



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10 a.m. – 12.47 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 3rd July 2018

Contents

Appropriation Bill 2018 – For Second Reading – Debate continued	2
<i>The House recessed at 12.47 p.m.</i>	37

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 10.00 a.m.

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

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

Appropriation Bill 2018 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes.

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

5 Good morning, Mr Speaker.

I have rather a lot to say, so I will get straight into it. What is this Education Revolution? What is it about it that has some so excited and others so worried?

10 Mr Speaker, we have to see all that I am going to say against the backdrop that in the UK last year while there were 137,000 more pupils in schools there were 5,400 fewer teachers and 5,400 fewer support staff.

It is not about buildings. There are buildings involved of course, but what we are about to witness is a paradigm shift in education – a radical change in the theory and the practice. With the Department of Education shortly up to full strength for the first time in years, people will notice the difference.

15 Teachers and all staff, children, young people and parents will see positive changes in the way the Department engages with the public, the schools and the community as a whole. Policies are being updated or, where they do not exist, developed; workstreams on issues as diverse as bilingualism and Gibraltar studies, key stage alignment and introduction of co-education will reach out from the Department into the schools at all levels in the profession.
20 From September these working groups will be looking in detail into the challenges and the solutions and will make recommendations for successful outcomes from the roots up. You see, Mr Speaker, we were always serious about full transparency and involvement. This has been extensive in defining the needs in our new buildings and continues now in the run-up to the operational changes coming into effect next year.

25 Of course, there will be new buildings. These will be exceptional, designed in full consultation with the professionals, providing schools finally fit for the future, making our young people better prepared and better equipped than ever before. To summarise where we are on these: work is progressing apace at Notre Dame which we plan to open this coming September, and at the Comprehensive Schools, where we plan to inaugurate the two new co-education schools in
30 September next year. Work on St Anne’s School will commence in the autumn immediately after Notre Dame moves.

Mr Speaker, I am delighted to confirm that having listened carefully to the views of the schools, we will this year be commencing work on a new St Martin’s School, a new Bishop Fitzgerald School and a new Governor’s Meadow School, in keeping with our manifesto
35 commitment. I will be meeting with the respective head teachers tomorrow to discuss the plans

and timescales in detail, with 2019 remaining the target year. We will also be proceeding with the plans to build a new Gibraltar College.

40 The new plans have brought Education into the public arena like never before. As part of this process the voice of the Teachers' Union, like that of all unions, is an important one to make itself heard and to be listened to. And while we may not have agreed on every detail, we are all listening to each other.

45 The Union executive is now meeting regularly with the Government, building on and beyond its formal Social Partnership, and we are working jointly on a plan with a number of key aims which include: to work in full partnership; to carry out an in-depth organisational review of how Education is administered; to create a structure to ensure educational decision-making is fully informed; to formally enshrine all important aspects of Education in legislation; to modernise the recruitment and selection process; and to carry out a long-term review of teachers and learning support assistants.

50 The detail of all this work is being worked out, but there is agreement on what are the core needs of Education. And I am glad to say a great deal of what the union is requesting was already being done and will be rolled out in the coming year.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased at how we have worked through the issues and excited to see how we are working together in developing Education.

55 Quite apart from the new schools, we must not forget that we have many other schools. This year the Department of Education has engaged a full-time officer to lead on the maintenance and improvement of those we are not currently proposing to move. Works have been identified and a programme prepared, which includes major repairs to the schools that will remain *in situ* and urgent works to those that will be moving within the next year to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose during the time that they continue in use.

60 Works during the last financial year have been many, including works in Bayside to improve school security; in Westside to prevent water ingress into the Sports Hall; in the College and St Joseph's Schools, and so on.

I am not going to go into all the details here, although the version of my speech which will be sent out by the Press Office will contain more of the detail.

65 Plans for the current financial year include: a complete roof replacement in St Mary's School to address water ingress and refurbishment in the school; replacement of the school annexe guttering in St Joseph's First and Middle Schools; and in St Pauls' School, refurbishment of a pilot classroom to evaluate the results in anticipation of the planned works programme for the next financial year when it will have a major overhaul.

70 Mr Speaker, my speech is going to be long enough as it is. If I were to go into details of what each school does by way of activities, functions, initiatives, productions, projects, fundraising and other charitable events, I would never finish. Each and every school is the equivalent almost of a whole Department. *Cada escuela es un mundo*, you could say, and a thriving one at that. I must at least thank each and every team in each and every school for all that they do throughout the year.

75 This year there have been many staff movements and promotions, with some still to come. I congratulate all those who have been successful and encourage those who have not, to continue to aim to progress. At this point, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the lifelong work of Alan Mason, Head of St Paul's School, who sadly passed away (*Banging on desks*) after a long illness, and well before his time. I would also like to thank Kenneth Saez, Head of St Bernard's Middle and Pat Duarte, Head of St Anne's for their sterling work throughout their careers as they enter the final week of work before their retirement.

85 Mr Speaker, if I may now run through some details of what the Department of Education has been doing over the last financial year and some of the plans for next. The Chief Minister already in his address gave details of our investment in scholarships so I do not intend to repeat that. In addition to this, the Washington Internship in 2017-18 catered for an additional 21 students and will provide for another 20 this year.

At schools we have purchased a new much-improved bus for St Martin's School to replace the one that had been donated by charity years ago. We have finally achieved the installation of fibre-optic data cabling and enhancement of Wi-Fi provision to all the schools to improve and support the Apple Teaching with Technology project which my predecessor the Hon. Gilbert Licudi introduced in his time as Minister. We are commissioning software which will allow the introduction of electronic pupil attendance registers.

We continue to run the Gibraltar College Language School with all the benefits encouraging young people to diversify their knowledge of language will bring, and we are working on expanding adult courses too. We have responded to specific needs of children, for example, by the introduction of nursing assistance for pupils with medical needs such as PEG feeding, and by engaging diabetic nurses. The Mindfulness Initiative has been extended to all schools for teachers and pupils to develop positive learning techniques.

The Department has been participating in CHAMPS – the Children, Healthy and Active Multi-agency Programme – alongside the GHA, Public Health Gibraltar, the Care Agency, the Youth Service and the GSLA, and this was launched in the spring and is working together for the common cause of helping children and their families live healthy and active lives, including reducing childhood obesity.

Mr Speaker, last September a member of the Department started working with a small number of our young people with special educational needs in providing work placements, an initiative designed to give the students experiences that can support them to be better equipped for work. During the coming year we will be looking at how we can develop this service further to help young people with learning difficulties enter employment.

Mental Health is now being given the priority it not only deserves but seriously needs. I commissioned an in-depth study into mental health in secondary schools which has now been completed, and a similar one in primary schools is commencing. The study has for the first time ever gathered together statistics on the type of problems our young people are experiencing, and is making recommendations on how we can better prepare our teachers and provide additional support to them. This, and the primary school study, will inform a review of provision in which I will be working very closely with my colleague, the Minister for Health. As an indication of the sort of results we have obtained, I can say that the majority of mental health problems in secondary schools arise from anxiety and domestic issues. It is only by knowing what the problems are that we can start to deal with them effectively.

To this end, a few weeks ago we held a week-long training session for teachers, attended by over 120 teachers as well as other professionals and NGOs. This programme will continue to support both teachers in the excellent work that they do in this field and of course the work of the BEST team and the Educational Psychologists.

Once again this year, the addition of an Assistant Educational Psychologist role to the Educational team has enabled our existing psychologists to engage in more in-depth, complex work with the rising number of pupils with Special Educational Needs. We have also sent a trainee Educational Psychologist to the UK to complete her first year of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology and Child Psychology and she will be joining the team in September. The team continues to deliver on the weekly drop-in clinics aimed at parents and carers who have concerns about their children's learning, development or behaviour. They have also provided evening parenting courses for families of children between the ages of five and eight who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and this will be extended to parents of children who are teenagers on the Autistic Spectrum.

The Department of Education is working hard on developing child protection policies and procedures and is working with other agencies, including the RGP and the Care Agency to this end. The policy is being updated and training being provided, covering issues such as sexting, safeguarding and signs of safety.

Mr Speaker, one of the areas in which we have made most progress over the past year is in teaching and learning with digital technologies. All First Schools have received training in the use

140 of teaching and learning strategies with handheld devices with the last school receiving the initial training on 8th of last month. Of the Middle Schools, St Joseph's received their training in March, with Bishop Fitzgerald's and St Anne's planned for the next academic year. The rollout of handheld devices continues.

145 The response of both teachers and pupils to this initiative is tremendous. It opens up so many possibilities and the children love it. Working parties are now being set up to further develop the excellent work done in Digital Technology areas, such as the very successful Cyber Centurion and STEM fields.

150 As part of improving the use of IT, Education.gov.gi will be rolled out to all schools before the start of the next academic year, an initiative to streamline workflows and support the collaborative working practices now prevalent in our education system.

155 I must take this opportunity to congratulate all those involved in Cyber Centurion, including teachers, students and members of the private sector, as well as those involved in the Young Enterprise Programme, for their commitment and success. I intend to further pursue ways of involving business in supporting education and providing opportunities such as placements and internships for our young people.

The inaugural Universities Fair was held last February, hosted at Gibraltar University and supported by the Kusuma Trust. Ten universities were represented including Gibraltar University, and plans are well in hand for a much bigger event next year.

160 Most importantly, Mr Speaker, we are working on a fully revised curriculum for 2019. Curriculum 2019 will contain about 15 vocational pathways designed to cater for a range of vocations not currently covered in our education system. We are not yet doing enough for students who are either not academic or academically inclined or who, quite aside from their ability, want to take up alternative courses.

165 Mr Speaker, when I have attended the schools on exam results day, and shared in the excitement, my mind has always been with those who did not manage to get to the stage of sitting exams. Where are they? Where are the young people who left school early, or who do not stay on for A-levels? What are they doing? And most importantly, what are we doing for them? Curriculum 2019 will ensure that they all have the option of progressing further in a range of subjects not possible now.

170 In addition, and most importantly, we are working on a specific Access Curriculum providing a pathway for students with Special Educational Needs regardless of where they are in our education system. A working group of representatives from the three secondary institutions and St Martin's have been working with the Advisory Service to develop this pathway.

175 In order to inform the development of Education, members of the Department visited Finland, well known for its *avant garde* education policies. The visit provided an insight on teaching and learning, curriculum, pastoral care and vocational studies. Some of the ideas have already been incorporated into Curriculum 2019.

180 Mr Speaker, an exciting project in which the schools have been involved is Sustainable Schools Gibraltar, inspired by the EU ClimACT Programme. A forum has been set up between ClimACT, Education and the Department of the Environment, and already a Schools Working Party of over 30 teachers has developed the framework, and they have been doing extremely good eco-work in their schools.

185 Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that the working party revising the 1974 Education Act has now completed its task and the final draft will shortly be discussed with stakeholders before publication as a Bill in the autumn. In advance of this, Mr Speaker, I will be activating something that is provided for in the current Act but which has not been in existence for many decades, and so I will shortly be appointing the statutory Education Council to advise me and the Education team on matters relating to education.

190 In listening to teachers on my regular visits around the schools over the past year and a half, there are regular issues that concern them. Clearly there is some anxiety about the changes that

we are bringing about. That is natural and is positive and constructive anxiety, and we will work together to ensure smooth transitions.

Other concerns are more longstanding. One was the unreliability of internet connection which, I am glad to say, as I have already mentioned, has much improved in the past year. 195 Another is the length of time that the filling of posts takes from advertising to informing the applicants of the results. I am working closely with the Chief Secretary and the Human Resources Department to resolve this.

One concern that I have is the threat of losing our bilingualism. Being bi- or multilingual has recognised benefits to intellectual and social development and is proven to delay the onset of 200 dementia. *Llanito* is also part of the essence of what it is to be Gibraltarian. It is an intrinsic part of our culture, of who we are. Sadly, for a number of reasons, many of our youngest cannot hold a fluent *Llanito* conversation. Mr Speaker, we will work to ensure that the education system encourages our children to use both of our languages. My four-year-old granddaughter's rendition of *Itsy-bitsy Araña*, learnt at St Joseph's Nursery this year, certainly gives me hope for 205 the future.

My final niggle is the perception that there is still within the Education Department in the widest sense, that the Department stops at the Queensway offices. Mr Speaker, all of us who work in education, from Bleak House in the south to Bayside in the north, are part of one continuum and it is imperative that any sense of 'them and us' disappears. The new Director and 210 I are committed to ensuring that this happens.

Mr Speaker, I make it a point to make regular visits to all our educational institutions. What I enjoy most of my work in education is talking to teachers, other staff and pupils, understanding the problems, challenges, and successes for myself; and I want here to publicly thank all the schools for their hospitality and for always making me feel so welcome. I feel that I have made 215 many friends among the professionals in education.

Back to the revolution: Mr Speaker, just last week, I met with the Head students of our three secondary institutions – Mehwish Salman from Westside, Mathew Porter and Jasmine Mahtani from Bayside and Rebecca Pedder from the College. It was a serious, enjoyable, inspiring two hours of conversation. They made some extremely valuable suggestions and I was able to see 220 that we agreed on so much. I could see their excitement at the contribution that they make to their schools, their praise for the support that they get from their teachers and indeed they made a few very useful suggestions which I will be taking up.

And I reflected: it brought home something that is of course obvious, but that always hits me when I am talking to young people. That this is what it is about; that we have such a 225 responsibility to them; that I am privileged to be in the position that I am and that I will do everything I possibly can to ensure that they are well looked after and given the opportunities that they all deserve. Not just the high academic flyers – but them too; not just the ones who do their homework on time – but them too. Because it is not all about exams – but they are certainly important for some, but not for all. Because, Mr Speaker, we believe in a fully inclusive and equal society and we will ensure a fully inclusive and equal system of education for 230 Gibraltar.

Things are changing, from opening up vocational pathways to, as from this year, no longer streaming young children at year 3. We are open to change that is good.

