic and our environment, but also the undeniable and positive effects that
1700 it has on our general health, our fitness and our physique.

Changing our mindset – especially one that spans so many generations, when our cars were
an extension of our very own living room, our only means of independence and freedom, our
rite of passage at a time when many generations shared one single flat – will be one of the most
challenging hurdles to overcome. This is something that will task our generation and those in the
1705 future. As science develops so too will our means of local travel. Already we are seeing how
hybrid and electric vehicles are slowly becoming more prominent in our society and we need to
further encourage the use of these. I greatly appreciate the support that we have received so far
from many sectors of the community and sincerely hope that we will continue to have the same
support as we now embark on the next stage of the Plan, its implementation in earnest.

1710 Mr Speaker, in the short time that the Traffic Plan has been published, a number of initiatives
have already been rolled out: Redibike, our bicycle sharing scheme, the launch of the pilot
residential parking scheme for zone 1, the completed bus tracker, the speed limit review,
Governor's Street pedestrian improvements, and speed cameras. Other initiatives had already
been implemented: the pilot roundabout at Glacis Road, pay and display schemes in numerous
1715 locations, countdown pedestrian timers, new pedestrian improvements at the Trafalgar
interchange and, even before that, the introduction of environmentally friendly staff car vehicle
fleets. I had made it clear on numerous occasions in the past that regardless of the status of the
final plan – that is, regardless of whether the Plan had been published or not – its key objectives
were already being rolled out.

1720 Mr Speaker, as part of our review of car parking in Gibraltar, a number of new pay and
display areas have already been implemented. These include those at Line Wall Road,
Watergardens and Portland House. The philosophy behind the introduction of the pay and
display areas is to provide a turnaround of parking facilities at key locations for the benefit of all.
It is through parking and its control that we may be able to eventually reduce car usage within
1725 what are described as key environmental zones within the Plan. This year, further pay and
display areas are earmarked for Glacis Road, Waterport Road and Grand Parade.

Technical Services Department has been instrumental in developing a pilot residential
parking scheme for the area of Alameda Estate and Trafalgar House. Mr Speaker, you may ask:
why pilot? Well, simply because we are entering uncharted territory and we will need the
1730 flexibility to be able to adapt the concept of residential parking to make it a scheme that works
as well as possible for as many as possible. This pilot residential parking scheme has taken on
board concerns raised by tenants of the area and has aimed to de-conflict the shortage of
parking for the various types of user, be they residents, commuters or tourists. The scheme will
see the introduction of exclusive residential parking areas, pay and display shorter-term parking
1735 zones and free parking. It is hoped that this will go some way in improving the situation in the
area. The scheme was officially announced on 26th May and will fully come into effect on
1st July, merely days away now. Residents are not forced to be part of given residential schemes,
and in fact those who are in Government arrears, as per Government policy, will not be able to
be part of the scheme in any case.

1740 There will be small administrative charges associated with the scheme and these are set as a
first step in trying to tackle the issue of car ownership, an underlying matter of concern within
the Traffic Plan – hardly a prohibitive sum, but it is a fair start in starting to at least recognise, if
not start to address, the local phenomenon of the second car. Providing free residential parking
would simply not dis-incentivise a reduction in car ownership and migration or increased
1745 dependence on the public transport network. With an excellent free bus service there is no

better excuse, even if it is only for the environment, than to get rid of the second car and keep the one environmentally friendlier car for those trips across the border or the local supermarket shop. Mr Speaker, what is evidently clear within the Plan, and even clearer to those who drive around endlessly looking for somewhere to park their car, is that we have a problem and we need to recognise that. With one of the highest rates of car ownership in the world, we simply cannot sustain the numbers of cars we own as a population. As a result of zone 1, we have discovered that there are a considerable number of couples, mainly pensioners, that own at least two cars – in some cases where only one of the couple drives! The two-car principle, that of the shabby rock runner and the better, more up-market car for those trips across the border, is clearly still alive and well – but this is the whole point, the real crux of the matter: it is the old rock runner that generally destroys our environment, the vehicle that emits those nasty fumes, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, the vehicle that competes for that extra parking space, while the main car is snugly parked away safely. The old banger is the vehicle that has the greatest likelihood of being parked in that illegal spot where the chance of that nick, scratch or dent is the greatest, but that is its entire purpose: its state and condition does not matter to us and in the end it is most likely the vehicle that will remain derelict for months or years before it is spotted taking up that valuable parking space. This is where the change in mentality needs to come, at least for the good of our environment, and this needs to start in earnest through education. It is mainly through education, especially of those more receptive to the warnings of today’s experts reference our suffering environment – that is, our younger generation, our children and grandchildren.

Mr Speaker, in conjunction with residential zone 1, the Department is working on plans for further residential parking schemes in both the Town area and the South District and it is expected that these will be rolled out during the latter part of this year.

