



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10.01 a.m. – 12.47 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 11th June 2019

Contents

Appropriation Bill 2019 – For Second Reading – Debate continued	2
<i>The House adjourned at 12.47 p.m.</i>	36

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 10.01 a.m.

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

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

Appropriation Bill 2019 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Clerk: Tuesday, 11th June 2019 – Meeting of Parliament.

Bills for First and Second Reading. We remain on the Second Reading of the Appropriation
5 Bill 2019.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes.

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

I rise for my eighth Budget speech conscious that being the last one in the electoral cycle it could conceivably be my last. While resisting the temptation to summarise the accomplishments of this latest part of my life's journey, I must however comment very briefly on how different Gibraltar is today from an environmental perspective. In 2011, all you could recycle here was glass. There was virtually no climate change awareness, no possibility of a Parliament even debating let alone passing a motion on the climate emergency. There was heavy pollution from the old diesel power stations, with frequent power cuts due to insufficient generating capacity. There were hundreds fewer trees, the Barbary partridge was going extinct and there was no Commonwealth Park.

10 Mr Speaker, 2018-19 was an extremely busy year for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change. It was a challenging year. An immense amount of time and work were devoted to environmental planning and contingency in the context of Brexit. As a result, two officers of the Department have been working almost exclusively on Brexit, with support from many others. This is quite apart from my own involvement in reviewing documents and chairing the joint working group of UK and Gibraltar environment officials both here and in
15 London, a process not yet concluded. This has affected progress in other areas but we have nevertheless been able to push through on key issues and embark on new initiatives. I am most grateful to my extended Brexit team, which includes people from other Departments, agencies and beyond, for their efforts and determination. As a result, we are ready for Brexit if it unfortunately happens, and will ensure, as I have stated before, that we continue to use EU
20 environmental targets as our minimum standards and without any decrease in our quality of life. Among the work that has suffered as a consequence of this is our 25-year environment plan, but I am confident this will be finally launched in September.

25 As I stated during the climate emergency debate, we have a real chance in Gibraltar to achieve carbon neutrality and our intention is indeed to achieve this. Despite the tiny impact this will have on a global scale, we can but do what we can and we can certainly be an example to others. Much has been done already. Emissions from power generation have reduced by 21%

since 2013; and LNG, which produces 25% less carbon than diesel, will continue to produce a further drop. Green procurement, solar panels for both hot water and energy generation, an unprecedented amount of environmental legislation and more trees are other examples.
30 Existing commitments by Government, as announced by the Chief Minister last year, also include no vehicles fully fuelled by petrol to be registered by 2030 and only electric vehicles by 2035.

The climate emergency declaration of Parliament commits us to encourage other countries and the region to take climate action. This is how we can lead by example, offering solutions to
35 other communities in how this can be achieved. In this and other contexts Gibraltar continues to work hard with our colleagues in the Overseas Territories and will extend this work further.

In relation to the Territories and thanks to intense lobbying for a number of years, Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom finally agreed last year to allow Overseas Territories to form a part of the UK delegation to international environmental conventions and
40 conferences of parties. This happened for the first time ever at the 24th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, otherwise known as the Paris Agreement, held in Poland in December. The Overseas Territories delegation was composed of Dr Kedrick Pickering, former Deputy Premier of the BVI, and our own Liesl Mesilio as his technical support. The level of exposure and possibilities presented to the team through this
45 high-level access was unprecedented and was achieved largely by Gibraltar's insistence on the importance of Overseas Territories' representation. Indeed, I continue to work with the UK to ensure Gibraltar's inclusion in international agreements, including the Paris Agreement, the Bern Convention, the Barcelona Convention and the extension of the Intercontinental Biosphere Reserve of the Mediterranean to include Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, my scientific team continues to work in monitoring environmental variables and manages many aspects of our natural environment. They are involved in a huge range of activities, both internally and in organising activities and initiatives such as World Environment
50 Day and the forthcoming Island Games associated environmental conference.

The administration section of the Department, among many other duties, manages the contracts that relate, for example, to planted areas. Together with the now fully integrated
55 Heritage and Upper Rock and Beaches Divisions and the Cleansing Section, they are a formidable force for the environment.

We have continued to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders in the public and private sectors, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses, the
60 University of Gibraltar and of course our active environmental NGOs, GONHS, ESG, the Nautilus Project, Sustainable Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Heritage Trust.

This year has seen unprecedented public interest in the environment, in particular sustainability and climate change. New groups have been formed and we have seen the extension to Gibraltar of the School Strike 4 Climate, spearheaded by Iona Sacarello and other
65 very committed students from Westside School, whom I have met on at least four separate occasions. I have nothing but admiration for these young people – and indeed all those who are now worried about the sustainability of our way of life from excessive use of polluting motor vehicles to consuming too much meat – for standing out and being counted. I thank them and all the NGOs for their invaluable contribution towards Gibraltar's environment and heritage.