Mr Speaker, this is the revolution I am talking about. We have to question, we have to progress, we have to reconsider and reassess; we have to change. 235

Mr Speaker, Grace Hopper, the American computer scientist and Rear Admiral – interesting combination – also known as 'Amazing Grace', said that:

The most dangerous phrase in the language is, 'We've always done it this way'

This is wisdom that transcends the ages. A long time before her, in 307 BC, King Wu-ling of Zhao, in NE China expressed the same sentiments in a slightly different way. He wrote:

A talent for following the ways of yesterday is not sufficient to improve the world of today, for those who use the old to define the new do not achieve change.

240 The work to bring about this change begins now. With the team across Education we can plan it and can drive it, but it is the teachers ultimately who will deliver it. It does not really depend on the budget, it depends on the teachers. We are blessed with a strong, motivated cadre of excellent teaching professionals and supporting personnel. It is to them that we, all of us, owe who we are and to them that we will owe the future.

245 Mr Speaker, those who have been to my office will know that Kermit the Frog has pride of place there. Its creator, Jim Henson, is known for the words:

Kids don't remember what you try to teach them, they remember who you are

Mr Speaker, I want to create an education way-of-being that will support teachers in a way that they will be able to deliver the best; that they do not have to worry about laptops not working or classroom temperatures being too low. I want teachers to be able to be who they are so that the children of tomorrow, as they go through their lives and take their place in our community will, just as Jim Henson said, remember who they are.

250 Mr Speaker, I also hold ministerial responsibility for public health. During the last year the Public Health Department was modernised and rebranded as Public Health Gibraltar and conducted or participated in many public events – including flu and antibiotic awareness; mental health; sun safety, including the very successful skin cancer screening day; smoking; men's health; education; breastfeeding; sports; dealing with senior citizens; diabetes; and so on – and was represented by the Director of Public Health at the Inter-Island Public Health Conference in Jersey.

260 The new health promotion website was officially launched last year and new leaflets and posters have been designed and infomercials produced on a number of different health issues. The hardworking Health Promotion team has organised a number of campaigns, including hearing, one with the Gibraltar Cardiac Association, and also contributes regularly to GBC Radio *Health File* and the *Gibraltar Chronicle* over many public health aspects during the year.

265 The Public Health Department launched its Health Improvement Strategy in January 2015 and a new three-year Health Improvement Strategy is due to be launched at the end of this calendar year. The content is under development but will continue to build on top-priority areas such as promoting healthy eating; reducing the harm from tobacco; preventing, detecting and reducing the burdens from diabetes; improving sexual health; and promoting mental health and well-being. In addition, the strategy will aim to make progress on two key manifesto commitments, lifestyle improvement and the self-care approach, to encourage all citizens to take control of their health and develop self-awareness.

270 Mr Speaker, the Public Health team is a small but extremely hardworking team. The head of the team is the Director of Public Health, Dr Vijay Kumar, who has functions both within the Gibraltar Health Authority and within my Ministry. Dr Kumar has for many years provided excellent advice to successive Governments on health matters and has worked extremely hard and extensively on many boards and committees and represented Gibraltar in meetings and conferences abroad, but above all has gained the respect and affection of Gibraltar. This year, he was awarded an MBE for his services. Vijay is retiring this year. I worked with Vijay from his arrival in Gibraltar when I was on the board of the GHA, and want to thank him for his work and support and for his tremendous contribution to our community.

280 Moving on to Environment, Mr Speaker, seven years is a very short time in politics when you want to achieve so much and have so much ground to make up. Let me start this section of my seventh Budget speech by saying that there is a huge amount more to do; but as I say this, I take comfort from the fact that many things that we now take for granted were unheard of just seven years ago and from the fact also that my voice is no longer a lone voice crying in the wilderness –

so many others now care and are committed to continuing to improve the quality of our environment.

290 Seven years later, recognition of the importance of the environment has taken on new dimensions at a Gibraltar and an international level. The challenge to the environment of the future that EU exit poses cannot be understated. As Brexit looms near, our focus and priorities are realigning to ensure even greater recognition of this importance. As the Chief Minister and I have both stated on more than one occasion, Gibraltar must and will maintain EU environmental standards as a minimum. This is vital, not just for our own quality of life but for our international reputation and standing.

295 We must guard against those who would suggest that caring for the environment is a challenge to the economy. Those who think this could do well to recall American Professor Emeritus Guy McPherson saying, 'If you really think that the economy is more important than the environment, try holding your breath while you count your money.' (A Member: Hear, hear.) An economy based on sound environmental principles is longer lasting and more resilient, and the economic benefits of green businesses have only just started to be tapped in our jurisdiction. I will be working closely with the business community during the coming year to bring these benefits to Gibraltar. But proof that it is perfectly possible to grow as an economy and progress on the environment is the extraordinary fact that as Gibraltar's economy continues to grow, as we have seen in this session, carbon emissions and our carbon footprint continue to fall. This is a formidable achievement and very rare internationally.

305 My team – led by Environment CEO and Chief Scientist Dr Liesl Mesilio and Senior Scientist Stephen Warr – and I are working closely also with Her Majesty's Government and our colleagues in the Overseas Territories, who share many of our challenges and opportunities, to ensure that we adapt to a new, uncompromising form of environmental governance.

310 To this effect, we will shortly be publishing a 25-year environment plan. This is environmental stewardship and multi-generational responsibility, setting standards not just for ourselves but for future generations too. We are the first Government to fully embrace long-term environmental management, with all our policies and actions aimed at improvements beyond the short four-year terms of Parliament. The Chief Minister's aims for diesel is one clear example of this. Nature does not come in four-year tranches. Much of what we do on environment takes time but reaps much longer-lasting benefit.

315 This strategy will be our blueprint over the next 25 years and will demonstrate our ambitious environmental aspirations. The strategy will be Government led, but will depend on civil society to seize the opportunities presented and assume its responsibility to play its role in the delivery of environmental leadership.

320 The strategy is divided into three parts: governance, management and implementation. Each topic within these parts has corresponding objectives which will carry Gibraltar's environmental agenda forward to 2040 and beyond.

325 It will set targets in many areas, such as on reduction and cessation of the use of non-essential single-use plastic, like plastic bags, bottles and straws. It will include the time limits for diesel-fuelled vehicles and internal combustion engines set by the Chief Minister in this Budget. It will set targets on carbon emissions and other pollutants, identify incentives for energy efficiency, and much more.

330 The community is now fully willing to embrace these initiatives, much more than it was even a few short years ago. I was, for example, very pleased to see support for the principle of limiting the future use of diesel-powered vehicles in the Chamber of Commerce's latest annual report, just published. Businesses are already embracing these initiatives. The Hunter Group's work with Aquagib to provide a refill scheme, spearheaded by the Nautilus Project, is an example. This year Aquagib itself is studying locations for water fountains to further reduce the need to buy small plastic bottles of water. More about plastics later.

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At an international level, Gibraltar continues to seek inclusion in international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Bern Convention, the Barcelona Convention and the Intercontinental Biosphere Reserve of the Mediterranean.

340 Mr Speaker, the public service has to lead the way. Already, Government Departments, agencies and authorities, and many Government contractors, have a policy of not using plastic bottles after current stocks are used up. This Parliament has taken the same step – I believe the first Parliament in the Commonwealth to have done so – and I think we have to be congratulated for that. To show its commitment to sustainability, the Government has engaged a Commissioner for Sustainable Development, who will advise further on how we can drive this
345 agenda.

The Green Filter is still driving continuous improvement throughout the public sector. Well over 500 building applications have been reviewed during the past financial year and the Environment Department continues to assist the Procurement Office in driving the environmental agenda into the new e-procurement platform.

350 Mr Speaker, waste management, including recycling, remains one of our key responsibilities and priorities. I am extremely pleased to report that recycling figures have seen a further improvement from those reported last year, with an increase of approximately 108% on our rates across the board. The biggest thanks for this achievement must go to the public. Without their contribution we would not be able to achieve this. We expect that this financial year will
355 see the commissioning of an expanded recycling facility near Europa Advance Road to increase our rates even further and improve the way in which we handle our urban waste.

I am extremely pleased that work has now begun in earnest on bringing about the new sewage treatment plant and we expect the project to be completed in 2020. An advanced works contract was signed in January and includes the design and survey work required for the final
360 planning, environmental assessment and preliminary site works. It is being carefully designed to fit into the stunning landscape of Europa Point. This development is a huge achievement. There were so many obstacles and setbacks, but it was not something that we could leave undone like others have before.

Sadly, we still have litter hotspots in our streets, and I once again appeal to the public to refrain from placing rubbish in the wrong places and/or at the wrong times. The Department's Litter Warden section is taking a zero-tolerance approach in this regard. Over 50 litter fines have been issued by this section alone in recent months. The Environmental Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police, as well as the Environmental monitors and feedback team led by the Cleansing Superintendent, are also taking part in the collaborative effort to deter offenders. As a result,
370 there has been a reduction in the number of instances of fly tipping in some key hotspots. The use of cameras is undoubtedly helping the Department in tackling the problem and additional cameras will be deployed this year. Meetings of the Litter Committee, which I specifically setup as a platform to voice concerns and review progress have continued to take place constructively. The Environmental Safety Group's Clean up the World campaign continues to provide an
375 example as to how the citizen can contribute.

The Department is working with the Chamber to identify ways of improving the effectiveness of rubbish collection in many areas and I am very hopeful that the new cleaning contract, which contains a much wider set of requirements than the previous one, will go a long way towards improving the situation further. I would like at this juncture to repeat once more the
380 Government's commitment to the continuity of the workforce at this time of change.

Discussion and collaboration with NGOs continues. I meet regularly with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, the ESG and the Nautilus Project. I thank them and all other volunteers for their invaluable contribution to Gibraltar's heritage and environment.

385 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.

I also continue meetings with the Brexit and the Environment Working Group and my Brexit Advisory Group, which is comprised of both public and private sector officials. This group attends regular meetings with me in London as we prepare for new working practices following EU exit.

The Department has once again successfully delivered its school environmental education programme. This year's theme focused on beating plastic pollution and culminated with the hugely successful celebration of World Environment Day on 5th June at Commonwealth Park.

Plastics, Mr Speaker, are now recognised as one of the largest threats to the natural environment, in particular the oceans, and potentially a very serious threat to human health. The Government has introduced legislation banning the importation of cosmetics and other products that contain micro-bead plastic. We are proud to be one of the first jurisdictions in the world to take such action. As we have seen, this Budget introduces significant measures towards furthering this aim. The Department is also working alongside well-known local retailers to reduce the use of single-use plastics. The work that is being carried out on this by the Nautilus Project merits special attention and praise and the 25-year plan I mentioned earlier will show that significant steps will be taken in this direction during the coming months.

The public and businesses have responded extremely well to both local efforts and Sky's Ocean Rescue campaign. Citizen involvement is key. And stopping plastic use will have direct benefits in the seas around us, where turtles, whales, dolphins and other animals are at daily risk of death due to our actions.

The forthcoming Island Games afford real opportunities to promote the environment, and my colleague the Minister for Sport will shortly be announcing some of these measures.

Mr Speaker, man-induced climate change is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced. In Gibraltar specifically, the near certainty of considerable sea level rise in coming decades and the increased frequency and severity of storms, already noticeable in recent years, will have a real and direct impact. Government remains fully committed to tackling the causes of climate change. As part of its obligations under the Compact of Mayors, Gibraltar continues to produce a city-level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. Gibraltar is one of a handful of cities which have reported a fully complete inventory and has in fact been commended by the Carbon Disclosure Project, to whom we report, for the completeness of its submission. The results so far show that our carbon footprint is reducing by a very small amount. The mere fact that it is not increasing, despite a growing economy, is a sign of success, but we can do more to force emissions down and a strategy to achieve this is being prepared.

Carbon emissions from power generation in Gibraltar dropped significantly for the third consecutive year in 2017, even before the conversion to gas. The Gibraltar Electricity Authority reports that emissions dropped from 161,358 tonnes in 2016 to 152,287 tonnes in 2017. That is a total of over 9,000 tonnes, or nearly 6% less. Emissions in 2017 were over 27,000 tonnes less than in 2014, or a reduction of 15.3% in three years. This phenomenal drop is simply not usual in countries experiencing the kind of growth we have seen in this Budget.

Switching off lights and devices, changing to low-energy lighting and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings have been measures that we have been encouraging since 2012 and we are clearly seeing the results. We must therefore continue in earnest, as we can undeniably make a difference.

Investing in renewable energy is another key component of our climate change mitigation strategy. Works on a 3 mega-watt solar photovoltaic project are well underway, starting with the installation of solar PV panels in the New Harbours estate. I am also pleased to be able to announce a project that will see the installation shortly of solar PV panels on the roof of the Mid-Town car park. I am just as excited to be able to say that we will shortly be publishing a tender for the development of large-scale solar PV panels in key locations around Gibraltar. These green developments will help us meet our target of producing 20% of our energy from renewable sources whilst similarly reducing emissions and improving our air quality.

Discussions continue on identifying other renewable energy sources, with the possibility too of expanding the pilot wave power plant, which has been extremely useful to EcoWave in identifying technical problems and improving their designs.

The Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) is also taking shape, with companies having registered under the scheme and striving to carry out their energy saving obligations.

All this effort will tie in very nicely with an upcoming major legislative piece on which my team is working, the Climate Change Act, as well as our revised Climate Change Programme. These will help Gibraltar meet its international climate change obligations and harness the economic benefits of green investment.

Our air quality monitoring programme has continued to operate during this past year, thanks to the work of the Environmental Agency and the Government-appointed UK-based air quality consultants, Ricardo. The results for 2017 have just been presented to me and will, as usual, be published. Concentrations of nitrogen-dioxide increased slightly overall in 2017 compared with 2016, but the compliance status remains the same as in 2016 and the values remain below those of previous years.

Despite the small rise in 2017, Witham's Road still shows a strong decline over the previous decade. The rise is likely due to a combination of the effects of shipping activity, such as within GibDock, and the nearby construction site. Rosia Road monitoring site shows annual mean nitrogen-dioxide concentrations below the limit value of 40 $\mu\text{g m}^3$ for the second year running. We achieved this for the first time ever in 2016. This is a welcome achievement and suggests that the effects at Witham's were indeed local. The good news is that the preliminary data for 2018 show a steep decline in NO_2 at both sites, and hence a strong improvement in air quality, suggesting that 2018 could have our best ever recorded quality of air at these sites. Both fractions of particulate matter, namely PM10 and PM2.5, were also EU-compliant within our limit values.