Mr Speaker, furthermore, as part of the Traffic Plan, a project to construct a new roundabout at Devil’s Tower Road is already well advanced within the planning stages, having already received the green light from the DPC. This roundabout, once constructed, will increase driver options when leaving Cemetery Road, allowing vehicles to turn left and travel south to Europa Road should they choose. It would also allow quicker access into that same commercial area and be particularly useful to access the very busy church of St Theresa’s and Devil’s Tower Road car park.

Mr Speaker, as part of the STTPP the Government has also recently introduced the new Redibike bicycle-sharing scheme. It is hoped that Redibike will encourage the public to think of cycling as a healthier and environmentally friendlier alternative to other modes of transport. A hundred and forty six persons have registered on the scheme so far. This is the first phase of a wider scheme, a scheme that has been privately sponsored by Gib Oil Ltd and consists of 105 bicycles and 120 docking points in 13 different locations throughout Gibraltar. I would like to extend my gratitude to our sponsors Gib Oil Ltd – especially Mr Harry Murphy, who is busy collecting medals for us in Gotland – who have gratefully supported us in this very important Traffic Plan initiative. All Redibikes are fitted with a carrier, a locking device and a bell, and will be available to rent at all times of the day and night. These bikes are sturdy and virtually vandal-proof with drive shafts fitted instead of the traditional bicycle chain mechanism for propulsion.

That was all that I was going to say on this matter – until my better judgement told me otherwise following the latest activity on social media regarding the failed Gibi Bikes scheme and following on from the hon. Member opposite’s comments on *Viewpoint* recently. This is not about red or blue, as perhaps the blues would like you to believe. This is not about Government deliberately and intentionally bringing about the demise of the Gibi Bikes Scheme purposefully, alluding that this was done to discredit the GSD initiative without consideration whatsoever to the cost of the scheme to the taxpayers, as the blues would like you to believe. The concept of a bicycle-sharing scheme is in fact a very good one, and it is a scheme accepted and promoted throughout many cities worldwide. That was not and is not the issue. If the GSD wants some credit, well done to them, Mr Speaker, very well done. But the concept was not their concept,

they did not invent it, they adopted it, which is great – it is great for the environment and it ticks all the boxes of any traffic plan worth its salt. This is why our Traffic Plan also contains a bicycle-sharing

1800

scheme. Had Gibi Bikes succeeded then it would have been one thing less that we would have had to do.

I will not make further comment about past traffic plans at this point, unless I am pushed, Mr Speaker. Gibi Bikes was an abject GSD failure. It was badly researched, badly executed and badly procured. Once again, it was not about red or blue. Although the demise of the scheme came before my time as Minister for Transport, it was not because they were coloured blue, I can assure you. It was for the following reasons, Mr Speaker.

1805

The Gibi Bikes project was introduced and operated by a company which had no previous experience of running such a scheme – Gibraltar was their first project, their test project. Almost all of the Gibi Bikes equipment was substandard. The anti-theft devices, the electronic tags and the locks were all of poor quality, hence the system failed regularly. Maintenance was poor and there was a lack of spare parts from the suppliers in the UK. The bicycles themselves suffered badly from corrosion. The scheme started with 130 bicycles and 13 docking stations. Only six months later, only 47 bicycles remained and eight docking stations were available for use. In fact, Mr Speaker, many bikes were permanently locked in their stations, failing to release due to software malfunctions, and other bikes simply went walkies – stolen, Mr Speaker. The scheme which cost the taxpayer over £300,000 back in 2011, operated for only six months before it closed and its supply company in the UK folded. That is the story as it is, Mr Speaker –

1810

1815

1820

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Disgraceful! Nothing to laugh about.

Hon. P J Balban: The only thing is that it is far better, politically, to blame the Government, blame us, for the failure of Gibi Bikes.

Furthermore, bicycles had to be collected at night, stored and brought out again in the morning, which was hugely labour intensive. Why would that need to be the case, Mr Speaker? Redibikes stay out all night, having been implemented and hence tested in many cities, not least in the north west of England in not such a sleepy town, Liverpool, a major city with safer, quieter areas and the noisier and let us say more boisterous areas, and it rains there too. They also have the reds and the blues there, Mr Speaker, but their reds and blues are more to do with sport. But I am sure that many a fan would have had a good ride on a bike after a match late at night, and there they are: bicycles trialled and tested in a real-life laboratory, not tested in Gibraltar by a company trying their luck with bicycle-sharing schemes. Redibikes took their time, yes, Mr Speaker, just like the Traffic Plan took its time, and that is the way it was going to be. In this way things have been done well, or at least as well as humanly possible.

1825

1830

1835

Mr Speaker, you may ask what became of those blue bikes. Well, thanks to the staff and mechanics down at Gibraltar Bus Company Ltd, a total of 52 bikes have been put together out of 130 bikes that once were. An announcement will be made shortly – yes, ‘shortly’, Mr Speaker, one of the pet hate words of the hon. Member across the way – when these bikes will be presented to a charity, all for a good cause; so the story does have a happy ending of sorts.