I have one message for our environmental NGOs, one which I think I am entitled to send given the 35 years that I spent in that movement. I am very happy to see them coming forward with campaigns and petitions to rally support for our common cause, but the battlefield has
70 changed since I was an environmental activist – although some remind me, and say that I still am, of course. The enemy is no longer the same; it is no longer an unsympathetic Government. The person you have to convince now is not the Minister for the Environment, nor indeed the Chief Minister, nor indeed the Cabinet. You are pushing against an open door. You are preaching to the converted. Indeed, if they will allow me, in some cases they are preaching to someone
75 who helped convert some of them. The focus now has to be directed elsewhere: to us working

80 together to gain support from the community, from individuals and corporations public and private, to make those who make commercial decisions that can have wide effect make the right ones and make them in a different way to how they would have done before.

My work with the various environmental and other committees continues, and I would like to thank all those many individuals who sit on committees, councils and boards that I name or chair, for their significant and voluntary contribution to the running of Gibraltar.

85 This Government leads in environmental governance, something which is recognised beyond our shores and something of which we can be justly proud. Our bold legislative vision on the environment has resulted in letters from international bodies congratulating us for our environmental foresight. As an example, our declaration of a climate emergency resulted, in a matter of hours, in nearly 2,000 likes on Twitter.

90 Mr Speaker, this Government's term in office has seen an unprecedented level of environmental legislation. We have so far published 173 pieces of legislation which have all led to positive environmental change – in 2019 alone adding ivory, balloons, animal welfare, pet sales, circus animals, dolphinaria, plastics and climate change to the list. This indeed should not come as a surprise, as Gibraltar's first significant environmental legislation came into effect during the GSLP's 1988 term and we have not finished yet.

95 I have been working on formalising the responsibilities of the Commissioner for Sustainable Development and to ensure we undertake action in pursuit of the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Gibraltar. The Commissioner for Sustainable Development and Future Generations will have a duty to promote, assist and advise on progress made by public Departments and agencies towards a more sustainable future. Over the last year the Commissioner, Daniella Tilbury, has been working to build capability in sustainable development across the community. I am committed to driving change for sustainability across the public service, business and the local community and will, with the Commissioner's assistance, be developing policies to achieve this, such as for example a sustainable catering policy. The Commissioner has also attended various high-level meetings, including expert committees hosted by the United Nations Economic Council for Europe and this representation enables Gibraltar's interests to be visible in international dialogues and fora.

100 Mr Speaker, I am delighted that there has never before been so much collaboration between Environment and Education, taking environmental education to another level. The Environment Department is actively supporting schools in project-based learning in cycles that form a platform for interdisciplinary teaching and learning, which has effectively embedded key environmental issues into the very core of the 21st-century curriculum. A key example of project-based learning is the incorporation of outdoor experiences such as visits to local sites or businesses. This internationally recognised approach empowers students with the skills and knowledge they require not only for the preservation, protection and improvement of Gibraltar's local environment but in the pursuit of global environmental sustainability. The framework of co-operation includes the Sustainable Schools Core Committee, which also includes the University the Sustainable Schools Working Party, with representatives from all schools; and the Sustainable School Group, which includes teachers, ancillary staff and pupils. Each school also has an eco-committee led by the students. ClimACT is an EU Interreg project which aims to support the transition to a low-carbon economy in schools. The University of Gibraltar, in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Environment, spearheads this project.

105 Mr Speaker, the tender for the provision of cleaning services and upkeep of public areas was awarded last year to Britannia Management, keeping the Government's commitment to fully protecting the workers. The new contract is considerably more extensive in the number of areas to be cleaned as well as the frequency of the cleaning. The cleanliness of our public areas has improved and will improve further as the proactive collaboration between the Department and the contractor identifies areas where further improvements can be made. The Department's litter wardens continue to work to stop fly tipping and littering. There are approximately 600

litterbins around Gibraltar, so there is no excuse for littering. As part of our strategy we will be rolling out further litter cameras this year and will be adding another warden to the section. We will also be providing recycling bins in the city centre, including Main Street. The Litter Committee continues to meet and advise on litter management, with many achievements that do not always get to the public eye but which are significant.

135

Moving on to waste management, overall recycling figures have seen a slight decrease in the order of 2% from last year. Considering that the figure had been increasing year on year since 2012, this is not a cause for concern. Part of the reason is the trend to reduce and reuse more, so the third 'R' – Recycle – is expected to drop, which is actually encouraging. We will therefore be embarking on an extensive waste reduction and recycling awareness campaign this year in addition to progressing the new waste facility at Europa Advance Road, to which we continue to be committed and which will ensure maximum separation of waste and increase our recycling ability.