Despite the positive trend continuing, I am still not happy with air quality in Gibraltar, as my aim is to see it compliant with the more stringent WHO guidelines. Air quality will, of course, improve significantly with the new power station and the permanent closure of all the other aged or temporary diesel plants, but this is not enough. Estimates suggest that in the south district the amount of pollution before 2011 could be apportioned approximately 80% to diesel power generation and 20% to traffic, so while the main contributing 80% will have gone by the end of this year, we need to work still on traffic, and of course on shipping. Therefore, I continue to work with my colleague the Minister for Traffic and Transport, supporting his courageous work in the STTPP to reduce traffic and reduce air speed and to encourage the transition from diesel and petrol through hybrids to electric vehicles – and we will see more progress on this in the coming months.

We continue discussions with GibDock in order to achieve total onshore power for ships in dry dock and alongside, and the GEA and the Port are looking at options for the installation of onshore power at the Port. Gibraltar will of course benefit from international measures on reducing the impact of marine fuel, which are imminent. The expected increase in the use of LNG for shipping will also have a positive impact.

Mr Speaker, during the course of the coming year an air quality monitor will be placed in the North District and I will be commissioning an Air Quality Plan to chart the actions necessary to continue to improve the quality of the air that those of us who live and work in Gibraltar breathe.

I will take a breath now myself!

Mr Speaker, last year saw an improvement in the water quality classification of our beaches. I am pleased to report that even Western Beach has seen an improvement during 2017 and the latest classification results show all of our beaches attaining excellent status. Never heard of this before.

As we are all aware, there have been several high-intensity Atlantic storms this year. These caused considerable damage to our beaches and delayed the commencement of preparatory

490 works. Despite the odds, the beaches were officially opened in time for the summer season. Some works are still ongoing at Camp Bay, given that the entirety of the revetment had to be redressed, although these works will be completed very shortly indeed.

Catalan Bay has also seen improvements this year with the entire beach facilities building, including toilets and showers, being refurbished ahead of the bathing season. A further sand
495 regeneration programme has been carried out in Catalan Bay and, for the first time, in Camp Bay, with approximately 10,000 tonnes of clean sand being deposited. I must thank our beaches and maintenance team for their hard work, which ensured that we were ready for the summer.

Mr Speaker, storms have not been the only natural phenomenon we have had to contend with this year. We have also witnessed a substantial increase in the number of Portuguese Men
500 of War and mauve stingers drifting into our beaches. Our lifeguards have been vigilant from the outset in order to maintain public safety. All our lifeguards receive an induction course on marine wildlife in addition to first aid and general lifeguard training. We have also worked very closely with the Ministry for Equality to include disability language and etiquette training as part of their induction.

505 This year will see the introduction of a beach cameras portal. The service will be operational this month and users will be able to check the state of our beaches online in real time, an excellent addition to our list of improvements.

Marine surveillance and research have become some of the Department's routine tasks. Great strides have been made ever since the Marine Protection Regulations were published in
510 2014 and this last year has been no exception as we continue to push the barriers of conservation action.

On the research front, recent developments include Department officials working alongside regional experts to gather detailed information on the cetaceans and marine reptiles that use BGTW. This work adds to the existing monitoring programmes developed in line with the EU's
515 Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea.

Our scientific dive team has also been busy and continues to work hand in hand with local diving clubs to collect valuable marine records. Shortly, dedicated anchor buoys will be deployed within the Seven Sisters marine conservation zone to enable divers to dive without the need to
520 employ damaging anchors.

Following on from last year's successful implementation of a temporary ban on fishing common octopus in Gibraltar waters, this year's initiative extended the prohibition to six weeks and introduced a new conservation measure whereby the maximum catch limit was restricted to 5 kg per person for two subsequent weeks. Other species, including groupers and common sea
525 bass, will also be subjected to similar conservation measures, in consultation with the Fishing Working Group, as part of the Department's wider Marine Conservation Strategy. I thank the members of the Fishing Working Group for their work and valuable advice.

I recently announced the creation of a dolphin protection zone in the north of BGTW within the Bay of Gibraltar. Additional measures, including a requirement to report any recreational catches of billfish species, such as the Mediterranean swordfish, have also been enacted. The Department's Environmental Protection and Research Unit merits special attention here since they are largely responsible for ensuring that the multitude of conservation measures implemented on land and at sea are adhered to. For this I am thankful and welcome the ongoing rapport with the Royal Gibraltar Police, HM Customs and the Royal Navy.
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The Environmental Agency continues to advise me in areas of nuisance, building control, waste regulation, ship sanitation, COMAH, food inspection, water quality, housing, dust control, inspection of X-ray facilities, pest control and food import controls. They monitor the quality of our bathing waters, working in partnership with the Department. They service and calibrate our three air quality monitoring stations and liaise with the pollution specialists in the field.
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Their new website has been launched, providing easier access to users for the dissemination of environmental information and all forms within the website can now be filled in and
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submitted online. Their mobile App, Gibenviro, continues to be improved and provides information to the public on a variety of topics, including bathing waters, air quality and recycling.

545 They also work with the Department and the litter wardens to complement the anti-dog fouling campaign. It is largely thanks to their efforts in collecting samples that fines are now being issued, which will lead to a reduction in dog fouling hotspots.

The Agency has been particularly active this year in its work with HSE and HSL in the UK in strictly ensuring the safety elements of the new LNG plant construction and design.

550 Mr Speaker, the appointment of a contractor for the maintenance of the planted areas in North Front Cemetery has led to a dramatic improvement. We have now appointed the contractor who will upkeep and it and ensure that the natural areas of vegetation are maintained to an acceptable standard. Works on planting more trees, on maintaining the surrounding walls, paths, toilets and benches continue. Areas are cleaned daily and the cemetery is kept as a safe, quiet place for visitors. I am happy to remind Members too that the review of the Cemetery Act is completed and the Bill is now on the Order Paper of this House. I stated last year that the cemetery is a difficult place in which to work. Not only do the staff manage the burials and exhumations, which in themselves are difficult, but they also carry out additional works and repairs and for this I thank them.

560 Mr Speaker, green spaces have crucial environmental benefits. As urban development progresses, the value of green spaces in Gibraltar increases. Contrary to what some say, there has been no decrease in green areas in Gibraltar in recent years. Development during this Government's tenure has been on brown or former brown sites. Indeed, the amount of green space has increased, notably with Commonwealth Park and Theatre Royal Park, and will now increase further with the new park north of the leisure centre.

The Department constantly monitors developments to ensure green areas are not lost, or that they are re-provided. Furthermore, we are continuously looking to increase the number of trees in Gibraltar and over 100 trees have been planted during the past year.

570 In December 2017, the Department launched *Planning for Biodiversity; an urban wildlife conservation and planning guide*, which promotes the protection and enhancement of our urban wildlife. Swifts are a feature of Gibraltar and part of our urban heritage. They also rid us of millions of mosquitos every summer. Bats are equally important at night. Gibraltar was probably the first place in the world to require swift nest and bat roost sites to be provided in all developments. We can, however, still do more to protect existing sites and enhance the population, and we will be leading on an initiative to do just this over the coming months.

575 Mr Speaker, we are encouraging walking around Gibraltar and will continue to maintain the paths on the Upper Rock. During the next 12 months we will also be creating two new public paths, one in the Buena Vista area and another new coastal path in the Europa area. We will link this network of paths with the Commonwealth Walkway initiative, which will highlight both our heritage and the importance of the Commonwealth family.

580 The development of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continues, with new schemes to improve the Alameda aesthetically and work towards sustainability. Significantly, the gardens continue to raise their profile as a global centre of excellence for the study and cultivation of cacti. The children's education programme is now one of the Botanic Gardens' flagship programmes. The gardens are now developing the Biodome, a new, bespoke education area. The management of the Alameda has decided to do this by seeking crowd funding and not Government funds, and plans are at an advanced stage.

585 Mr Speaker, it has been an exceptional spring this year and our Gibraltar Nature Reserve has been extraordinarily radiant. The diversity of wild flowers on display and abundance of fauna have caught the attention of many. If we add to this the multitude of improvements that have been carried out recently, we are surely progressing well along the path to a continuously improving nature reserve experience.

595 Against all odds and despite the severe storms that have battered the Upper Rock, our tourist sites have continued operating smoothly. The much anticipated Skywalk was officially inaugurated in March by Mark Hamill – Skywalker himself – and we are now proud to be able to say that we have yet another world-class visitor attraction within the Gibraltar Nature Reserve. Since its inauguration, over 57,000 customers have gone to visit the site and many have posted their pictures on social media. News of the attraction has reached far and wide.

600 Other parts of the Reserve have also seen improvements. A new audio guide system has been installed inside the WWII tunnels. The new system is allowing us to increase the throughput of people visiting the tunnels, whilst not compromising visitor experience and quality. I am also pleased to say that the attraction is now open seven days a week, as is the interpretation centre at O'Hara's Battery.

605 The Department has also taken over the management, regulation and maintenance of lower St Michael's Cave. Improvements to this hidden gem are presently being carried out and include a complete overhaul of all safety equipment and lighting. These improvements will secure the sustainable management of lower St Michael's Cave for years to come.

610 One of the key strategic changes implemented in the Reserve this year was increasing the entry fee for non-residents on 1st April. This increase adequately reflects the enhanced quality of our product and the addition of our new attractions and improvements. In April alone, the measure increased revenue by over £175,000.

615 Sometimes it is the smaller things that matter and we have paid attention to these too. New bins, picnic tables and balustrades are being installed in the Reserve and our reintroduction and captive breeding programmes have continued in earnest with both Barbary Partridges and rabbits being released. Indeed, the secretive Barbary Partridge appears to be secretive no longer. Such has been the success of the reintroduction programme run jointly by the Department and by GONHS, that they are appearing and nesting in many new locations. I remember being accused by a former GSD environment spokesman for being responsible for the extinction of this emblematic species from Gibraltar. I think that the GSD should have learnt by now that, given time, results follow. Commonwealth Park is another example of this – look at it now.

620 Great work also is being done by the Department and GONHS in the captive breeding and rehabilitation of birds of prey.

625 Plans are also progressing to create a new area of natural habitat in the area of Devil's Tower Road, which will be at the same time affording protection against falling rocks for road users.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Nature Reserve, our flagship product, is set to continue to improve and flourish while enhancing our unique biodiversity. We have more exciting plans for the future, which will this year include the setting up of an educational centre on the Upper Rock.

630 Going on to gulls now, Mr Speaker, as a result of our persistence, the long-term trend in the breeding population of gulls in Gibraltar continues to be one of decline. Despite the limitations in gull control that are imposed when working in an urban environment, surveys show that, although they do still create disturbance in some areas – I am very conscious of that – the urban population of gulls now appears to be decreasing as well. This often difficult and dangerous work, which includes 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 recognised.

640 Mr Speaker, the management of our macaques shows how the control of the population is best carried out by means other than extensive culling, and where carefully managed use of contraception, with some selective removal of individuals, delivers notable results. There will always be periods of contact, but we have been successful over the past year in reducing the nuisance value considerably. Surgical contraception by way of laparoscopy continues and our veterinarian continues to treat a select number of macaques from most of the groups in close consultation with the macaque team. This seems to have resulted in a drop in the number of births this year, which should serve to stabilise the population in the future.

645 Mr Speaker, delivering home-grown environmental policy and legislation has always been a strong suit of this administration, as it was of the previous GSLP Government. The following pieces of legislation are planned for the coming year: the Climate Change Act, the revised Cemetery Act, a revised Animals Act, Pet Regulations, a Circus Animals Act, Balloon Regulations, the revised Heritage and Antiquities Act and the amendment to the Electricity Authority Act to allow renewable feed-in agreements.

650 Going on to electricity now, Mr Speaker, by far the most significant development in Gibraltar in the coming financial year will be the commissioning and putting into operation of the new gas-fired power station, whose first engine, as the Chief Minister mentioned yesterday, was very successfully tested for the first time this last weekend. The first consignment of LNG is expected to arrive for commissioning of gas during the summer, made possible thanks to the HSE-led safety safeguards, which have been meticulous and stricter than in any similar plant anywhere in the world. The new generators, initially manned by Bouygues, will contribute very significantly towards generation cost savings and a much cleaner and quieter environment. I would like to thank the GEA, its CEO Michael Caetano and the teams at Bouygues, Shell and Gasnor for getting us here. Most particularly I want to thank the Financial Secretary, Albert Mena, who has very effectively led on the complex discussions on contractual and practical matters and without whom this project would not have come to where it is now. The last 12 months have seen a huge effort going not only into the new power station directly but also into the associated new high-voltage distribution centres, infrastructure and the new high-voltage cabling network.

660 The GMES power station, the former MOD power station, although on stand-by mode, had unfortunately to be called back into service for a short period this last winter as a result of cold weather. It is, however, now very likely that it will be fully decommissioned within the next few months, just as the old OESCO station was some time ago.

670 Mr Speaker, I think it is also worth mentioning that the only recent power interruption occurred in January and was as a result of a high-voltage interconnector cable fault, due to aging equipment. Gone are the days of regular power outages due to lack of capacity – something that we promised to do in 2011 and that we have so successfully accomplished. Customers enjoy a power supply reliability in line with other western European countries, despite our lack of electrical connection to a European-wide grid.

675 The cost of fuel supplied during the last financial year continued to fluctuate, with £390.98 per tonne in April 2017, increasing to £458.48 at the end of January this year, before dropping slightly to £433.40 per tonne in March 2018. The impact of these varying oil prices has not been great, at least for the first half the financial year, given that the Authority had entered into a fuel hedging contract which had been in place for six years when the cost of fuel was considerably higher. The fuel hedge contract terminated in Sept 2017.

680 The Authority continues to upgrade and expand the Network and the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system used to monitor the generation and main distribution system, providing a better and faster response when dealing with the now very rare power outage scenarios.