1840

Mr Speaker, also as part of our commitment to encouraging cycling, a major review of our existing road network will also be carried out this year to assess the feasibility of introducing dedicated bicycle lanes, where possible and indeed if possible, linking the Frontier to the south of Gibraltar. This will be by no means a simple feat, as there are many difficulties associated with Gibraltar’s size, especially when trying to marry and share the very limited space available between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Nevertheless, the Government is committed to exploring this matter in a holistic way in order to try to introduce improvements, where possible, in order to encourage this healthier alternative to motorised forms of transport common today.

1845

Mr Speaker, another major Traffic Plan initiative launched recently has been the introduction of speed cameras at a number of known speeding hotspots throughout Gibraltar. This builds on

1850 the recent initiative of introducing speed indicator signs and is primarily aimed at making our
roads safer by way of speed management. The speed cameras are fixed devices set up, as a pilot
1855 first phase, at Devil's Tower Road, Europa Advance Road and Rosia Road in an effort to reduce
speeding in those particularly notorious hotspots. These locations were chosen on the advice
and recommendations of the RGP, who are the experts on the ground. The cameras will be a
valuable deterrent and will complement roving speed cameras already used by the Police
throughout Gibraltar. The static speed cameras have already seen a visible reduction in speed on
our roads. This will hence statistically help reduce risk to both road users and pedestrians alike
1860 from the consequences of speed-related accidents. Additionally, a reduction in speed has
positive effects on the environment, helping to reduce noise pollution and emissions. Since the
scheme went live, over 1,920 persons have been caught speeding. The initiative will continue to
be monitored but so far the intention is to further improve the current set-up by introducing
rear-facing video capture to the existing cameras and introducing additional speed cameras in
other major roads throughout Gibraltar.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the RGP, the legal team that drafted all the
1865 relevant legislation, the staff at the IT and Logistics Department, Technical Services, our back
office at Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd and all those who have assisted us with this STTPP project.

Mr Speaker, Technical Services Department, in conjunction with the RGP, will continue with
its full review of the present speed limits on all of Gibraltar's roads, and in the coming year
improvements will be made to signage and road markings on a number of our arterial roads,
1870 including Europa Road, Queensway and Line Wall Road. Furthermore, we have, upon the advice
of the RGP, also recently amended legislation to make the Road Watch offences punishable by
way of fixed penalty notices (FPNs), hence reducing unnecessary and valuable court time and
making the process much more efficient.

Mr Speaker, if there has been one thing that I feel has made the biggest difference as part of
1875 the Traffic Plan to the enhancement of our public transport offering, it has surely got to be the
bus tracker. This is a major STTPP achievement. I am most proud that this project has been
carried out in house by the staff of the IT and Logistics Department, a project that has been
technically very complex to put together, one that has been developed on a route-by-route basis
over time. As a result, it is now possible for bus users to track their bus and therefore manage
1880 their personal time accordingly, knowing exactly where the bus is at any given moment in time
and at what time they are able to meet it at the bus stop as opposed to having to wait for it to
arrive. The STTPP stakeholder surveys highlighted that one of the reasons detracting potential
bus users was the perceived uncertainty of the service, leading to a lack of user confidence. The
new bus tracker reverses all these potentially negative attributes that could dis-incentivise bus
1885 use. Public transport is a vital part of our transition from using our own vehicles and moving to
more sustainable modes of travel and transport. The last route to go live was the night bus
route. Since the night bus tracker went live, there appears to have been at least a 50% increase
in take-up of the service, which is very positive indeed. Government is looking into the possibility
of extending its fleet management system in order to provide passenger real-time information
1890 to bus users at the bus stops. This will allow those citizens who do not have access to
smartphone devices or internet access to be able to track their bus in real time at their bus-stop.

Mr Speaker, one of the most important issues raised by the Traffic Plan regarding pedestrian
safety was that of Main Street during the early-morning delivery hours. These hours directly
1895 conflicted with pedestrian movement, making this a serious safety concern and one that had
also been highlighted by the Commissioner of Police. The Traffic Plan emphasised the problems
faced by pedestrians and especially persons with mobility problems while trying to transit
through Main Street amid goods vehicles unloading merchandise and doing their daily morning
deliveries. This was even more relevant when cruise ships, especially large ones, were in port,
resulting in thousands of passengers mixing with the local population and the local and cross-
1900 frontier workforce. This provided a very poor image generally, both aesthetically and
environmentally, and was most importantly seen as a major safety and security concern for

Government within the busy Main Street. It has been as a result of close networking with the Chamber of Commerce, the GFSB and other commercial entities generally that we have been able to agree on improved delivery times. I wish to express my gratitude to the commercial business community for supporting the Government's proposals and agreeing and accepting the new delivery hours, which although inevitably will mean a change in the way things are done in town, it has generally been accepted that this will in fact be better for the tourist product and for Main Street users generally. In this respect the Ministry for Commerce, led by my colleague Albert Isola, have also been instrumental. Technical Services are now involved in the process of procurement of retractable bollards and will investigate the range of products available in the market for these purposes in the first instance. Once a suitable product is identified, Technical Services will then be involved with the infrastructural preparations for the set-up of a permanent retractable bollard system, which is planned for the near future and is expected to assist the policing of delivery hours in town.