140

Mr Speaker, I am pleased that despite the complexities in the discussions and design referred to yesterday by the Chief Minister we are progressing on the preparatory work on the new sewage treatment plant which we still expect to be completed in 2020.

145

It is now well known that plastic in the wrong place and at the wrong time is a scourge on the planet, particularly the oceans. Surrounded as we are by sea, we have to take action and action on this will have a direct benefit on our waters and the life within them. As the Chief Minister has already announced, Gibraltar will be taking steps in implementing an importation ban with regard to plastic bags and other single-use plastic. Whilst certain exemptions will be created to ensure hygiene and safety standards are met, we will prohibit the importation of plastic bags with a thickness of 100gsm or less. In addition, we are taking wider measures to regulate the importation of single-use plastic. The regulations will restrict and prohibit the importation of a wide range of such plastic products into Gibraltar, to reduce litter on land and sea. Most PLA products – the wrongly named 'biodegradable plastics' – are currently produced as single-use items and are therefore also captured.

150

155

Mr Speaker, I return to the subject of climate change. Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting economies and affecting lives and costing people and communities, and will do so even more in future. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, weather events are becoming more extreme and greenhouse gas emissions are now at their highest levels in history. Climate change requires immediate and ambitious action to prevent the worst effects it can have on people and wildlife. This was reflected in this Parliament's unanimous declaration of a climate emergency, being the second Parliament in the world to do this, coming just a week after a similar motion in the Mother of Parliaments. The climate emergency motion sets out ambitious targets, even more ambitious than those set in the Climate Change Bill soon to come before this House, which provides the legal framework and the binding obligation to this and future Governments to deal urgently with climate change. Together with our 25-year plan it formalises how Gibraltar will tackle its responsibilities in years to come.

160

165

170

Declaring a climate emergency is only the first step: action is required. We are working hard to ensure that this happens. Both the motion and the Bill require strict, accountable reporting. The Department of Environment and Climate Change has already analysed in detail what challenges these represent and what action needs to be taken. It will not be easy but it is achievable. A detailed analysis and plan will be published in the coming months. I have seen the initial work done and I am confident and excited. Based on these recommendations, we will identify Budget implications, but I would like to remind the House that work on climate change is progressing in many different Departments and authorities as part of their core work and so not separately identified by head. And so, work in the GEA, AquaGib, GSLA and in relation to many Government projects, not least the schools and the sports facilities, is making provision for improvements that will positively impact on our climate change responsibilities. In addition, relevant projects such as solar installations are being funded by private investment on power

175

180

purchase agreements. However, progress will not need to wait. The Government's own tender project for the phased rollout of rooftop photovoltaic systems across Government buildings, under a power purchase agreement, is now well under way with successful tenderers informed last week. This project is envisaged to produce approximately 3.6MW of solar power. This is in additional to the 3MW solar plant, the first phase of which is already producing power, and the solar panels at the sports complexes, which are expected to generate approximately 800kW of solar power. The installed capacity of solar at the end of 2019 will therefore be over 7 MW. At average production, this is 30% of power consumption, so I am confident that our 2020 target of 20% overall is within reach.

The amendment to the Electricity Act approved by this House recently will encourage private consumers to micro-generate and get credit when feeding into the network. Other projects include the deployment of onshore wind power at two sites. A call for expressions of interest will be published for this project. The Department is also working with the University of Highlands and Islands in Scotland to explore the tidal resource in BGTW and to assist us in expanding our renewable energy portfolio.

Mr Speaker, the LNG plant is close to being fully commissioned, setting us well on the path towards a lower-carbon economy as diesel-powered electricity generation becomes a thing of the past. Already much of our electricity comes from LNG, and Waterport power station is often silent. Work on decommissioning will be done this year at the same time as the former south district power stations and most of the temporary generators are dismantled. A steering committee made up of management and staff with Unite the Union representation is embarked on working together to ensure a smooth transition when GEA takes over the new plant a year after final commissioning. I have to thank all at GEA, including its board, for driving the project and adapting to the change that we are seeing.

Our continuing greenhouse gas inventory programme, as part of our commitments under the Global Covenant of Mayors, helps us monitor and govern our total manageable emissions more effectively. The latest results see that Gibraltar's overall carbon emissions were 10% lower in 2017 than in 2015 and 8% lower than in 2016. Emissions from electricity generation are down 21% from 2013 and, significantly, down 15% since 2016. Emissions from waste are down by 13% since 2015 and 10% since 2016. We now have to tackle other emissions with the same energy as we have tackled power generation.