685 Improvements to the public lighting network continue by replacing existing streetlights with LED and/or low-energy lanterns, thus further reducing overall consumption.

Training and development of technical and non-technical staff continued this year with an emphasis on safety and on the new power station project and its state-of-the-art technology. Employees have already started attending training courses organised both locally and abroad.

690 I turn now to water, Mr Speaker. I am pleased to report that AquaGib has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance indicators in respect to both provision of potable and seawater, and for sewerage services throughout Gibraltar. In order to achieve this level of service, AquaGib has undertaken an expenditure of £11,556,000. It has continued to invest in capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving the water infrastructure assets of Gibraltar. The approved investment plan is set at £3.2 million over the five-year period to March 2020. During this last year, a total of just over £½

million was spent on capital projects, which included the replacement of potable and seawater mains; replacement of water meters, and replacement and installation of new membranes for Governor's Cottage reverse osmosis plants, so increasing their efficiency.

700 In addition to the above, AquaGib has invested approximately £650,000 this period in replacing the high-pressure pump, 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 just around two years and will result in a huge energy saving of approximately 30% per annum.

705 During the period, AquaGib has commenced on a long-term project with Government to further increase the potable and salt water delivery from Waterworks reservoir to the Westside area.

Mr Speaker, I now move on to my responsibilities for heritage. Having been at the helm of this division for a year and a half, I have come to believe that most people do not realise the extent of the fortifications, city walls, monuments, listed buildings and natural heritage sites which Gibraltar is privileged to have and has a duty to protect. Most of these heritage assets are by their very nature old, so their state of preservation varies. The Heritage Division of the Department, led by Marcello Sanguinetti, has commenced a refurbishment programme for these sites, most notably the making safe and repointing of the impressive Almond Tower at the Moorish Castle. This was in danger of collapse, so we are extremely pleased that a combination of teams from Technical Services, the Museum and their conservator, together with a specialist contractor, are in the process of restoring this magnificent structure. Other areas have included Southport Gates, the Garrison Library balustrade, the Military Heritage Centre and Princess Caroline's Battery.

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720 Mr Speaker, a new archaeologist is now in post and will be assisting the Department in its duties, and one of the fundamental aspects of this is the issuing of advice to contractors and the Town Planning department. Over the past 18 months we have been extremely successful in de-conflicting heritage and development.

725 The scale of development in Gibraltar also means that there is a great emphasis on archaeological watching briefs. Such a brief led to the discovery of a whole network of bunkers and passageways at the Lathbury Barrack site, which as a result was properly surveyed and photographed.

730 Mr Speaker, we have carried out beautification works in the area of Europa Point using the magazine previously known as the Du Farol or 'the last shop in Europe'. Visitors there will no longer experience 'much cheapness', rather interpretation informing on the World Heritage site, history and natural history of the area and the use of the Strait throughout the ages. This information will now be seen by the many visitors and will also complement the new sports complex. Improvements to the area will now continue to the north, with the embellishment of the Nun's Well site already commencing. Both these projects will ensure that the eastern part of the Europa Point plateau remain open and accessible to the public.

735 Mr Speaker, the opening of the viewing platform overlooking the Gorham's Cave complex World Heritage site at Europa Road and at Europa Advance Road now gives the opportunity to view the caves where Neanderthals once lived and to receive detailed information on their story. A programme of visits to the site itself is now in progress and these are proving a great success.

740 Major works were also carried out at Vanguard Cave to protect the sediment slope from erosion by the sea. Gabions have been placed on the lower section and this protects it from the elements, especially in the light of what seem to be ever more powerful storms. Works were also carried out at Mediterranean Steps to stabilise a section that was creating minor rock falls and impacting on the entry point to the Gorham's Cave complex. These remedial works also help to make the area safe for the many users of Med Steps.

745 The caves continue to provide incredible items, such as the discovery last August of a Neanderthal child's canine milk tooth, and as a result, excavations for this year have been extended by one month. There has also been an expansion of the volunteer participation

scheme and this year the Museum will have an unprecedented number of Gibraltarian students
750 in the excavations.

The importance of the exposure that Gibraltar gets through TV channels like the BBC, CBS
News, Japan's NHK TV, or publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Lost World* book as
part of the development of the World Heritage site cannot be overstated.

The Gibraltar Museum team continues at the forefront of research into the Neanderthals
755 worldwide, as is demonstrated time and time again.

Mr Speaker, we have developed an extremely honest and fruitful working relationship with
the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, which continues to uphold the highest standards in defence of our
common heritage. Their work would not be done without the tireless efforts of the Chair, the
CEO, the board members and the countless volunteers who give of their time. These include
760 those working continuously on the embellishment and research work at Witham's Cemetery and
the Fortress of Gibraltar Group, who recently discovered the location of a transmitter room that
had been forgotten. As keen military enthusiasts, they have also helped in mapping out World
War II sites for recording and future decisions on their use.

One particular group that we support is the Re-enactment Society, those tireless exponents
765 of our military history who give so much enjoyment every weekend in Main Street and
Casemates and who very recently performed very successfully within the Great Siege Tunnels.

Mr Speaker, the Order Paper also includes a Bill for the new Heritage and Antiquities Act. This
is the result of co-operation between the many stakeholders, including of course the Trust and
the Museum. I would like to especially thank the Deputy Chief Minister for working with me on
770 this Act. His expertise as a historian has been particularly helpful in this journey; and of course
my predecessor, the Hon. Steven Linares, who led on all the original drafting of what is a very
complex piece of legislation. Work on this commenced nearly 18 years ago. I am very pleased to
have been able to bring this to Parliament just over a year after I was entrusted with
responsibility for Gibraltar's heritage. I must also acknowledge with thanks both the Hon. Roy
775 Clinton and the Hon. Trevor Hammond, with whom I have held constructive discussions on the
Bill. The Bill has been well received by all stakeholders and will create a firm foundation for the
protection, maintenance and promotion of our heritage assets. One great innovation is that all
the listed structures will now be mapped out on GIS. Instead of just grid references, the full
extent of the property will be shown together with a description and photographs. A special
780 thank you must go to my GIS officer Karl Netto for delivering this so efficiently and
professionally.

Mr Speaker, my final area of responsibility is getting close. Urban renewal is moving apace,
with landscaping initiatives carried out in conjunction with the planted areas division of the
Department of Environment. Developments that have heeded heritage advice are regenerating
785 the Old Town area. A case in point is the Arches complex at the Old Police Barracks. This is a
testament to what can be achieved. I urge developers to come and engage with us early to
continue this trend. Many projects are in the pipeline, such as the development of Orange
Bastion and the new schools. All will add to the improved visual and living environment for all
our citizens.

We can also benefit from volunteers in this respect, as was shown with the repainting of
790 Referendum Steps by the Youth Service in connection with the anniversary of the Referendum,
or the street art initiative that is about to commence. Gibraltarians take great pride in their
homeland, and tenants' associations also go a long way in improving their surroundings for the
betterment of all. This is something we applaud and encourage.

Mr Speaker, as proof of the success of positive collaboration, I use the example of the ex-
MOD gatehouse at the entrance to the old Naval Dockyard. There were those who doubted it
would be saved at all. It clearly demonstrates this Government's commitment to heritage, and I
thank all those who made this happen, particularly the Chief Minister and His Excellency the
795 Governor for their personal support in achieving this.

800 The Garrison Library has now moved into a period of sustainability, conservation and
outreach, providing open access to the library collections as against its institutional history as a
members-only subscription library with limited access to the general public. The library is now
used on a daily basis by local researchers and students alike, who make excellent use of its
collections. Additionally, it has also become a hub for research gatherings for Gibraltar
805 University's PhD students and also supports many niche cultural events as well as the annual
conference on self-determination, which it organises jointly with the office of the Deputy Chief
Minister. I am very excited to continue to develop my working relationship with the library team
with a view to ensuring we protect its rich historical and cultural treasure for future generations.

Mr Speaker, as I end, the world remains an uncertain place on many fronts, but Gibraltar and
810 its Government remain certain in its goals and aspirations. This is evident in all fields, including in
this context the environment. Our aim now is to ensure that the environment is safe for the
future, well beyond the life of this Government. We have the obligation. It must be our legacy.

And finally, Mr Speaker, a few thank-yous: to you, the Clerk and the staff of Parliament; to all
the members of the teams in all of my Departments, agencies, authorities, and contractors; to all
815 the members of the many boards and committees for which I am responsible and where they
invariably serve voluntarily; a special mention to the Attorney General and the Gibraltar Law
Officers for providing advice and drafting legislation, overburdened as they are with Brexit; to
the officials at 6 Convent Place, including the Press Office, Chief Secretary Darren Grech, Chief
Technical Officer Hector Montado and Financial Secretary Albert Mena, for their often
820 unrecognised work and support; to Dominique Searle and the staff at Gibraltar House for their
steadfast support and hospitality whenever I have cause to visit London; to the volunteers in the
NGOs with whom I work; to the three unions who have members in my areas; and very
especially to my Ministry and my personal staff for their support. I must, of course, make special
mention of Derek Alman, who in my Ministry is leading on the new schools project.

825 I also want to thank and send my best wishes to four former Directors of Education who have
left their posts in the space of about six months. Anyone hearing this out of context could be
forgiven for thinking we had experienced a night of the educational long knives!

Former Director Ernesto Gomez retired as Chief Secretary and former Director Joey Britto
retired as Senior Administrator. I thank them and wish them both well.

830 Darren Grech, former Director on temporary promotion, to paraphrase Shakespeare in the
Scottish play, was from my team 'untimely ripped'. Darren was Director of Education for the first
year of my tenure as Education Minister and I thank him for his dedication, his counsel and his
commitment. I wish him every success in his new challenging role as Chief Secretary.

The fourth farewell is to someone who stepped in as Director, also on temporary promotion,
835 with no time to think about it, and who has stepped into the role with great effectiveness and
wisdom – that greatest attribute of all. To Lilli Gomez, whom I call Lilli the Wise, an
educationalist of the finest kind, who is retiring in a week's time with so much still to offer.
Thank you: few people who I have worked with have contributed so much to a role in such a
short space of time, a role you fully deserved.

840 And finally, to congratulate and welcome the new additions to the Education team, Director
of Education Jacqueline Mason and Senior Education Adviser Keri Scott. To quote the well-
known ancient Chinese proverb, you arrive in interesting times. But this is not ancient China, so
it is not a curse, it is a blessing – you will see.

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

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Mr Speaker: The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

Minister for Tourism, Employment, Commercial Aviation and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr
850 Speaker, I will start my address with Tourism and Commercial Aviation. In the last 12 months
the Gibraltar Tourist Board has continued to work effectively on promoting and selling Gibraltar
as a top destination in order to attract more visitors to our shores, thereby developing

opportunities and growth for the industry. The relevant figures were, in fact, given by the Chief Minister in his address.

855 It is, however, important to highlight that in 2017 total visitor numbers were up, tourist expenditure was up almost 20%, number of coaches coming to Gibraltar was up, hotel room occupancy was up, number of cruise calls and passengers was not just up but hit record highs in 2017, number of passengers by air, despite the collapse of Monarch in early October 2017, again hit record highs in 2017. All of these are objective figures which show that the approach by Government in marketing Gibraltar is bearing fruit.

860 I have mentioned, and it was mentioned also by the Deputy Chief Minister, the unfortunate demise of Monarch Airlines in October of last year. This left Gibraltar with a reduced service to London Gatwick and Manchester and saw the service stopped to both Birmingham and London Luton. As soon as the collapse of Monarch occurred, the Gibraltar Tourist Board contacted all airlines with suitable aircraft and operational bases in order to fill the gap left by Monarch.
865 Unfortunately, by early October schedules and aircraft allocations have already been decided for the following summer season, leaving very little room to manoeuvre to replace this capacity for this summer season. Despite this, we saw, after discussions with the relevant airline, the purchase by British Airways of the London Gatwick slots left vacant by Monarch. With this purchase, BA launched a six-times weekly service to London Gatwick for the peak summer
870 months of May to September, providing much-needed seat capacity during this busy period. BA has also continued to show its commitment to Gibraltar by announcing a frequency increase on its London Heathrow service starting at the end of October, increasing frequency from nine to 13 services weekly. Last winter easyJet also increased its capacity from Bristol and Gatwick by operating slightly larger aircraft on these routes and we are pleased to see that flights to Bristol
875 next winter will also increase to three per week from the current two flights.

Despite this, we continue to remain in constant contact with existing and new airlines with regard to recovering now unserved UK departure points. Furthermore, we are also exploring opportunities to new regional parts of the UK and we continue to participate in the ROUTES Europe event, where airlines and airports come together to do business.

880 Mr Speaker, the cruise industry, as the figures have shown, also continues to show consistency, and in 2018 250 calls are expected. This is an increase of just over 6% on last year and I am delighted to announce that 11 cruise ships will be making their inaugural calls to Gibraltar this year. Our consistent dialogue with the industry at the Seatrade Global events and through the membership of MedCruise maintains our reputation as a proactive
885 destination and one of excellence. Our partners in the local industry continue to play a vital role in the delivery of all services, as does our hospitality and retail industry as a whole, in ensuring a pleasant experience for all who come ashore.

Mr Speaker, during the 51st MedCruise General Assembly, held in Toulon in France last year, elections were held for a president and a new board of directors of the association. Nicky
890 Guerrero, Chief Executive of the Gibraltar Tourist Board, was elected to the board of directors comprising 12 members, with two other candidates representing large ports in the western Mediterranean. As I said in the relevant press release at the time, it is extremely gratifying to see that Mr Guerrero was elected to the board of directors of such an important association. This is undoubtedly a testament of the respect and high regard in which Mr Guerrero personally and
895 Gibraltar generally are held within MedCruise. Mr Guerrero has since represented the association at various high-profile events as Director for Partnerships and Events and thereby representing Gibraltar on these occasions too.

Mr Speaker, last year I attended the Monaco Yacht Show in September, where we were able to support the local yacht industry and the Gibraltar Maritime Association with their promotion
900 of the Rock to the yachting world. We expect to return to this prestigious event this year.