1905
1910
1915
1920
1925
Mr Speaker, the full initiative, as already described and set out within the STTPP, included the creation of new loading hubs and the reduction in the hours of delivery within our highly populated Main Street. I am pleased to announce that this has now been done. New Main Street access times have now been set between 8 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. with final exit being no later than 9.30 a.m. Furthermore, an additional delivery window has been set between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., the last exit from the pedestrian zone being 8.15 p.m. A number of new delivery areas have been created to allow deliveries to take place outside of these hours in dedicated hubs within John Mackintosh Square, Cooperage Lane and Convent Place. These will be controlled by means of permits issued to commercial entities by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department. Deliveries in these new areas will be exclusively on a permit holder basis and the hours will be between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday to Friday, and Saturdays between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. These new delivery bays are distinct to the loading bays that already existed in town.

1930
1935
Mr Speaker, one of the major issues raised by the business community was the abuse that existed regarding loading bays generally and the difficulty that businesses were facing when trying to access these bays. As part of the plans within the Traffic Plan, new legislation will prohibit the use of loading bays by the general public during delivery times but will allow their use after hours and on Sundays and Public Holidays, where appropriate, for parking. Nevertheless, the Traffic Plan recognises the need that residents have too, and to this end the Department is looking at the possibility of creating short-stay drop-off areas for residents and visitors over and above the creation of further pay and display zones which would allow visitors to park within the distinct residential zones.

Mr Speaker, once again I must thank the RGP, especially the Commissioner of Police, who has been advocating these improvements for Main Street and who has shared the same vision for Main Street – that is, for a safe, modern shopping and business hub.

1940
Mr Speaker, the Traffic Plan would be impossible to achieve without meaningful and effective policing. It is to this end that the Ministry for Infrastructure and Planning, whose responsibility is also for traffic and transport, will be working closely with the RGP and with Gibraltar Parking and Management Services Ltd, who manage our newly contracted team of PMOs and our team of transport inspectors, whose role will be to see that the policies within the Plan succeed.

1945
1950
Mr Speaker, before moving away from Technical Services I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Infrastructure Section of the Technical Services Department for their hard work and commitment during those times in the past year where Gibraltar has suffered from storms and very heavy rainfall. It is thanks to the hard work and dedication of this team, who work on those cold, dark, blustery and rainy nights whilst most of us are sheltered within the warmth of our homes, that the impact of these storms is not greater on both our sewerage and road networks. Thank you.

Finally, Mr Speaker, funding is once again being requested this year for the purchase of equipment to allow the Sewer Infrastructure Section to continue to expand and provide an enhanced service in respect of its inspections of the sewer network. This also applies to the

1955 garage and workshop, where funding for new equipment is also being sought. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse-collection vehicles.

1960 Mr Speaker, the Technical Services Department is one of those Departments that is rarely in the limelight but works tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver on their defined responsibilities maintaining public infrastructure and to support and provide technical advice to other Government Ministries and Departments in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

1965 Mr Speaker, turning now to public transport, the new MAN buses continue to provide Gibraltar with a modern bus service. Providing an efficient, comfortable and user-friendly bus service is critical in meeting the objectives as set out within the Traffic Plan. The Traffic Plan highlights the importance of public transport to support people's quality of life and economic well-being. Its primary aim is to encourage greater use of public transport by providing a high-quality, reliable, stable and well-maintained network.

1970 Mr Speaker, the investment in the six new buses for the Upper Town has greatly improved the service to this area. I am pleased to announce that the procured Ford Transits have proved to be powerful enough to deal with steep inclines while at the same time providing an adequately comfortable climate within for its users. This also includes the much needed and much sought after service to Mount Alvernia, where this innovative small bus design and investment has given wheelchair users greater access to the bus. Three out of the six new buses have wheelchair lifts fitted.

1975 Mr Speaker, the introduction of the night bus route itself is also a major positive change to our public service offered during the weekends. This was a Traffic Plan recommendation as set out in the draft 2015 document. Today's present route evolved from two distinct trial routes, namely N8A and N8B, to become the one unified route today, N8. Night bus usage is slowly increasing and this is especially so on specific events, for example Calentita Night, GMF and Summer Nights. There have been almost 1,700 passengers more this year compared to last year.

1980 Mr Speaker, a new branding for the Gibraltar Bus Company, which will involve the launch of a new bus logo both for the buses and new bus stop signage is already in progress. This will improve the visibility of bus stops, especially for those not familiar with the location of the bus stops in their immediate surroundings. The present arrangement of buses stopping at each bus stop creates unnecessary delay and inconvenience to traffic flow. By reintroducing the concept of the request stop it may be possible to improve timetabling and hence efficiency. This will need to go hand in hand with a targeted awareness campaign as bus users have become used to buses stopping at each bus stop by default. Bus stops that become request stops will be clearly labelled to avoid confusion.