On air quality, I am of course aware of criticism as to our air quality that we see in social media in particular, but the Chief Minister yesterday revealed very good news on this subject. We have to recognise that we live in a concentrated urban area with more traffic than we would like to have, and that we have a great deal of shipping calling at Gibraltar and even more passing through the Strait and impacting on our air, even though it has no connection to Gibraltar other than the geographical. We also have some industrial activity, which includes Gibdock. And so there are still clearly improvements on which we have to work and on which we are working hard, but we have a duty to acknowledge real progress and there is good news. I can report that last year, 2018, not only were recorded nitrogen dioxide levels EU compliant for the first time ever in all our monitoring stations but also that, for the first time since air monitoring started in Gibraltar 14 years ago, levels of all pollutants, including all gases and particles monitored, were within EU required levels. This is hugely significant. It shows that our efforts are working and gives me great confidence as to our being able to tackle the remaining problems too. Air quality of course is due to improve further when we change fully to LNG and as the solar power increases.

In relation to traffic, Mr Speaker, the STTPP is already making inroads and my Department will this year be working more closely than ever with that of my colleague Paul Balban to analyse the impact of traffic on air quality and assist and support him and his Department in taking further steps to reduce this. This will include rolling out electric car charging points to encourage their use in certain areas, in addition to measures, for example, in private developments announced yesterday by the Chief Minister. Awareness of air quality issues in the community is

235 at its highest. The Environmental Agency's air quality website continues to provide up-to-date
hourly measurements of pollutants. These are reported to the public on a user-friendly website,
which increases transparency and demonstrates the work and progress being made. As
promised, last year we introduced three new air quality monitors – one at Europort, another at
Gibdock and another which was used to measure occupational exposure at the Frontier and is
240 now measuring air quality in Catalan Bay in response to a request from the Village. The data will
be made publicly available. I am happy to say that levels detected so far are all within EU
acceptable ranges, but most important the results are helping us understand the issues better so
that we will be better able to improve the quality of the air that we breathe, which is so
important to our health. Given the success in improving air quality in the south, the time has
245 now come to move the air monitoring system at Witham's Road to the north, and we are
currently considering the best location. I must stress my full support for the work that has been
done by my colleague Paul Balban in implementing the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and
Parking Plan and congratulate him on it and on the courage he has shown in improving traffic
and the environment. The plan implements policies that reduce traffic and speed as well as
250 encouraging the use of alternative methods of transport.

Mr Speaker, I announced last week during World Environment Day that I will be creating an
Air Quality Commission. The Commission will bring together key stakeholders in a common
endeavour to understand the facts about air quality in Gibraltar. It will create a forum for sharing
concerns and for proposing solutions. By operating transparently, it will help public trust in the
255 evidence and the collective actions taken as a result. I will be announcing further details on this
in the coming weeks.

Mr Speaker, it surely is ironic that the largest contributor to improving air quality and
reducing our carbon footprint has been and is the Gibraltar Electricity Authority, which I chair.
The last 12 months have again seen a huge effort going into the commissioning of the new
260 power station project, the associated new high-voltage distribution centres' infrastructure, the
new high-voltage cabling network and the adjacent LNG facility. As the commissioning phase
nears completion, to date about 14 million units – kilowatt hours – consumed in Gibraltar have
come from the new North Mole power station. The total installed generating capacity at the end
of the year continues to be 76.98 MW, well in excess of our maximum demand, so we are very
265 well provided. As mentioned earlier, carbon emissions this year saw a decrease of nearly 6%,
from 152,287 tonnes in 2017 to 147,992 tonnes in 2018, a figure that will see a further drop over
the next 12 months. The Authority continues to upgrade and expand the network and
Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system used to monitor generation and distribution,
thus providing a better and faster response when dealing with now extremely rare power
270 outage scenarios. Improvements to the public lighting network continue by replacing existing
street lights with LED and other low-energy lanterns, thus further reducing overall consumption.
The GEA is also working with the Port Authority in order to encourage onshore power being
made available to ships at berth.