At the World Travel Market in London last year I launched the GTB's Year of Culture Campaign. For the first time ever the GTB held a major press conference at the International Media Centre, where the new campaign was unveiled by myself and the Chief Executive of the

905 GTB. The presentation was attended by over 60 journalists from the international media, the UK
national and trade press. The campaign is a narrative of storytelling across the key cultural areas
of the Rock. The Tourist Board is presenting this through visual footage and editorial in the build
up to hosting the Gibraltar 2019 NatWest International Island Games. The concept is to
showcase Gibraltar's extensive cultural activities and history leading up to the modern day. The
theme 'A Year of Culture' is a celebration of Gibraltar's diversity, history and heritage and
910 highlights a number of themes which best reflect Gibraltar's spirit of endurance. The aim is to
encourage a different perspective of the destination and a deeper understanding of what
defines Gibraltar and its people today.

The themes were portrayed through an extensive online and offline media campaign that the
Tourist Board ran this winter. The campaign commenced immediately after Christmas and will
915 be a continuing marketing initiative. It included for the first time a TV advert running throughout
January in addition to a UK regional radio campaign in February and a mobile phone campaign,
which was also trialled for the first time. The campaign also included destination editorial
features in traditional national and regional newspaper titles, in both printed and online
formats. A short-burst video is also being used to support the campaign on websites and
920 throughout social media.

We continue to promote niche market tourism and once again will be represented at the
Rutland Bird Fair from 17th to 19th August of this year.

The MICE market, which deals with meeting centres and conferences, is receiving particular
attention with two familiarisation trips by foreign operators specialising in this market, in
925 conjunction with the local industry, having already been held this year. In addition, one local
hotel and tour operator co-operated with the GTB to hold an event at Gibraltar House in London
for MICE market agents on 26th June, only a week ago.

The Gibraltar Tourist Board updated its website earlier this year. The update includes a
fresh new look, including more image and video content and the availability of the website in
930 the Spanish language. The ease of navigation has been improved too, with faster access to the
more popular sections. The website will be made available in other languages in the coming
months. New sections include suggested itineraries for visitors to Gibraltar with different
requirements. The events section has been given more prominence, building on the success of
Gibraltar's increasingly popular cultural calendar. The UNESCO World Heritage Site, Gorham's
935 Cave Complex, is given a higher profile and the Gibraltar 2019 NatWest International Island
Games will also feature throughout the year.

Our consistent activity on social media has proven the power of this medium. Furthermore,
the ability to measure activity is a great asset.

Other activities included the release of a music video by popular Reggae artist Maxi Priest,
940 produced with the co-operation of the Gibraltar Tourist Board. The video was released via Visit
Gibraltar, via the official Government Facebook page and also the GTB Facebook page, as part
of the Government's tourism marketing strategy. After it was posted, the video was viewed
more than 86,000 times in the first 24 hours. Maxi Priest also shared the original post on his
own page.

945 This year we made a return to the FITUR travel exhibition in Madrid and presented the Year
of Culture campaign to the Spanish market. In addition, and closer to home, the GTB led a
delegation to Chiclana in Cádiz, where areas of mutual co-operation in tourism were discussed.

Event-led tourism continues to be a priority for this Government. Events now range from
backgammon to darts, chess, music, food and literature. And sport will clearly play a major role
950 next year as we welcome the Island Games, no doubt bringing many visitors to the Rock.

Mr Speaker, I was delighted once again this year to introduce the Gibraltar Lecture at the FT
Weekend Oxford Literary Festival. The lecture was delivered by Baroness Kennedy, who is one of
Britain's best-known lawyers and has dedicated her professional life to giving a voice to those in
need and to championing civil liberties. The lecture was sponsored by the Gibunco Group of
955 companies and is part of the yearly activities carried out to promote the Gibunco Gibraltar

International Literary Festival. Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar also sponsors the Green Room for the Festival at Oxford.

We are already looking forward to another excellent Literary Festival in Gibraltar in November of this year and we are very grateful to the Gibunco Group for their commitment to the Festival and their support at Oxford and Blenheim with the Gibraltar Lectures. This Government believes in delivering quality events throughout the year, not only for our residents but also for those who wish to visit us to enjoy these. I would like to thank all our sponsors and partners who help make this festival a great success. Last year, the festival was made more accessible with the use of induction loops, sign interpretation, more visual aids and the website also included soundbites. Indeed, the festival has led the way in becoming not only more accessible but also digital. We were also honoured last year to host a reception at Gibraltar House for Her Royal Highness the Princes Royal, Patron of the Festival.

The growth figures which we have seen reflect the continued confidence in Gibraltar as a destination for visitors. This level of confidence has been further demonstrated by the private sector investments we have seen in the expansion of tourist accommodation. In addition to the Holiday Inn Express in Devil's Tower Road which already opened its doors to visitors, the Indigo Hotel will be built on the Corral Road site currently occupied by NatWest Bank, and in addition there are developments planned for new serviced aparthotels on Devil's Tower Road, Engineer Lane and on the site of the vacant Continental Hotel, although this final application is still going through the outline planning process. In total, these developments will make almost 500 additional rooms available for visitors to Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, the results of the hard work carried out by the GTB, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Culture and Sport and all our partners in the tourism industry both here and further afield, are clear and speak for themselves.

Mr Speaker, I turn to employment matters. Again, the relevant figures on employment numbers and the record low unemployment figures were given by the Chief Minister during his speech. These figures are truly outstanding and show the commitment of this Government towards assisting members of our community in finding gainful employment. We now have in place a highly successful mechanism that has taken so many out of unemployment and given them worthwhile and meaningful jobs.

I will not repeat the figures mentioned by the Chief Minister but it is worth looking at the quarterly average for the second quarter in 2011, just before we were elected into office, which stood at 433 and compare this with the quarterly average for the second quarter of this year, which has just finished at the end of June and which stands at an all-time record low for the quarter, of 45.

Picking out figures at random which suit one's argument might be considered dangerous. What is important, however, is the trend. The quarterly average for the first quarter in 2017 was 216, for the second quarter of 2017 114, for the third quarter of 2017 85, for the fourth quarter of 2017 62, for the first quarter of 2018 57, and for the second quarter of 2018, as I have mentioned, 45. The trend is clearly and significantly downward to low figures of Gibraltarian unemployment the likes of which we have never seen before.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe that this is purely anecdotal or accidental. Nor can I take the credit for all of this. It is a testament to the hard work of all of those at the Employment Service, very ably led by Debbie Garcia, who have made this possible, and I pay tribute to them all and thank them for what they are achieving. Ultimately, the beneficiaries are all of those who have been able to find a job and who are on a daily basis actively assisted in their pursuit of employment. The Department of Employment continues to enhance and improve the quality of its service by making interaction with Government more efficient, effective and easier.

The Employment Service has, since the beginning of this year, met with various representatives of the business community in order to obtain an understanding of current and future employment-related needs. Meetings included the Chamber of Commerce, the Gibraltar Bar Council, the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses, the Gibraltar Society of Accountants

and the Gibraltar Hindu Community. The Department has also recently contributed to a panel event hosted by the local branch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, where members had the opportunity to ask questions regarding employment matters and express any concerns.

The Careers Section has developed and enhanced its provision extensively over the past 18 months. Employment officers, employment co-ordinators and employment and careers counsellors work together in providing the best possible support and advice to service users. The teams, ably led by the Employment and Careers Manager, assess individual needs and circumstances, match skills, qualifications and experience to available vacancies and identify possible future career opportunities. At the same time, the Employment Service has developed a high level of interaction with local employers and established direct lines of communication, thus ensuring that any advice and guidance given to users reflects accurately the needs and requirements of local business and industry.

The Careers Section also provides dedicated support, delivering workshops in CV writing, cover letters and interview skills as well as allowing opportunity to explore all the options available in the job market and potential career progression. The Employment and Careers Counsellor continues to work closely with the Department of Education, offering support and guidance for school leavers as well as providing onsite counselling at our secondary schools once a week. Through this, the Department of Employment forms an integral part of the overall initiative in working towards bridging the gap between education and employment, supporting individuals in their decision-making processes at such important stages of their lives.

The Labour Inspectorate is tasked with the enforcement of employment laws. They operate in a diligent and effective manner, always demonstrating our continued commitment toward eradicating illegal labour and ensuring that all our businesses are compliant with employment regulations. A new strategy and programme of inspections is underway, covering all sectors of business and industry, thus ensuring that a level playing field is maintained.

Finally on employment, Mr Speaker, regarding health and safety at work, I am happy to inform the House that the Health and Safety Inspectorate records a non-fatality record of nearly eight years. Training in this line of work is essential, particularly as we now enjoy 59 active large construction projects all over Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service. 2017 has not only been a year of continued progress; it has also given the GFRS the opportunity to overcome and adapt to new challenges. As a whole, the GFRS responded to 1,519 operational calls, which includes actual fires, emergencies and false alarms. The Geographical Information System has been modified to enable live access to the Land Registry address system, which should improve the accuracy of deployed resources attending to emergency incidents.

As part of the GFRS fleet replacement programme, two new fire appliances – a rescue vehicle and a water firefighting vehicle – have been procured and now form part of the assets that can be deployed, with a combined value of approximately £250,000. These are now fully operational and proving to be a valuable acquisition. The second phase of this replacement programme is due to be completed towards the latter part of 2018 with another two appliances, both water firefighting vehicles. These are currently being manufactured and will have a combined value of approximately £300,000. The ultimate beneficiary of this replacement programme will of course be our community. In addition to the above, the Government has this year acquired a new auxiliary vehicle equipped with specialised rope rescue equipment that is used to support frontline operations.

During the month of December 2017, the GFRS played a major role in the planning of the GIBEX exercises in partnership with C3 – or Civil Contingencies – other blue light responders and partner agencies. The service is proactively involved in the development of multi-agency

1060 response plans for a variety of potential scenarios and is very much at the forefront of the consultative committees for promoting interoperability.

After 18 years of emergency medical care, on 22nd January 2018 the GFRS transferred its Emergency Ambulance Service to the Gibraltar Health Authority. The longstanding professional relationship between the GFRS and the GHA remains very solid. The GFRS will continue to make every effort to support GHA ambulance crews as and when required in the execution of their duties. In fact, in 2017, the Fire Control operators have mobilised the GHA Ambulance Service on 5,394 occasions.

1070 The GFRS forms a vital part of Gibraltar's future development as a modern and, more importantly, safe community with involvement in major projects including the pre-construction phase of the LNG facility. The main objective of this continued involvement is to familiarise themselves with potential risks in order to assist in the implementation and creation of emergency response plans. The primary aim of these plans is to mitigate the effects that an unlikely event could have on first responders, on our community and on the environment, by working in partnership with other agencies and emergency services.

1075 Mr Speaker, on the Airport Fire and Rescue Service (AFRS), considerable training and equipment upgrades have taken place during the last 12 months, with its firefighters having undertaken a number of courses in both operational and personal development areas. Earlier this year a large-scale training exercise was held involving air terminal staff and other non-emergency agencies who work at or support the terminal and its aviation operations. Numerous lessons were learnt and these have now been incorporated into the emergency plans. It was found to be an invaluable exercise for players who do not normally get the opportunity to practise but will nevertheless be depended upon to fulfil specific roles and functions in the event of an incident.

1085 Following from the tender awarded last year for the purchase of new firefighting assets, the first vehicle has been delivered to the AFRS on schedule. The next three vehicles have also now arrived. A period of competency and further specialist training for these new vehicles will commence to ensure that all the staff are fully conversant with the new technology and tactics that will be introduced with these vehicles. The vehicles replace the current fleet, which have become obsolete and not economically viable to maintain. These Rosenbauer Panthers will prove to be a significant upgrade and provide the airfield with a much enhanced firefighting capability and an assured element of resilience.

1090 Aviation firefighting is very much a compliance-led industry and the AFRS last year underwent their second UK Civil Aviation Authority audit, one which was undertaken jointly together with representatives from the Military Aviation Authority. Both these regulatory organisations gave the AFRS a clean bill of health with only relatively minor observations having been raised.

1095 The staff at the AFRS aspire with eagerness and enthusiasm to further their future development opportunities, both as individuals and collectively as an organisation. This ensures that the AFRS is well placed and fully prepared to respond to any demands that may be placed upon it either at the airfield or elsewhere in Gibraltar in support of the GFRS or any other emergency service.

1100 Mr Speaker, in March of this year the air terminal, as I have mentioned, exercised its role in the Airport Emergency Orders with the simulation of an aircraft declaring overheating to a wheel assembly, resulting in it becoming immobilised away from the aircraft stands. This required all agencies to respond and deal with the logistical implications of disembarking and returning passengers to the air terminal from a remote location on the airfield. Valuable lessons were identified.

1105 The air terminal took possession of another explosive trace detector to complement the other four already in service. These are used for the screening of passengers and hand luggage and are located at the different search areas. The extra unit will ensure that the Airport is able to remain compliant with current aviation security regulations and also provides the necessary resilience when any of the other units are being maintained.

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At present the tender for the procurement of X-ray scanning equipment for the screening of hold baggage equipment is in its final stages. The new equipment will bring Gibraltar International Airport in line with other UK airports, which must have this equipment installed during the course of this year. The new technology makes use of computer tomography, which is very similar to that used in hospitals for CT scans, and will bring with it the capability of a much higher detection rate of threats and restricted articles.

Mr Speaker, the Government last year commissioned the National Air Traffic Services to provide a costed plan for the introduction of a contingency air traffic control tower. As was proven by the rock fall earlier this year in March on to Devil's Tower Road, the loss of the main air traffic control tower will automatically lead to the closure of the Airport to civil aircraft. Luckily this year's event led to a closure of ATC for less than 24 hours. In different circumstances, such as the aftermath of a fire, the closure could last for an extended period. The Government has therefore allocated funds this year to provide for an independent contingency facility, which will sit on the other side of Winston Churchill Avenue from the existing ATC tower.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the Port Authority. Last September, Manuel Tirado was appointed acting Captain of the Port and Chief Executive of the Gibraltar Port Authority. Mr Tirado and his team at the GPA continually strive to maintain Gibraltar as a centre of maritime excellence along with its partners and stakeholders in the local maritime industry.