1990 Mr Speaker, in order to continue to improve the public transport service, Government has increased the transport inspector complement by two, thereby bringing the total complement to seven officers. These officers are now fully trained to ensure that our public transport meets the expectations of its users and that service providers fully abide and conform to all the legal requirements under the Transport Act. Transport inspectors have the role of enforcing the Transport Act and hence public transport operators and transport undertakings. They strive to ensure adequate taxi service at the Airport terminal at key arrival times. Transport inspectors are also responsible for policing the use of permits to enter pedestrianised zones and are assisting with recent measures regarding the introduction of the new delivery hours in Main Street and Irish Town.

2000 Mr Speaker, the Government continues to work with the Gibraltar Taxi Association in order to jointly identify strategies to continue to better the taxi service throughout Gibraltar. It is only through user feedback that we may be able to truly ascertain whether service actually improves or otherwise, and there is unfortunately still reluctance to bring complaints to the attention of the Transport Commission. In an attempt to improve transparency, new external rear signage was agreed which makes it easier to identify taxi licence numbers. The GTA has increased its

2005

2010 service by way of their fleet of private hire vehicles, which now have two drivers, providing longer service hours. The GTA itself proposed a new shift roster for taxis while on city service, once again providing greater breadth in the service hours. Furthermore, the relocation of the taxi rank at John Mackintosh Square adjacent to the Parliament Building itself to outside the City Hall should result in an improvement to the city service. Nevertheless, it is clear that much work still needs to be done. It is in fact the GTA committee who are often the most self-critical, and many taxi drivers generally agree and support these measures with a view of safeguarding their business by providing an adequate service to the population from taxi ranks and from the Airport alike.

2015 I wish to thank the GTA and its members for their willingness to help improve what is already a very difficult service to provide amidst daily traffic pressures, especially around the Frontier and the Airport. I hope that amid our colourful and noisy meetings we can continue to seek ways to further improve the service to all during this coming year.

2020 Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department (DVLD). Procedures for the introduction of the tachograph card in Gibraltar are now ready. The Department has been closely working with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency in the UK for the introduction of the tachograph cards that will serve our drivers, operators and enforcement agencies. All the administrative procedures – that is application forms, information letters and databases – are now in place. A memorandum of understanding and a service level agreement drafted jointly by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department and Government Law Offices has already been agreed by the DVLA.

2025 Mr Speaker, drivers of transport undertakings wishing to complete the driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) initial qualification and periodic training can obtain the training that is continually being provided by the DVLD. So far, 29 drivers have successfully passed the Bus Certificate of Professional Competence and 36 drivers have successfully passed the Lorry CPC initial qualifications. Government, in an effort to ensure that all directive requirements are fully met, will continue to deliver the 35-hour periodic training for existing drivers during 2017-18. Presently, in total, 183 bus and 97 lorry drivers have successfully attended the CPC periodic training.

2030 Mr Speaker, taking into account the safety requirements of vehicles in Gibraltar that carry dangerous goods is of great importance, and in accordance with the Transport (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) Regulations 2010, the Government has invested in training to ensure that all of the technical staff at the Motor Vehicle Test Centre are now fully trained and qualified to assess vehicles that carry dangerous goods by road. This training has been carried out locally by a qualified instructor from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency from the UK. At present, eight vehicles used for the carriage of dangerous goods locally have been issued with the relevant ADR certificates.

2035 Mr Speaker, the introduction by this Government of the Motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course (CBT) for riders continues to be a tremendous success. Feedback from parents and the public at large has been extremely positive. A hundred and seventy two individuals, mainly under the age of 17 years of age, have been trained over the past year. I am very confident that this Government's training incentive is constantly contributing in continuously improving road safety and reducing motorcycle accidents, especially in first-time motorbike users. This initiative falls directly in line with the general principles of the Traffic Plan regarding road safety. Since the CBT scheme was established, a total of 1,260 persons have completed the course in order to acquire their learner's licence.

2045 Mr Speaker, due to an unexpected increase in demand of the photo-card driving licence locally, Government has needed to procure an extra 8,000 blank driving licence cards from the UK. To date, the Department has issued a total of 15,500 photo-card driving licences. Furthermore, the Department is in close contact with the DVLA in the UK to ascertain how the format of these licences may be affected as a result of BREXIT, if at all.

Mr Speaker, due to an increase in need for counter services as a result of the CBT, ADR and CPC over and above the usual traditional counter services provided by the Department, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department, as a means of improving customer service, has introduced a bespoke business counter that is assisting businesses with the aim of reducing respective waiting times. This counter has been operating daily since last year and the feedback from its users has been very positive. Furthermore, the Department continues to use e-Government information and communication technology as a tool to achieve better customer services. The public can presently actively access a number of online DVLD services and applications via the new e-Government portal, mainly roadworthiness test bookings – the MOT – driving licence and theory test bookings. This is proving to be very popular and is allowing customers to access and pay for such facilities at any time from the comfort of their own homes. Government is also considering other measures and incentives in order to offer customers additional e-Government opportunities, thus allowing the DVLD to cater for the increase in market demands and service requirements.