Moving to water, during the past year AquaGib has maintained and improved on its levels of
275 service and performance indicators in respect of the provision of potable and seawater supply
and sewerage services. In order to achieve this level of service it has undertaken an expenditure
of £12,474,000. AquaGib has continued to invest in capital projects as part of its asset
replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving the water infrastructure assets in
Gibraltar. The current approved investment plan is set at £3.2 million over the five-year period
280 to 31st March 2020. During this last period a total of £645,733 was spent on capital projects,
which included the replacement of potable and seawater mains, and the replacement of
customers' water meters, meter cupboards and meter manifolds, and other work. In addition to
this, AquaGib has provided support to Government on the delivery of new infrastructure for
many projects, including the commencement of a new sewage pumping station at Varyl Begg
285 estate, new mains for the comprehensive schools at the Notre Dame sites, new mains to
facilitate the building of the Lathbury and Europa Point sports facilities, new mains along

Dockyard Road and new sewage pumping stations at Wellington Front and No. 4 Dock. During the period, AquaGib has continued with a long-term project to further develop the potable and saltwater delivery from the Waterworks reservoirs to the Westside area. This project is expected to be completed within the next financial year. Importantly, replacement of old equipment at its reverse osmosis plants will significantly reduce the energy consumed in water production.

Mr Speaker, from water to beaches. We have this year improved the training and supervision of our lifeguards to make our beaches safer. Lifeguard induction now includes first aid, dealing with the public, obligations under the Seashore Rules and the Seaside Pleasure Boat Rules, beach litter, marine pollution, wildlife strandings and, most importantly, training in disability. This year considerable planning and logistical support has been added in order to improve the lifeguarding standards and this includes round-the-clock supervision of the beach service in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all beach users.

As is now expected, the winter and spring storms again caused considerable damage at our beaches. We have had continuous storm damage of varying severity over the past 12 years. As a result, we work with the Technical Services Department on an extensive works programme to resolve this in time for the summer.

A complete overhaul of the Camp Bay public toilet and shower facilities will be carried out this year and solar panels will be installed to provide hot water at the facilities, and this will be mirrored at the other beaches. We have also, of course, to celebrate the opening up of Nuffield Pool to the community with the splendid new seafront promenade.

Mr Speaker, marine surveillance and research have become one of the Department's key areas of research with both the technical section and the Environmental Protection and Research Unit actively engaging in research, management and surveillance, and now include certified marine mammal medics. The Department's scientific dive team has trained up four further officers. The team continues to be instrumental in marine monitoring programmes. They also carry out the regular servicing and maintenance to the underwater camera system, increasingly popular here and abroad, giving its worldwide viewers an insight into the high biodiversity within BGTW and our 'No Take' Marine Conservation Zone. The Marine Conservation Zone, located at Seven Sisters, is proving to be a success with notable fish species such as grouper and pointed nose groupers being spotted by users of the underwater camera. Indeed, as the UK government increasingly indicates its support for marine conservation, its Blue Belt, with declaration of marine conservation zones and looks at the management therein, I will remind them of our own marine protection laws – all the fruit of GSLP or GSLP-Liberal Governments – and of the need to support our laws and the protection of the rich biodiversity of BGTW. The Department continues to liaise closely with local NGOs, clubs, associations and marine users through the Neptunian Network, which was set up in 2017, organising marine awareness campaigns and coastal and subtidal clean ups, with further outreaches planned.

Mr Speaker, the Environmental Protection and Research Unit is going from strength to strength. Over the past year they have engaged with 241 fishing vessels, carried out 113 land patrols, 56 dedicated dog patrols, 38 wildlife rescues, three cetacean surveys, 15 callouts and five oil spill checks.

With the uncertainty of Brexit, the Environmental Agency have been working closely with the Department on issues such as contingency planning on food imports and exports of waste in the event of a no-deal scenario.

The Agency monitors the quality of our bathing waters. Last year, we saw a further improvement to the water quality classification of our beaches. Four of Gibraltar's beaches are now classed as excellent, with one classed as good. These are the best classifications that our beaches have ever achieved. When assessing Western Beach using the four-year average as stipulated in the EU directive, it is still classed as poor; however, based on 2018 results, Western Beach is classed as sufficient and therefore improving. However, although water quality there is better, clearly there are still issues that our neighbours need to address and it also shows how essential the bathing water monitoring programme is.

340 The Agency has also contributed significantly to the dogs anti-fouling campaign. Since the inception of the DNA testing scheme, 230 samples have been submitted with 22 fixed penalty notices issued to offenders and seven issued to a dog owner for not being licensed. As the programme continues and awareness increases, irresponsible dog owners find new places to take their dogs. We continue to persevere with the aim of further reducing this problem. I take this opportunity to assure responsible dog owners of my support, of our efforts to restore their good name, that we are looking to tackling the problem of dog urine and to confirm that we will be creating a dog park near the Nuffield Pool.

345 The Agency is the competent authority for COMAH and has had a major input throughout the design and construction phase in ensuring, along with the UK based HSE, that the LNG storage plant and new power station meet the strictest safety standards, which far exceed those normally required by the industry. They will continue to discharge their work as the competent authority once the plant is fully commissioned. The Agency is also working with the Port Department in tightening the laws on emissions from ships, especially black smoke.