Positive growth trends reported at the last Budget have continued this year, as highlighted again by the Chief Minister during his speech. We do not, however, take the healthy growth figures for granted and we will continue to closely monitor our tariffs against competitors, global and regional trends, and of course any impact resulting from Brexit. Overall, I hope to see the positive trends continue during 2018.

To achieve this goal, the robust marketing programme which the Gibraltar Port Authority has been actively engaged in for the last 36 months will continue. This strategy has seen direct engagement with ship owners and operators around the world as well as attendance at a variety of bunkering and shipping events in places such as Rotterdam, Singapore, Athens, Amsterdam, London, Tenerife, Jamaica and Fort Lauderdale. These marketing trips have helped to maintain the high profile of the Port of Gibraltar. The Gibraltar Port Authority will continue attending conferences and exhibitions, profiling the Port in tandem with its stakeholders as this approach has proved to be very successful hitherto. One recent example of this has been the Posidonia Exhibition held in Athens, Greece. This event, one of the most prestigious in the shipping industry calendar, brought our key partners together to promote the Port and to showcase the Gibraltar team rather than just the Gibraltar Port Authority.

The Port has also recently become a member of the International Association of Ports and Harbours, an association which promotes the interest of ports worldwide through strong member relationships, collaboration and information sharing that help resolve common issues, advance sustainable practices and continually improve how ports serve the maritime industries.

Mr Speaker, I am also delighted to announce that the upgraded Vessel Traffic Services system (VTS) is in the final stages of going live, with staff currently undergoing training and the new purpose-built office handed over to the Gibraltar Port Authority. This particular project demonstrates the Government's commitment to investing to improve.

With regard to Port finances, revenue for last year surpassed the estimated Budget figure of £4½ million, with a total exceeding £6 million having been received. The Port Authority has been working hard on initiatives to further increase revenue streams. One of these initiatives involves the revision of the Marpol Scheme – which involves the discharge of waste from ships – and tariff structure which took effect from the beginning of this year, with all vessels visiting British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, with certain defined exceptions, being required to pay the revised tariff as part of their calling costs. The result of this review and implementation, apart from additional revenue for the Port, is that all vessels paying the fee are entitled to a free discharge allowance under the new scheme, so not only are we improving our revenue income but providing the service for vessels to discharge in Gibraltar up to a certain limit. This also ties in

1165 with Government's effort to improve the impact that shipping has on the environment. The Port Authority has also undertaken a review of the bunker fee structure in close consultation with its bunker operators and changes to the fee structures took effect as from 1st April of this year. It is anticipated that the increase in bunker fees and annual bunker licence fees will also improve our overall revenue figures for the 2018-19 financial year.

1170 Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the team at the Gibraltar Port Authority, ably led by acting Captain of the Port Manuel Tirado, who continually strive to maintain Gibraltar as a centre of maritime excellence along with its partners and stakeholders in the whole of the local maritime industry.

1175 Mr Speaker, with regard to the Gibraltar Maritime Association, once again the Gibraltar Ship Registry has retained its 'White List' status worldwide for the third consecutive year. This is reflected in the annual International Chamber of Shipping's Flag State Performance Table for 2017-18. Gibraltar also ranks high in its overall technical performance levels by the 'Paris MOU' and the 'Tokyo MOU' and is recognised as a quality register by the US Coastguard in their 'Qualship 21' system.

1180 The overall Gibraltar fleet, both ships and yachts, at the end of 2017 stood at 1,261 vessels, down by just two vessels when compared to the previous year. The uncertainties of Brexit have had an impact on new registrations in both the Yacht and Ship Registries. Once we have clarified whether Gibraltar, and in fact the UK Ship Registry, either retains or loses EU member state register status or the conditions upon which they currently operate as an EU member, we will be able to target our services in Europe accordingly. The GMA is preparing for either scenario and has the flexibility and expertise to adjust its services. For the foreseeable future, however, it is business as usual at the Gibraltar Registry.

1185 The GMA is continuously exploring new avenues to diversify its fleet. This year the GMA will be co-hosting a stand at the Monaco Yacht Show in 2018 with the Gibraltar Port Authority and the Gibraltar Tourist Board as well as the Gibraltar Yachting Association.

1190 In the last 12 months the GMA has provided training to a number of independent authorities, including the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Cayman Islands Registry, the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service and HM Customs. Furthermore, the GMA's seafarer section continued to issue a significant number of provisional and full-term certificates in 2017, with more than 3,600 completed during the calendar year. Our new seafarers' portal has been slightly delayed in order to finalise software issues, but the GMA is aiming to finalise the facility and introduce it during the course of this summer.

1195 The GMA is highly regarded for its technical expertise in maritime surveying. We are proud to be considered one of the best-performing ship registries in Europe.

1200 HM Government's strategy for the GMA over the next two years is to continue maintaining its high quality of service, increase the fleet size by bringing in business from new geographic areas and further develop its position as a training hub.

1205 Mr Speaker, on Civil Contingencies, the Office of Civil Contingencies continues to sit at the apex of Gibraltar's emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery. Under the strategic direction of Gibraltar's Contingency Council, the Office of Civil Contingencies has continued to work hand in glove with the GCC's Executive Committee and the four Joint Operating Working Groups responsible for the land, air, maritime and cyber environments. Central to Civil Contingencies' work is the requirement to ensure that there is an appropriate level of preparedness to enable an effective multi-agency response to emergencies which may have a significant impact on Gibraltar's community. This could range from natural disasters, large-scale accidents or indeed terror attacks. Preparing together, training together and responding effectively together is what multi-agency interoperability is all about. Throughout this past year, the Office of Civil Contingencies has worked closely with the emergency services and other agencies and I will now touch upon a number of areas of their work.

1210 A National Risk Register has been created and this is owned by the Gibraltar Contingency Council. The risk register sits at the heart of what drives our work and it is a robust, collectively

1215 understood assessment of the most significant risks in Gibraltar, based on how likely they are to
happen and what the impacts may be. This information is used to inform a range of risk-
management decisions, including the development of proportionate emergency plans and
resilience capabilities. Risk-based emergency plans underpin an agreed, clearly understood and
exercised set of arrangements to reduce, control or mitigate the effect of emergencies in both
1220 the response and recovery phases. Some of the plans that are currently being reviewed include
the Major Incident Response Plan; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Response
Framework; and the Liquid Natural Gas Plan.

We clearly recognise the importance of a high level of interoperability between all
emergency responders and supporting organisations as a means to ensure an inclusive,
1225 collaborative approach to integrated emergency management. Work continues under the Joint
Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) to ensure that our emergency services
develop their joint tactics, techniques and procedures. Plans are in place for the delivery of
further multi-agency training under the JESIP banner for all our emergency services during the
last quarter of this calendar year. This will also include training in response to a marauding
1230 terrorist firearms attack.

Significant investment has gone into Gibraltar's Geographic Information System. A bespoke
incident management platform is being developed which will improve situational awareness
across all agencies and at every level of command. Mapping tools will allow management
zones to be clearly identified, as will the ability to mark the deployment and disposition of
1235 assets and define cordons, control points and access routes. All of this will assist commanders
in gaining a better understanding of the incident they are faced with, and importantly it will
provide all levels of command with a single version of the reality.

The emergency services and other agencies are required to remain competent to fulfil their
roles in emergency preparedness, response and recovery. They must work together as a matter
1240 of routine, understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, underpinned by a systematic
and sequential approach to individual and collective training, rehearsal, validation, learning and
improvement. Similarly, there is a requirement to develop and assure resilience capabilities and
arrangements through an exercise programme that is risk based, inclusive of all relevant
organisations and recognises the cyclical process of learning and continuous development.
1245 Throughout last year a number of training events and exercises have been planned and
delivered to ensure that organisations are best prepared to respond to any emergency or major
incident.

Mr Speaker, turning briefly to international exchange of information, in addition to handling
day-to-day exchange of information on request in tax matters with TIEA-partner countries and
1250 negotiating further international agreements, including Gibraltar's first double-taxation
agreement, Gibraltar Finance has continued to lead on the implementation of the various
international tax compliance-related initiatives. Gibraltar Finance continues to handle the day-
to-day exchange of information in tax matters in accordance with the provisions of the bilateral
agreements signed with numerous TIEA-partner countries over the years and to co-ordinate all
1255 matters relating to the automatic exchange of financial account information under the Common
Reporting Standard in its various guises, including the relevant Directive and EU agreements
with European third countries.

Mr Speaker, on social security, the total amount of benefits paid out by the Department in
the financial year 2017-18 was £41,787,000. Despite Brexit, there are ongoing EU obligations
1260 which we have to meet. The Department is working closely towards the implementation of the
Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information in Gibraltar pursuant to EU regulations. The
primary aim is to set up an IT platform that will help social security institutions across 32
countries – the 28 EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland –
to exchange information through structured electronic documents using a standard
1265 administration process for social security co-ordination activity at EU level. The project will
deliver a central IT network to support the international exchanges, as well as a national

application that can be utilised by national institutions to create, send, receive and manage electronic messages. The project is progressing at a fast pace, going partially live in August 2018.

1270 The Department is also actively involved in the process of vigorously testing the new DSS application program that will cater for the administration and payment of all 17 social security benefits. This will bring the Department into the 21st century and enable it to provide a more efficient and effective service to the public in order to meet the ever-growing demands. The system will streamline the information currently held in manual records and will incorporate a sophisticated analytical tool that will be instrumental in producing statistical data, therefore
1275 expediting our estimates and analysing of future expenditure in relation to any given benefit.

Finally on social security, in March of this year the Social Security (Open Long Term Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations were passed, giving effect to the Budget measure announced by the Chief Minister last year. Social Insurance contributions will accrue for the benefit of the contributor starting at age 15 as opposed to age 20, as had hitherto been the law. This applies
1280 to persons who are born on or after 2nd July 1997.

Mr Speaker, to end my contribution I turn to the Gibraltar University. The University, as we all know, is a creature of statute. All of its powers, responsibilities and obligations are derived from the University of Gibraltar Act. Although much work, discussions and research were carried out in preparation for the Act and the inauguration of the University, we were always conscious
1285 of the fact that there was no higher education institution in any place like Gibraltar which we could simply emulate or whose charter, legislative framework or bye-laws we could just adopt or apply. Certainly there was much to learn, and which we did learn, from other higher education institutions around the world, but we had the opportunity of choosing those parts of frameworks or provisions which we felt best fitted Gibraltar and adapting those to our needs as well as including new provisions specifically designed for this particular University.
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We therefore created a University within a legislative framework which we felt suited the needs and aspirations of Gibraltar from a higher education perspective. It is a framework which expressly embraces the concepts of institutional autonomy and academic freedom whilst at the same time creating the structure to ensure that the Government's goals and aspirations when it established the University are met and that public funds are used in the manner for which they are provided.
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We knew from the outset that the University would have to develop, evolve and, if necessary, change over time having regard to the actual experience of an operating institution and to respond to any change in Gibraltar's needs and aspirations or even global trends in higher education. Now in its third year, there have been a number of recent developments at the University.
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There has been a change in management, with Prof. Catherine Bachleda appointed as acting Vice-Chancellor. She is also the University's Dean of Academic Quality and Professional Learning. Prior to joining the University, Prof. Bachleda was Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Al Akhawayn University – a not-for-profit, accredited, English-speaking, American-style university located in Morocco – where she was responsible for enhancing the academic quality and reputation of the university through faculty development, curriculum reviews, institutional accreditation and student academic and leadership development. Over the past 25 years Prof. Bachleda has worked in academia and/or industry in North Africa, the Middle East, the United Kingdom and Australia in a variety of management, quality and learning roles. I wish Prof. Bachleda well in her new role.
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Earlier this year the Government welcomed the appointments of Prof. Clive Finlayson MBE and Prof. Ian Peate OBE to the University's Board of Governors. Professors Finlayson and Peate are eminent academics who are internationally recognised as leaders in their fields. Prof. Clive Finlayson is the Director of the Gibraltar Museum and also has specific roles as Chief Scientist and Curator. Prof. Ian Peate is the Head of the School of Health Studies at the GHA and has worked in nurse education since 1989. The Government is extremely pleased with the
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appointment of Prof. Finlayson and Prof. Peate. They will enrich the Board of Governors and will no doubt make very valuable contributions to the University.

1320 Mr Speaker, another recent development is that the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority has
been appointed as regulator of the University. This is an important step in the development
of the University. In particular, the GRA was designated as the Gibraltar Authority for
Standards in Higher Education and the Gibraltar Higher Education Commission under the
University of Gibraltar Act 2015. Furthermore, the GRA was given powers to issue a
1325 Memorandum of Regulation to the University, to obtain information from the University and
to issue enforcement notices if the GRA considers that the University is failing to comply with
the 2015 Act or with requirements under the Memorandum of Regulation. Following its
appointment, the GRA duly issued the Memorandum of Regulation to the University. The
Memorandum of Regulation sets out how the quality and standards of education in the
1330 University shall be monitored; how compliance by the University with its functions, duties and
obligations under the Act shall be monitored; how the use by the University of its funds,
including any public funds provided to it, shall be monitored; how other aspects of the
University's performance are monitored; how the University is expected to demonstrate
effective governance and accountability; and how the University's autonomy and academic
1335 freedom are maintained.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to highlight the significant contribution made to the
University by Dr Darren Fa. Dr Fa is currently the Director of Research and Partnerships at the
University. He was truly instrumental in the establishment of the University. Whilst he was still
working at the Gibraltar Museum, Dr Fa was seconded to the Education Department to work
1340 with me on the University project. He accompanied me in travelling to numerous well-
established universities around the world. Dr Fa worked tirelessly on the project and it was his
recommendations that were accepted by the Government. He was the architect of the
framework and structure which the Government adopted for the University. I wish to thank
Dr Fa for his work, his dedication and his commitment to the University.