Mr Speaker, the Traffic Commission continues to meet on a monthly basis. The Traffic Commission is constantly working to assist our citizens in all matters relating to traffic. The Commission is also heavily involved in recommending to Government the improvement of facilities and eco-friendly traffic advice regarding new project applications submitted to the Town Planning Commission. It is via the Traffic Commission that road users are able to interact with the Ministry and Departments so that their concerns and suggestions can be considered. It is also via this forum that other large Government initiatives receive recommendations and approval.

The Transport Commission works hand in hand with all the transport undertakings, the Bus Company and the Gibraltar Taxi Association in order to mutually find strategies to continue to better both commercial and public transport services in Gibraltar.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the members of both Commissions, many of whom give up of their own personal time on a voluntary basis for these purposes.

Mr Speaker, the DVLD has gone a long way in establishing a linked-up database with other member states in accordance with EU directives. The DVLD is sharing European Register of Road Transport Undertakings, known as ERRU, via the Driver and Vehicle Services Agency. This allows for a better exchange of information between member states so that the competent authorities can better monitor the compliance of road transport undertakings with the legislation in force.

EUCARIS – the European Car and Driving Licence Information System – is another example of information exchange system that DVLD uses to provide the infrastructure and software to other countries in order to share their car and driving licence registration information. This system will ensure the assistance in fighting car theft and registration fraud within Europe.

Mr Speaker, the Cross Border Enforcement Directive has been the latest directive to be transposed into our laws. The practical procedures refer to the pursuit of traffic offences committed by drivers of a car that is registered in a EU member state other than the member state where they were detected. The implementation of this will offer an automated tool for enforcement authorities in the member state where the offence was committed to pursue and fine the drivers of cars registered in another EU member state when they commit traffic offences there.

Mr Speaker, I am fully satisfied that to date all EU directives relating to traffic and transport have been fully implemented.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to my responsibilities for town planning and building control. The Town Planning and Building Control Department continues to deal with large numbers of applications in the administration and enforcement of the Building Regulations. During 2016, the Department has received 632 planning and building applications, 16 demolition applications, 48 advertisement applications, 32 tree applications and 24 tax relief applications. That is a total of 752 applications for 2016. If we exclude tax relief applications, there have been a total of 728 applications this year compared to the 544 applications received

2110 in 2015 – that is a significant increase of 33%. Some applications were large and complex
involving environmental impact assessments and have also required extensive discussions with
respective applicants to try to achieve the highest standards of design.

2115 Building Control has also been working on the introduction of what will be known as ‘Part R’
– that is access to and use of buildings under the provisions of the Public Health Act. At present,
our building rules do not make adequate provision for this very important building aspect – rules
which will undoubtedly in future be provided for with the necessary legal framework to make
buildings safe and accessible to all. By introducing these rules, we are bringing our legislation
2120 closer to that of the United Kingdom within this very important area. The objective is to enable
all people, regardless of disability, age or gender, to gain access to buildings and hence use its
facilities. These will therefore benefit the wide spectrum of special requirements that are
increasingly prevalent in our society today as our life expectancy, in conjunction with better
medical care, improves. The document is in its final stages and should be able to take effect
sometime shortly after the introduction of the Disability Act.

2125 Mr Speaker, Government and MoD projects continue to be submitted to the Development
and Planning Commission (DPC) for guidance and advice. In 2016 the forum considered a total of
45 planning, building and demolition applications from Government and the MoD projects
alone. The DPC provides advice and guidance on such applications, which are then considered by
the Government and/or the MoD in finalising their plans.

2130 Mr Speaker, DPC meetings continue to be held in public with a total of 12 meetings held in
2016. In addition, the DPC’s subcommittee meets regularly to determine minor applications. In
2016 there were 40 meetings of the subcommittee. This process greatly helps in speeding up the
decision-making process. All agendas and minutes continue to be made available online,
together with application forms and planning guidance, ensuring that the planning process
remains open and transparent, facilitating ease of access to relevant planning information and
documentation.

2135 Mr Speaker, the e-Planning service, which was launched in October 2015, continues to
operate successfully. The service allows anyone to search and view the details of any application
submitted after the launch of the service, including all the plans and other documents submitted
with its respective application online. This makes it much easier for the public to be able to see
what is being proposed and members of the public can even submit comments in respect of any
2140 application through this e-service. Furthermore Mr Speaker, e-Planning makes it much easier for
applicants to submit their applications online. Planning applications can be submitted online in
their entirety without the need for a given applicant to have to deliver a hard copy of such
application to the Department’s counters at Town Planning and Building Control. During 2016,
just over 60% of all planning and building applications were submitted online.