355 Mr Speaker, recently, as Minister for Public Health, I have been working closely with the Agency in assessing living conditions in a number of areas, especially the Upper Town, and together with representatives from Housing, Town Planning and Land Property Services, we are working towards being able to improve these conditions.

360 The Public Health team, under the leadership of the new Director of Public Health, Dr Sohail Bhatti, though small, continues to be extremely active in public campaigns and engagement across the public service and beyond. They are always there with initiatives and campaigns, making a real difference. The multi-disciplinary CHAMP initiative on obesity last year and on mental health this year are testament to this. Among other work, they are particularly engaged with schools, working towards healthy eating and healthy living, which include healthy tuck shops and plans to prohibit smoking directly outside schools.

365 Mr Speaker, the management of the cemetery continues to progress well. The appointed contractor for the planted areas within the grounds has been very well received and is providing the much needed ongoing maintenance. In addition, over 100 trees have been planted on the site to provide shade. The long overdue legal overhaul to the Cemeteries Act, regulations and various appointments of statutory posts have all been completed this past year. Preparatory works have already started for an extension to the Muslim plot within the North Front Cemetery as the present area is nearly at full capacity.

375 Planting trees and creating green areas is a priority for the Government. As we know, urban trees can help mitigate some of the negative impacts and social consequences of urbanisation. Trees are a critical factor in human health and well-being and in the overall quality of life in communities. In 2019 alone we have already planted 549 trees in areas like Red Sands Estate, Glacis Estate, Europort Avenue and Camp Bay, and there are more to come. The exciting new park to the north of the leisure centre will add to the green spaces developed by us for the clear enjoyment of all. With 80 further trees and an organic children's playing area its success is guaranteed, as the extraordinary success of Commonwealth Park, this Government's green gem, has shown. Another initiative we are embarked upon is to identify walls and buildings that can be converted to green by the planting of climbing plants. This will be done in several sites this year and retrospectively green up existing large concrete structures to reduce temperature, absorb carbon, and create a healthier environment overall.

380 Since the launch of our 'Planning for Biodiversity: An Urban Wildlife Conservation and Planning Guide' in December 2017, a significant number of bird and bat boxes have been successfully installed in different developments across Gibraltar. These are being monitored by the Department and are ensuring that the populations of these species are maintained.

390 The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continue to develop, with new works carried out on planting beds throughout the Alameda in an effort to marry aesthetics with showcasing the gardens' plant collections. The effects of root action and erosion on the Alameda's paths continue to be a problem, so I am very pleased to announce the start of a phased programme of resurfacing of

the Alameda's paths. The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continues to raise their profile as a global centre of excellence for the study and cultivation of cacti and is developing a particular focus on the much neglected cactus flora of the Caribbean. One of the gardens' early successes was to rescue the endemic Gibraltar campion from almost certain extinction – if I say so myself. The gardens keep conservation collections of these and other of Gibraltar's special plant species, but new material will be collected from the wild this year in order to enhance the genetic diversity of these important collections. The children's education programme is one of the gardens' flagship programmes and work is well underway to develop an exciting new education area in the heart of the gardens for outdoor learning about horticulture and the environment. The Botanic Gardens hope to deliver the project by the end of the year, all as a result of a crowdfunding and sponsorship initiative and without calling on public funds.

Mr Speaker, this past financial year the Gibraltar Nature Reserve collected £5.5 million total revenue, as compared to the previous year's revenue of £4.1 million, an increase of £1.4 million. This has been possible thanks to the vision, sheer hard work and enthusiasm of my team. We are expecting there will be a further increase in revenue this year. The Gibraltar Nature Reserve has increased in size this year with the addition of the fascinating Devil's Tooth Green Corridor, resulting in the reserve having increased overall in area by about 39% since 2013. Habitat management continues to improve areas for wildlife, and the success of the Barbary partridge programme that the Department is running with GONHS is evident to all. Not so secretive anymore, Mr Speaker! The Gibraltar Nature Reserve provides vibrant and beautiful habitat for our flora and fauna, and managed carefully the Upper Rock can produce income to those who rely on it for their livelihood. The Upper Rock is at its best ever and we will continue to enhance this relationship between the tour guide sector and the conservation and heritage side of the Nature Reserve. I am proud to say that this Government is proving time and again that it is both possible and desirable to care for, respect and improve the environment as well as make it financially viable and provide an income to those working in the tourism sector. We will continue to do all this while making environmentally sound, prudent and commercially worthwhile choices. I can confidently say that, as part of the improvements we have planned in the short and medium term, we have and will continue to increase the revenue from the Gibraltar Nature Reserve. There are exciting times ahead for the reserve.