1345 Mr Speaker, I cannot end my contribution on the University without dealing with an issue
raised by Mr Clinton during his address. He argued that Government contribution to the
University was being tripled this year from £500,000 to £1.5 million. That is, in fact, incorrect.
Government contribution to the University is, in fact, being reduced this year. What Mr Clinton
has done is to look at head 17 in the recurrent section of last year's approved estimates, which
1350 mentions a contribution of £500,000 to the University, and he has looked at head 43 in the
current estimates, which mentions £1.5 million. He has then incorrectly jumped to the
conclusion that the Government contribution has been tripled this year. What Mr Clinton has
overlooked is that we have previously debated and passed in this Parliament a Supplementary
Appropriation Bill whereby £10 million – as I recall, it was passed unanimously by the whole of
1355 this Parliament (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) – was appropriated for the University. This
was to fund the capital costs relating to the establishment of the University and the first years of
operation. Last year, there was still £1.4 million left from the £10 million and this, together with
the £500,000 appropriated under head 17, amounted to a Government contribution last year of
£1.9 million, not £500,000. The £1.5 million in this year's estimates is therefore not a tripling of
1360 Government's contribution but a reduction of almost 25% of that contribution.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): How wrong he got it!

1365 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, he got it wrong (**A Member:** Terribly!) – and perhaps he might
be forgiven and perhaps he is thinking now, 'Well, how was I to know that there was still
£1.4 million left of the £10 million and that this was to be added to the £500,000?' – and
Mr Clinton seems to be acknowledging that as if to say 'how was he to know?' Unfortunately for
Mr Clinton, he cannot claim that, because the £1.4 million is, in fact, reflected in the book itself.
(**A Member:** Shame!)

1370 If Mr Clinton were to look at page 176 of this year's estimates, he would see under 'Improvement and Development Fund, Expenditure, Head 102 Projects' £1.4 million as a forecast outturn 2017-18, reflected in the estimate last year of 2017-18 as funding for the University of Gibraltar. So it is there, black upon white, in the book.

1375 **Hon. Chief Minister:** There it is: look at it.

Hon G H Licudi: It is also in last year's book, which is where Mr Clinton has found the figure of £500,000 as an estimate for 2017-18 under the Improvement and Development Fund of £1.4 million.

1380 In fact, if Mr Clinton were to add the actual figure – this is in last year's book – for 2015-16, the actual figure which is in this year's book of 2016-17 and the forecast outturn in this year's book of £1.5 million, he would find that this comes to exactly, to the pound, £10 million.

1385 So what Mr Clinton has done is use the wrong figure to reach the wrong conclusion, despite the right figures being in the very same book that he has been looking at. The difference from what he has argued and the reality of the true position is quite startling, from a suggestion by Mr Clinton of a 300% increase in Government contribution to the reality which is clear from the book itself and which is a reduction in contribution of almost 25%.

1390 Mr Speaker, this could be described as a schoolboy or rooky error by Mr Clinton, (*Laughter*) but it is not an error that we should expect from a qualified accountant, and particularly not from someone who prides himself in scrutinising and looking closely at books and figures, and especially by the person who is put forward by the Opposition as their expert in figures. (**Hon. A J Isola:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

1395 Mr Speaker, the whole of Mr Clinton's speech and arguments were centred on an analysis of figures, and based on the extent of the error he has made on the University we must conclude that we cannot believe a single word he said (*Laughter*) and we must reject the rest of his analysis. (*Interjections and banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank my staff and all those who work with me in the various Departments and organisations which form part of my ministerial responsibilities. I am truly grateful for their support and hard work during this last year.

1400 Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. –

1405 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am conscious that the House has been sitting now since 10 o'clock. I wonder whether the Speaker would agree –

Mr Speaker: I would prefer to carry on.

Hon. Chief Minister: I am thinking of you, more than anybody else.

1410

Mr Speaker: I am quite comfortable. I do not know how long the Hon. Mr Paul Balban is proposing to be, but we will go to a recess round about one.

Hon. Chief Minister: One or one thirty, I think.

1415

Mr Speaker: Okay, the Hon. Paul Balban.

1420 **Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, I will try to keep my contribution to the Budget debate this year as short and as to the point as reasonably possible while trying not to do any injustice to any of the ministerial portfolios that I am responsible for,

or the many projects that have been completed or embarked upon during the past financial year.

1425 Financial year 2017-18 has been a very busy year for the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning. The Traffic Plan has seen the need to work very closely with other Departments, including the Legislation Unit and IT and LD, who have been instrumental as many of the projects and schemes have required legislative changes and have depended on IT support.

Mr Speaker, if I want to grab people's attention, other than growing a beard there is only one thing I need mention and that is Zone 2. (*Laughter*) I have nothing more to say about my beard at the moment, but I will have plenty more to say about Zone 2 in a while.

1430 I will start my address by turning to my ministerial responsibilities for Technical Services. Technical Services Department continues to provide technical support to Government generally on a wide range of construction and engineering-related matters, as well as meeting their defined responsibilities of maintaining public infrastructure. These include coastal engineering works, cliff stabilisation schemes, works to retaining walls, together with the maintenance of
1435 highways and sewers.

The Department has also provided support on the implementation of several key projects related to the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan (STTPP) launched in March last year. Most notably this year with regard to coastal engineering works has been the repair of the existing rock revetment at Camp Bay – damaged during the heavy storms experienced this
1440 year – in time for the bathing season. Cliff stabilisation works have continued this year with the construction of the second phase of a new high-capacity rock catch fence on the east side slopes.

Mr Speaker, no one can forget the large rock fall that occurred at the Aerial Farm site this March. Technical Services was responsible for overseeing the event from the moment that the
1445 rocks fell until the road was successfully reopened. The Department continues being involved, working closely with geotechnical engineers to assess the probability of future rock falls at this location and elsewhere. Above all else, safety is the most important consideration when it comes to rock falls, regardless of the inconvenience that the rock fall itself may cause residents or the population at large.

1450 Mr Speaker, the Infrastructure Section of the Sewers Department has continued to maintain the public sewerage network as part of Government's commitment in this area. The relining works to the existing foul sewer network along Devil's Tower Road were completed last year and this has provided additional flow capacity in the area. Works were also completed at various locations to provide additional flood alleviation measures in areas which were severely affected
1455 following periods of heavy rain.

Mr Speaker, this coming year Technical Services will continue its major desilting and cleansing works to the main sewer along Rosia Road and southwards towards Camp Bay. Major desilting and relining works are also expected to be carried out to the main sewer running under Line
1460 Wall Road from the area of the City Hall to NatWest House, together with general gully cleansing, manhole repairs and the general upkeep of the public storm and sewerage networks throughout.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Infrastructure Section and on-call officers of the Technical Services Department for their hard work and commitment during those
1465 times in the past year where Gibraltar has suffered from storms and very heavy rain. It is thanks to the hard work and dedication of this team – while most of us are at home, sheltered – that the impact of these storms is not greater on both our sewerage and road networks.

Mr Speaker, the Garage and Workshop continues to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles.

1470 The Highways Section of Technical Services has continued to maintain and repair our roads and footpaths throughout the year. Roads especially have seen greater wear and tear this year as a direct result of ongoing development from both public and private sectors. Careful planning and thought is essential when considering what roads are resurfaced and when, because

1475 resurfacing is a very costly and disruptive exercise which is not long lasting near to areas of
construction, due to heavy goods vehicles carrying heavy loads. There is a fine line between
ensuring that our roads are kept in as good a condition as reasonably possible without investing
huge amounts of taxpayers' money on projects that would be unfortunately short lived as a
1480 result of construction. Last year, major resurfacing works were undertaken at St Bernard's Road,
part of Europa Road and along part of Rosia Road. This year, funding will be sought to see the
continuation of our resurfacing programme in areas least affected by construction and road
repairs will continue as necessary.

1485 Mr Speaker, pelican crossing lights and equipment continues to be replaced and maintained
working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. Countdown timers will continue to be
provided at other crossings this coming year. Last year, new pedestrian crossings were
introduced at Europa Road in the area of Shorthorn Estate, at Rosia Road by Bayview Terraces,
by Harbour Views Estate on Westside Road, and most recently a speed ramp/raised zebra
crossing was constructed at the entrance to Laguna Estate. These crossings are all aimed at
improving our existing pedestrian routes and making access safer for all, as recommended in the
STTPP.

1490 Road closures and diversions on the public highway are overseen by the Department to
ensure co-ordination and the minimisation of disruption and are an important part of the work
done by the Department, both for its own in-house works and for all other utility companies and
contractors.

1495 I am pleased to announce that the third phase of the project to address Main Street's paving
joints was completed last year and further maintenance works to the paving stones on Main
Street will be completed this year. I would like to thank all the staff at Technical Services, the
Garage and Workshop management and all technical grades within these departments for their
hard work this past year.

1500 Mr Speaker, I will now talk about Zone 2. There is much to say about parking in general. This
past 12 months has seen the STTPP pushing social boundaries, namely in the realm of parking
but generally in the context of change. Parking is but one of those matters that evokes very
strong and powerful feeling within the community, especially when the car has been an intrinsic
part of us for so very long. Car ownership will arguably become one of the most challenging
aspects to tackle in the future if we are to become an environmentally responsible society.

1505 Some parking initiatives have been very well received indeed, others have been less popular
or even outrightly criticised by others, but nonetheless Zone 2 has been topical to say the very
least, having featured colourfully within local conversation and in social media interactions.
Good, bad or indifferent, everyone has had something to say about Zone 2.

1510 However, it has been acknowledged by many, not least the Hon. Daniel Feetham when he
recently stated here in a preamble to a supplementary question, that 'residential parking
schemes are good but the reality is that this involves taking very difficult decisions'. The hon.
Member is absolutely right. A parking scheme does require many difficult decisions to be taken,
they are really hard work and one size does not fit all. To prod the beehive from a distance with
a very long stick and run away for fear of being stung, for fear of being unpopular with the
electorate or even for fear of receiving the most lemons, is not what this is all about, in my
1515 opinion. *(Laughter)* This is all about leading and doing what one thinks is the right thing to do,
and sometimes difficult and unpopular decisions need to be taken. This is what is expected from
a Government. This is about trying to improve our environment and our health for us and for
successive generations. It is about making life easier, even though it may not seem that way at
first, while trying to achieve certain common aims and benefits for us all. I trust that the
1520 community at large may understand and perhaps even embrace the very difficult work that is
being done as part of the STTPP.

Many other cities around the world are making considerable and sometimes very unpopular
changes to the way they go about their daily lives, trying to achieve more sustainable living by
encouraging alternative modes of travel and transport to achieve a reduction in pollution.

1525 Mr Speaker, it is already clear that the parking schemes are starting to show benefit. Residential parking schemes try to achieve better parking opportunities for residents while trying to accommodate visitors and commerce at appropriate times. Parking schemes also lead to the identification and the reduction of derelict and abandoned vehicles, which frees up even more parking space. In my mind, there are only two options: either do little, for the reasons I
1530 have already alluded to – that is, to avoid being unpopular; or try to tackle the matter in a way that is responsible, well structured, well timed and scientific in its approach.

For the avoidance of doubt, I need to stress yet again that all residential parking schemes are pilot and will therefore remain under scrutiny until the whole parking scheme is rolled out for all of Gibraltar. At this stage, when all of Gibraltar is zoned then the entire residential parking
1535 scheme will enter its final pilot phase as a whole. Because the effect of zoning cannot be determined at commencement, it is essential that each zone is allowed to settle, allowing time for stakeholders to provide feedback and designers to have the time to analyse its effects. Therefore, Zone 1 will not cease to be a pilot scheme simply because Zone 2 is implemented, nor will Zone 2 stop becoming pilot in nature simply because Zone 3 has been launched. This is the
1540 scientific and right way of doing things because no zone is an island, all zones are different and they react differently when there are more than one zone working in parallel.

Mr Speaker, it is not the intention of this Government, as surely it is not the intention of any other Government, to make life difficult for residents – on the contrary; but it is a well-known fact that we have a parking problem, or probably more accurately a vehicle ownership problem.
1545 Nevertheless, a brave scheme of this nature is seen by some as an ideal opportunity for political mischief and to try to score cheap but short-lived political points. Within just days of its launch, having hardly seen the light of day, the Opposition had already launched a scathing attack against Government, describing Zone 2 as ‘a sad indictment of the failure of the Government’s parking plan, and it should be scrapped’. Those were the words of the Hon. Trevor Hammond. I have not heard much more from the hon. Gentleman about Zone 2 lately – perhaps he is saving
1550 it all up for his Budget speech. In fact, I am not hearing so much about Zone 2 anymore. (**Hon. A J Isola:** Hear, hear.)

Mr Speaker, the STTPP I hope will be seen as a set of documents that will lay the foundations for the future regarding traffic, transport and planning. This is not my plan, nor is this the
1555 Government’s plan; this is *our* plan, Gibraltar’s plan, and it should be built upon by future Governments. The groundwork has now been done. Never before has a project of this nature or magnitude, scientific and solid in its grounding, been carried out in Gibraltar. The STTPP simply cannot be wrong. You may agree with certain parts of it, disagree with others, not all the concepts will be achievable, others may even be economically unviable, even socially
1560 unacceptable at this moment in time. Nevertheless, the STTPP should open our minds to the vast potential for change that exists for us. Add to it, contribute to it, be part of it.

Mr Speaker, let’s really think about this objectively. At the end of the day, the STTPP and indeed Zone 2 is not a political document or plan conceived in a smoky room by a political party
1565 some dark and rainy night for the mere sake of it. The STTPP, often lambasted politically by the GSD, was drafted by worldwide professionals in the field working closely and backed up by a working group comprising local technically qualified professional civil servants, the same civil servants who would have no doubt delivered this sort of plan to them had they been the party in Government – had they been brave enough. Yet one could almost sense the rubbing of hands in glee at the mere thought of the imminent political feeding frenzy about to be unleashed at the
1570 smell of fresh blood gushing out of what the Opposition thought was a lethal wound sustained to the Government’s parking plan, a plan which was in their opinion an ill-thought-out plan. At least that is what they hoped for.

Mr Speaker, just days after this political onslaught the picture had suddenly and dramatically changed in some of the areas of Zone 2 as residents started to receive their permits and began
1575 occupying their parking spaces. I have received *many* positive messages and letters from residents of Zone 2 who had been unable to use their vehicles for many years due to the massive

parking problem within this area. This has now changed. Nevertheless, I am not stating that Zone 2 is perfect by any means. There still need to be more tweaks and we still need to take on board further feedback, but it is a very good basis from which to start.