2145 Throughout 2016 the staff at Town Planning have continued to develop the e-Planning
system. Numerous improvements and enhancements having been implemented, predominantly
on the back end of the system, in order to improve the internal flow of information to make the
processing of applications more efficient. The system has also greatly reduced the need for
paper copies of documentation, resulting in savings to both applicants and the Department.

2150 The same e-Planning system has been useful to disseminate information about applications
to members of the DPC ahead of meetings. A specific feature has been developed for e-Planning
that now allows DPC members easy access to the details of every application that is due to be
discussed at DPC meetings. This makes it easier for DPC members to familiarise themselves with
the details of applications prior to the DPC meeting and therefore allows for better decision-
2155 making.

2160 Mr Speaker, in May of this year, I was pleased to announce another improvement to the e-
Planning service comprising the addition of a facility to allow the public to carry out map-based
searches for applications online. The public can now view what applications have been
submitted in any given area by way of a map view and can also access all the details of the
applications displayed. This is yet another example of how the planning process is being made

much more accessible to the general public. This is considered of utmost importance as planning decisions may and can have a direct impact on people's immediate surroundings and their environment and therefore have a bearing on their quality of life.

2165 Town Planning staff will continue with a rolling programme of improvements to the e-Planning service to improve both internal systems as well as to further improve the services being offered to the general public. In particular, staff will be working on the introduction of a facility that will enable applicants to also be able to pay application fees online. This will therefore be much more convenient and efficient for applicants, who will no longer have to visit the Department's counter to pay in person or have their payment sent by post.

2170 Mr Speaker, the Department also continues to develop its Geographical Information System (GIS) to enable it to record and analyse data geographically. The Department has recently completed development work that allows it to manage geographical data in a much more user-friendly and efficient manner. This in turn allows for better integration between the Department's geographical data and the e-Planning service.

2175 Mr Speaker, I am pleased to say that we expect to be in a position shortly to bring before Parliament the new Town Planning Act together with its subsidiary legislation. I am also pleased to announce that my staff, working closely with the staff of the Government Law Offices, have reviewed and published amendments to the Town Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations in May this year. The enactment of these Regulations ensures that we continue to
2180 be fully compliant with the latest EU Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments.

Mr Speaker, the Town Planning Department continues to encourage property owners to improve the appearance of their buildings through the Tax Relief on Façade Improvements Scheme. During 2016 there were 24 applications under this scheme. A similar tax relief scheme has been introduced to encourage the use of solar water heating and photovoltaic cells as a way
2185 of contributing towards sustainable energy generation; a scheme my staff are encouraging homeowners and developers to make use of, when applicable.

Mr Speaker, following the incorporation of the post of Urban Renewal Officer into the Town Planning Department in 2015, we have been able to focus more attention on this important
2190 issue. In this respect, the Department works closely with my colleague the Hon. Dr J Cortes, who leads on urban renewal. Work is currently focused on identifying specific buildings in need of refurbishment and encouraging owners to undertake improvement works to maximise the use of these properties, thereby bringing new life back into such urban areas.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude my contribution to my address today by thanking all my staff, who have worked so hard to see our commitments become a reality. My thanks go not
2195 only to those who ensure the rolling out of our commitments, my senior members of staff, but also to all those who do not go by unnoticed, who perform all the valuable functions within the Civil Service throughout all the various Departments and offices.

I also wish to reinforce my appreciation to all the staff here within Parliament, whose role is to ensure that proceedings run as smoothly and efficiently as they do and who are always there
2200 to help when necessary.

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

Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

2205

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, can I move that the House now recess to 2.45 p.m.

**Procedural –
Length of Ministers' speeches**

2210 **Mr Speaker:** Before we do, there is something I want to say. We have been listening this morning for three hours and 25 minutes to three speeches from Ministers. I would have liked to have heard a Member of the Opposition have the opportunity to reply before we broke up the morning session. That would have been far more satisfactory and would have kept a sense of balance, which there has not been in the debate this morning.

2215 Hon. Members, and here I am referring to Ministers in particular, have heard me tell them that many of the answers that they give to questions are too long, particularly when replying to supplementaries, and that I have no power in the Rules to limit that – I would like the answers to be shorter. But I do have powers when it comes to debate, and the powers are twofold: first of all, I can interrupt speeches in respect of relevancy, and that is a matter for my discretion; and I can also withdraw the permission that I give all Members to read their speeches. Members will have heard me say in the past that as far as I am concerned it is not a very clever rule, that I do
2220 not see a problem really with Members reading their speeches, but it is a rule and I am going to read it out:

A member shall not, except with the permission of the Speaker or Chairman, read his speech, but he may read extracts from written or printed papers in support of his argument, and may refresh his memory by references to notes.

I find, and more so ... with the exception of the Chief Minister, because when the Chief Minister introduces the Appropriation Bill it is a practice that ... and given what has happened in the last year, the Chief Minister has a perfect right to make a speech of two hours and more. But
2225 the speeches of Ministers are becoming exponentially longer and they are going into unnecessary detail.