As a result of continuing control of yellow-legged gulls, the long-term trend in the breeding population of gulls in Gibraltar continues to be one of decline. 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. Due to immigration from other nesting sites around the western Mediterranean, culling has to be sustained on an annual basis and without this team's valuable work the gull population in Gibraltar would quickly increase to the very high numbers that peaked during the early 1990s.

The GONHS Bird of Prey Unit continues its excellent work in rescue and rehabilitation with extraordinary success. A number of release and reintroduction programmes are planned, the first being the setting up of a colony of Lesser Kestrels which sadly have recently disappeared from the Rock as a breeding species due largely to loss of feeding habitat in nearby Spain.

On the macaques, surgical laparoscopic contraception now provides the cornerstone for birth control in the species, although contraceptive implants of up to three years' duration are still used in selective cases. For the first time in many years we have had zero growth of the monkey population without mass culling, as a result of the benign measures that have been taken. Incursions into town are evidently much less frequent for a number of reasons. These include our provision of ponds and a varied diet to supplement their natural feeding. These animals are of course wild and free-ranging and therefore it would be impossible to prevent all incursions into urban areas, but they are part of our heritage and are once again being considered more as welcome residents of the Rock and less as an inconvenience. That is just as it should be.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar is already well known as a leading jurisdiction on DLT legislation. It is also true that we lead on the Environment. It therefore makes sense to bring these two together. Ways in which Blockchain can help us tackle climate change include supply chain management, recycling, energy, environmental treaties and carbon tax. We are therefore working to create a regulatory environment for persons to establish exchanges where environmental assets can be traded using distributed ledger technology in Gibraltar. The regulatory environment will consist of the co-existence of the existing DLT Regulations and draft Token Regulations, together with regulations to be enacted under the forthcoming Climate Change Act which will govern the standards that must be met by the projects whose environmental assets are listed on the exchanges. In the longer term, and in particular once the Paris Rulebook has been completed, we will adapt the framework as necessary to accommodate the trading of internationally traded mitigation outcomes. In achieving this goal we are consulting stakeholders and industry actors at an international level with a view to holding a public summit in Gibraltar to encourage and provide incentive for green activities within Gibraltar as well as create environmental assets here that could be traded on the exchanges.

Mr Speaker, the Heritage Division, with the assistance of Technical Services, has carried out works on heritage properties over the past year, the main ones being the Almond Tower at Moorish Castle, Parson's Lodge Battery and Moorish Castle Gate. Work on other heritage assets, including the Tower of Homage, are planned. Some will also have noticed the disappearance of the structure that had been erected at Nun's Well. This crenelated carbuncle had no historic significance. We are currently landscaping to create a new, open recreational area, and will be looking at opening out the well in a second phase. Myriad other smaller projects have been carried out, ranging from the refurbishment of cannon to the replacing of plaques.

Something that never ceases to amaze me is the wealth of archaeological remains that continue to be unearthed whenever developments take place. This was the case in the Lathbury sports complex. At the Europa sports complex site, pottery of Moorish origin and remains of a Moorish wall have been found. At the other side of Gibraltar and in the Airport tunnel human remains and various items of pottery, including parts of amphora, have been found in the sand at a considerable depth, and at Four Corners we have unearthed the remains of the Torre del Molino. The team from the Gibraltar Museum and the Ministry, including the Government Archaeologist and of course the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, are working together like never before to the great benefit of our heritage.

At our World Heritage site and given the discovery of a Neanderthal child's tooth, as reported last year, the Gibraltar National Museum, a recognised world leader in research, has dedicated a team to continue work in Vanguard Cave all winter for the first time. A recent paper published in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig has put the sediment at the top of this cave at around 45,000-50,000 years, which means the sediments that are making up this section are going to be older. I can also report that, following contacts made during the successful Calpe Conference last September, samples of sediment have been sent to assess their potential for extraction of DNA. It is remarkable that today's technology means we can pick up signals of humans and animals without even retrieving the fossils. In this vein, I was pleased to preside over a press conference showing that ancient DNA had been extracted from Neolithic and Bronze Age human remains from the Rock. These are indeed exciting times and are rewarding all of us for putting our faith and support in this project. Excavations this summer will run for three instead of the usual two months, thanks to a new collaboration with the prestigious University of Leiden in the Netherlands, that country's oldest university where, incidentally, George Eliot studied.

The close working relationship with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust continues and is indeed going from strength to strength. The Ministry and the Trust meet regularly in order to work with developers in the formulation of works plans, whilst at the same time protecting Gibraltar's heritage. All those who participate in Trust matters need to be praised as they are vital within

our community and I salute and urge them to continue to support us in our efforts. Their work at Witham's Cemetery of course merits particular mention.