1580 There are many different yet conflicting needs within Zone 2, and these still need to be considered thoroughly. Yet that one solitary reference to political bravery across the floor of this house that day gave me certain peace. It confirmed to me why the politically fraught issue of parking had never been tackled by the Members opposite in the 16 years that they were in Government. I knew then that I had to be on the right track in as far as at least putting such a politically brave environmental plan to the test. There is no Planet B, as Emanuel Macron recently put it.

1585 Only last week I announced the launch of Zone 3, which will cover a large part of the South District. Work on this scheme is ongoing and will go live this autumn. Zone 3 will therefore be my next challenge; following that, no doubt eventually Zones 4, 5 and 6. The biggest and totally avoidable teething problem arising from a zone scheme comes as a result of the delay in permit applications, despite the many press releases, official notices and advertisements issued, and even with an amnesty period the initial weeks of a parking zone are not fully indicative of how it will perform a few weeks after its launch and even later still. I hope that Zone 3 residents will be quick to apply for permits to avoid the issues that arose with Zones 1 and 2. I hope that Zone 3 is allowed time to settle down before it can be properly assessed and before it is politically shot down. I know for a fact that many residents are waiting in positive anticipation for Zone 3 to start.

1595 Mr Speaker, there has never been such a major overhaul of Gibraltar's parking arrangements and the challenge is certainly an exciting and interesting one. It gives us a very valuable insight into social parking behaviour and the differing needs of different sectors of the community. Parking for commercial vehicles is now being considered as parking schemes start to displace these vehicles from within highly populated residential areas. There are already plans in place to address these issues.

1600 I wish to thank our in-house technical team, especially our transport planner, Technical Services and all the civil servants involved in its planning and mapping out on the ground who have worked very hard indeed to make this very difficult project a reality. Residential parking schemes are no mean feat. From every single parking space that needs to be counted, drawn up, each single street line painted and every single street sign placed, from the legislation that needs to be drafted to the zone booklets that need to be written, a vast amount of work goes into each zone. Thank you.

1610 Mr Speaker, pay and display is seen as a way of allowing non-residents and visitors to park for short periods of time throughout Gibraltar and regardless of zoning. To this end, a further pay and display parking was recently introduced along Bayside Road, allowing short-term parking of those frequenting the marinas and sports facilities. Another pay and display area will shortly be created along the western end of Waterport Road below Waterport Terraces, which is currently under construction and will see parking provision double for residents, visitors and surrounding businesses and includes an extra motorbike parking area. This year, 10 new pay and display machines have been installed providing card payment technology. These are linked via a network to head office, allowing for quick response times when machines develop a fault. Older pay and display machines that have now been operational for over six years will slowly be phased out, making way for these smarter systems.

1615 Mr Speaker, as part of the STTPP, Government introduced a new bicycle-sharing scheme known as Redibikes in March last year. Redibikes is currently under review to see how it may be improved further so that we may try to encourage greater use. Adjustments are being made to the pricing structure, allowing for a longer rental period and therefore encouraging greater family and leisure use. Less used bike stations will be relocated to new sites near the beaches and close to hotels to help increase seasonal and visitor usage.

As an avid cyclist, I am extremely keen to see others take up cycling as a means of transport. The bicycle is an ideal mode of personal transport, cheap to run, easy to park and it helps to contribute to a healthy lifestyle and a clean environment. A major review of our existing road network is currently underway in an attempt to provide both segregated and shared use of our road network for this purpose. The introduction of traditional bicycle lanes throughout all areas of Gibraltar, as seen in many other cities, will prove difficult, perhaps even impossible, due to the lack of space available to segregate vehicles from cyclists. However, all effort will be made to provide cycle lanes where reasonably possible in order to encourage this healthier alternative to other traditional forms of transport and improve cycling safety. We will shortly be introducing a dedicated cycle route through Main Street and Irish Town on a trial basis operating outside of the busy commercial shopping hours. This will be a first step in trying to provide a safe, segregated cycle lane that will hopefully increase user confidence, especially in the more vulnerable groups like families and young children. There should be no real reason why Gibraltar may not be able to adopt cycling as a means of transport, especially away from the hills to the south. Extra bicycle parking facilities will also be provided in the next financial year to supplement those already provided this past year. Cycling facilities will also be included as part of the new comprehensive schools project. My colleague the Hon. John Cortes is as keen as I am to see cycling become a means of sustainable transport in Gibraltar and indeed within our youth.

Finally on this subject, I was recently very pleased to be able to congratulate a small business that introduced a number of bicycles into their home food-delivery service fleet. This small business has taken on board the very essence of the STTPP and is leading by example. I hope that other businesses may start to consider using bicycles or indeed greener fuels such as electric power in the future for their commercial needs.

Mr Speaker, the introduction of speed cameras in April 2017 provided, for the first time, the ability to help control speed in order to make our roads safer. The initial pilot scheme saw vast improvements in speed reduction, but it has since been necessary to tackle the issue of speeding motorbikes in certain locations. Improvements have now been carried out to allow rear-facing images to be taken of offending vehicles whilst still providing clear images of offending drivers. Rear-facing slave cameras have now been introduced at the original sites at Devil's Tower Road, Europa Advance Road and Rosia Road. Additionally, two completely new sites have been commissioned along Waterport Road and Queensway, well known as speeding hotspots, only last week.

The benefits of speed reduction are well known and include improved road user and pedestrian safety together with a reduction in noise pollution and emissions. It is unfortunate that investment in expensive equipment is necessary to ensure the safety of road users as a result of a small number of inconsiderate, unsafe and disrespectful road users. Nevertheless, as I have said in the past, this Government is fully committed to eradicating speeding on our roads.

At this point I must thank all staff who deal with the issuing of permits, and the management of our Government parking facilities at Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd. I would also like to acknowledge all those involved in policing the many parking areas throughout Gibraltar, and those responsible for overseeing the back office for the speed camera project, including Gibraltar Parking Management Services Ltd and the RGP. Policing is a vital part of any residential parking scheme.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry is also well on track to deliver on other STTPP related projects which will be announced as they materialise.

I will now turn my attention to public transport. The Government continues to give the bus service significant importance in light of the need to provide a robust and reliable means of sustainable mass transit. The Man buses continue to play a key role in providing the backbone to Gibraltar's public transport infrastructure.

The real-time bus tracker service has been an enormous success and is now operational on all bus routes.

A new night bus service, the N1, was introduced in April this year for the Upper Town and it now joins the N8. Night buses now access all areas of Gibraltar on Friday and Saturday nights

1680 and also cover other nights when there are special events. The night bus service complements the campaign against drinking and driving.

The Upper Town buses continue providing an excellent much sought after service to passengers and residents of Mount Alvernia alike, especially as a result of the wheelchair-carrying capabilities.

1685 Last August saw the introduction of a number of request bus stops throughout Gibraltar. This change in policy now means that drivers no longer need to stop at each and every bus stop on route when there is clearly no passenger waiting to board or any passenger wishing to alight, therefore improving the frequency and timing of the service.

1690 Mr Speaker, our transport inspectors ensure that all users and undertakings fully abide and conform to all the legal requirements under the Transport Act and allow the public transport offering to improve.

1695 Government continues to work with the GTA in order to identify strategies to better the taxi service throughout Gibraltar. The modified City Service roster has shown signs of an improved City Service this year to the extent that complaints are slightly down from previous years. I wish to congratulate the GTA Committee for their recent acquisition of two accessible private hire vehicles which can accommodate wheelchair users. I applaud the GTA Committee, who try to continue to improve the service provided by its members.

1700 I wish to thank management and all the staff down at the Gibraltar Bus Company, especially those behind the steering wheel who work many hours, day and night, to provide an exceptional and free bus service to locals in Gibraltar. I would also like to thank our team of transport inspectors who oversee and police all matters relating to transport in Gibraltar.

1705 Mr Speaker, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department have now agreed the introduction of the tachograph system with the UK Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). The necessary administrative procedures have now been agreed by way of a memorandum of understanding and service level agreement with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority in the UK, the DVLA, who shall source tachograph cards for local drivers, operators and our local enforcement bodies.

1710 Mr Speaker, after transposing EC Directive 2009/40/EC, changes for motor vehicles undergoing their periodic roadworthiness tests, or MOTs, became effective as of 20th May 2018. These new rules and standards implemented by the European Commission are set out as an objective by the European Union and aim to achieve zero fatalities throughout our road transport network by the year 2050. Among other things, the new test regime will now categorise faults as either minor, major or dangerous. Motor vehicles found to have minor defects that have no significant effect on the safety of the vehicle or impact on the environment may be issued a roadworthiness certificate, but these will be reflected on the certificate with relevant advisory notes in respect of each of these minor faults. However, motor vehicles that have major or dangerous defects will automatically fail the test and shall not obtain a roadworthiness certificate. Testing will be more stringent with regard to the limit on smoke emissions, particularly in diesel-propelled vehicles known to cause more toxic emissions. Diesel particulate filters will now also be rigorously checked and vehicles found lacking these components during examination will be failed.

1715 Mr Speaker, in anticipation of what could become an electric revolution in the future, electric charging points were recently commissioned within the public parking area at Mid-Town car park. The first on-street electrical car charging point is expected to become a reality later on this year and is consistent with both the STTPP and the Department of the Environment's Thinking Green Environment Awareness campaign. These charging stations will complement the existing private sector initiatives around Gibraltar, which must be congratulated for embracing electrical car charging technology and who are also leading by example.

1720 Yesterday, the Chief Minister also announced Budget measures in support of those who install mechanisms for the charging of electric vehicles in their home or in a parking space or

garage owned by them, and attractive further cashback incentives for electric cars and electric-assisted bicycles without a throttle where the engine cuts off at speeds of 25km per hour.

1735 Mr Speaker, the motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course (CBT) continues to be a tremendous success with around 400 new riders having passed over the last year. This initiative has been a massive step forward in promoting safety on our roads.

1740 Data sharing with the European Register of Road Transport Undertakings, known as ERRU, via the Driver and Vehicle Services Agency (DVSA) has allowed a better exchange of information between member states. The European Car and Driving Licence Information System, known as EUCARIS, is an example of an information exchange service used by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department. The service provides EU member states with the facility to share and obtain car registration and driving licence information. Furthermore, the Department has now implemented the Cross-Border Enforcement Directive (CBE). This system provides cross-border access to vehicle registration information so that enforcement bodies may identify non-resident offenders. The Directive aims to facilitate the cross-border exchange of information on road-

1745 safety related traffic offences with all EU member states, thereby facilitating enforcement.

I wish to thank all the staff within the Department down at the MOT Centre, the vital counter and back office staff, vehicle testers, vehicle examiners and senior management, and especially the Chief Examiner, for their very hard work.

1750 Finally, I now turn my attention to my responsibilities for town planning and building control. The Department continues to deal with large numbers of applications seeking planning permission and building control approval. In 2017 there were a total of 612 applications. Some of these were large, complex applications involving assessment of environmental impacts through the EIA process, involving extensive discussions with applicants to try and achieve high standards of design and construction. Building Control issued approximately 250 certificates of fitness or completion during the period, which is slightly up on last year. In 2017, 56 planning,

1755 building and demolition applications were received by Government and MoD seeking advice and guidance, which are then taken into account by the Government or MoD in finalising their plans.

In 2017, 14 DPC meetings were held in public. I am pleased to say that many people have participated in the democratic process to address the Commission at these meetings either in support of or in objection to specific applications. Additionally, the DPC's subcommittee also meets regularly to determine minor applications, which greatly helps to speed up the decision-making process for more minor applications. In 2017, there were 35 such meetings of the subcommittee. Agendas and minutes of DPC meetings continue to be made available online, together with application forms and planning guidance, ensuring that the planning process remains open and transparent and facilitating ease of access to relevant planning information and documentation.

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The e-planning service continues to operate successfully, allowing easy access to application details for the public and providing a platform through which applicants can submit their applications online. Town Planning staff have continued to develop the e-planning system throughout 2017. One of the more significant improvements that has been developed this year is the integration of the Department's geographical information system into the e-planning system, allowing easier staff access to geographical information when assessing applications. Other development work undertaken this year has included the introduction of a tool to allow staff to undertake high-level shadow analysis of proposed buildings, assisting staff when considering the potential impacts of new development proposals.

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Mr Speaker, I was pleased to recently announce part R of the Building Regulations in conjunction with my colleague the Hon. Samantha Sacramento. Building Control staff have been working very hard to ensure that this vital piece of legislation would become a reality for the well-being of all sectors of society regardless of their needs. Part R provides the necessary framework to provide and improve access and use of buildings by not just physically disabled people but also the elderly and those with hearing and visual impairments.

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1785 Building Control staff are currently reviewing the Building Rules made under the Public Health Act with a view to updating all 11 remaining parts, bringing them in line with the UK and European standards, ensuring that standards are maintained and best practices achieved. This will ensure the health and safety of both the user and occupiers of the built environment.

The Tax Relief on Facade Improvements Scheme continues to encourage property owners to improve the appearance of their buildings. There were 10 applications under this scheme in 2017.

1790 My Department continues to work closely with my colleague the Hon. John Cortes, who leads on urban renewal. Our focus continues to be on identifying specific buildings in need of refurbishment and encouraging owners to undertake improvement works in order to maximise the use of these properties, thereby bringing new life back into these urban areas. The Department has also been closely involved with other Government Departments and agencies in the implementation of the street art initiative, which aims to encourage urban regeneration by
1795 the use of street art in selected locations.

1800 Mr Speaker, finally, I would like to thank all the team at Town Planning and Building Control. I would also like to thank all my personal ministerial staff, whom I share most of my working day with, for all their help, support and very hard work during the past year and always. I also wish to thank all parliamentary staff for their hard work and assistance given to me throughout the year.

Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker: This is a convenient time to recess until three this afternoon, when I will call upon the Hon. Trevor Hammond to address the House. The House will recess until three.

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The House recessed at 12.47 p.m.