Two years ago, one of the Ministers spoke for over two hours and I saw that he was getting tired. Afterwards, I took him aside and I gave him some advice. He took the advice and last year the speech was about an hour and equally effective, if not more so.

2230 I think Ministers are making the mistake of going into so much detail that no one at the end of the day is going to know what they were really talking about. They have too many Departments under their belts and they feel that they have to deal with each and every single one of them.

I honestly do not think that it is a satisfactory state of affairs when three Ministers spend
2235 nearly three and a half hours this morning ... I want Ministers to reflect on what I am telling them. It is controversial – I realise I am doing a Bercow (*Laughter*) – but perhaps I ought to be controversial. And as I say, ultimately, if I want to, I can interrupt Ministers and all other Members, prevent them from reading their speeches when they will only have to have a few notes and the speeches will be longer.

2240 They are getting far, far too long. It is not necessary to go into so much detail. They come here ... One of them remarked this morning that he thought he was going to speak for 25 minutes. Well, he did not: he spoke for 45. And another one said, 'I'm just going to speak for a bit over an hour.' No, he spoke for an hour and a half! When you read a speech, when you have prepared a speech, you may think it is going to take an hour. In the event, you take an hour
2245 and 20 minutes or an hour and a half.

I am sorry, but I do have to speak from my heart and tell hon. Members when I find that matters are not proceeding satisfactorily. I am empowered by the Rules to do so and I would ... Maybe it is too late this year for Members now to cut down their speeches, maybe it is too late, but if I am still around next year – if you want me here and I am fit enough and healthy enough
2250 and I am still around – I will expect you to come up with much shorter speeches next year.

The House will now ... Yes, Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, you have made a statement which I think I need to deal with.

2255

Mr Speaker: Yes, by all means. I thought you might have reflected, discussed it with your Ministers and then perhaps this afternoon tell us what is the consensus view. But anyhow, you have the right.

2260

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Mr Speaker, I am going to tell you what I think because I think it is important that the House should be aware that Ministers are told to come and give information to the House about their briefs.

2265

We are in a situation where we are damned if we do and we are damned if we do not. We are damned if we do give too much information; we are damned if we do not give the information. This will be a theme of what I will say in my reply during the course of the rounding up in respect of this debate.

2270

This is a debate where in all the time I have been in this House we have heard lengthy statements from all the Ministers I have shadowed, whether they were Members opposite or Members now on this side of the House, dealing with the issues that they are responsible for in respect of the appropriation that we are concerned with. We had lengthy interventions yesterday from Members opposite: I assume that what you are saying is not just applicable to Members on this side of the House – it must also be applicable to Members opposite.

2275

The reason that Mr Speaker has had to hear three speeches from Ministers has been because we have had to move one of the Ministers who would have spoken later in the order – Mr Isola – because he is going to travel to do Government business during the course of this debate, although he will be back in time for the end of the debate.

2280

Mr Speaker, the Government wants to see an interspersed of numbers between the Ministers and the Members opposite but there are 10 of us and there are seven of them, and so therefore on some occasion that alternation of one to the other cannot occur.

2285

The Government wants to see short and punchy speeches, but in the context of this debate we sometimes have to spend time giving information. I have no desire to speak for three hours but sometimes it is necessary, in order to give all the information, to do so. I would have expected, Mr Speaker, that the community, as you have said, would want to hear the information that I was going to put in the public domain yesterday and the information that Ministers have put in the public domain today. But of course, as on every occasion, what you say is something that we will, of course, consider carefully and we will reflect on in the context of preparing for the debate next year.

2290

Mr Speaker, coming to Parliament without notes or indeed without a written speech is not, in my view, a recipe for people to speak for a shorter period; it may in fact be a recipe for people to go on and on and to become circular in what they say. So I think you are right to give us permission to read speeches in this debate, you are right to bring to our attention that they need to be as short and as punchy as possible, but I think it is also true that Members opposite will want to hear the things that Ministers deal with in order to be able to get up and reply to the things that are said – although all too often one delivers a speech and gets a reply to a Facebook post that is six years old.

2295

2300

Mr Speaker: I would like to tell the Chief Minister that between 1972 and 1991, during all the years when I was a Minister, a Member – 16 years a Minister and four Leader of the Opposition ... eight Ministers only, which meant that we probably had an even wider portfolio than Ministers have now, and speeches never went in excess of an hour. I commend that to Hon. Ministers.

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, if I can just deal with that point – and it is not often that you and I are replying to each other, but between 1969 and 2006 the most important

2305 portfolio, which was the portfolio of Public Finance, was held by somebody who was appointed
to this House, by His Excellency the Governor. Now we have a lot more responsibilities and that
is why we have more Ministers. But it is also true, Mr Speaker, that in that time the Budget did
not exceed £100 million. In the context of the Budget that we are dealing with today, where we
2310 are dealing with a turnover in the billions and a spending budget of £600 million, there is a lot
more to talk about.

Mr Speaker: The House will now recess until quarter to three this afternoon.

The House recessed at 1.03 p.m.