495 Mr Speaker, following on from the introduction of the Heritage and Antiquities Act, the past year has seen the consolidation of the advisory group provided for in the Act, the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council. This has been an invaluable aid in providing expert advice on all aspects of our heritage and is working extremely well. One of the priorities of the Council is the assessment and consideration of other properties that have heritage value to be included in the Act's list of scheduled monuments, and it is actively working on this. The Heritage and Antiquities Act itself has proved a success and its content has been embraced by developers, who now understand that heritage matters need to be considered at the embryonic stage of projects. There is constant liaison, together with many site visits, and advice is provided. As a consequence of this, we now find that when developments come before the Development and Planning Commission they do not have heritage concerns and therefore are expedited quickly.

500 Mr Speaker, urban renewal is being tackled on different fronts and with close liaison between Ministries, Departments and agencies, particularly through the Urban Renewal Committee. The work involves Planning, Housing and Technical Services Departments, Cultural Services and LPS. One of the initiatives that has sprung from the Committee is the street art initiative, which is already brightening up urban areas, with more to come. This year will also see the much needed refurbishment of Governor's Parade.

510 While it is not an area for which I have political responsibility, and while it was dealt with at length by the Chief Minister during his address, I feel that as the longest serving member of the DPC I have to comment on development. I agree that there is more development than many would like – but let us analyse this more carefully. First, some of the main sites are schools and health facilities, direly needed and having to be built almost all at once due to the neglect of the last administration. Secondly, natural areas have not been compromised. Thirdly, building now has to be energy efficient and have environmental considerations as standard; therefore, developments today have much less environmental impact, square metre for square metre, than at any time in the past. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday, in his sojourn into alternative reality, had the audacity to complain about development in Gibraltar when so many of the developments about which he complained were commenced or approved by the GSD when in government and so have been inherited. (A Member: Shame!) (A Member: Yes.) They did their planning by decree and in secret, often the first thing the public knew about a development being the holes in the ground – some of which lasted longer than others. This is what led me to walk out of one of those secret DPC meetings when I represented an NGO and then refuse to attend a number of meetings subsequently. Public engagement now is as never before, with many developments, even Government projects, either being pushed back or significantly amended as a result, and all perfectly transparently and in public.

520 Specifically for Victoria Keys, I am confident that the environmental impact assessment that we have required will show that the loss of the impoverished and much punished seabed will not have significant detrimental effects on the environment. In fact, it will provide habitat for our now famous limpets. I will ensure that any material from the east side will be screened for contaminants before being used and that the process does not negatively impact surrounding areas. I have met with the lead developers and will be personally working closely with them to ensure that Victoria Keys are an example to the world in a sustainable green development, aiming for carbon neutrality as a minimum.

530 The Garrison Library has worked on a number of conservation projects concerned with the fabric of the building. Focus has been on the restoration of the Military Room, which has now become a fully equipped reading room; and of the Gibraltar Room, where much of the Gibraltar collection is kept. These changes have transformed the level of service available to the general public and researchers and have served to restore these rooms in keeping with the building's Georgian heritage. The top floor of the former Gibraltar Chronicle building, which had formerly been used by the Garrison Library secretary and accounts office, has now been restored,

545 uncovering through the removal of chipboard partitions and a false ceiling two beautiful
Georgian rooms. Work on the balustrade has been extremely difficult due to its delicate nature
and the difficulty of sourcing suitable material but is now progressing. The Library has also been
working on strategies to increase footfall through cultural events and outreach programmes with
550 schools in Gibraltar, including the Gibraltar Literary Festival and the annual International
Symposium on Self-Determination organised in conjunction with the office of the Deputy Chief
Minister. Mr Speaker, I am very excited to continue to develop my relationship with the Library
team with a view to ensuring we protect it and promote and develop it as a rich historical and
cultural treasure for future generations.

To end on environment, I feel that I must challenge the political parties opposite. In doing so,
555 I have to express my disappointment at the GSD and, more surprisingly, at Together Gibraltar
and their approach to the environment. When the NGOs are all appealing to the politicians to
depoliticise environment as they call for a consensus and a joint approach, the actions of both
parties opposite show that they are not interested in us working together. With the sole
exception of the Hon. Mr Feetham, who is gracious in his recognition of the progress we have
560 made in areas such as animal welfare and the Upper Rock, the remainder of the Opposition, and
most recently the party represented by the hon. Lady – for whom, and she knows this, I have the
highest regard – fail to accept and recognise the progress actually being made in Environment,
and instead embark on negative statements that denigrate the work of those, including public
servants and NGOs, who are achieving so much. I would ask them to reconsider their approach –
565 even as an election approaches – and, for the sake of the environment, be constructive.

Finally, Mr Speaker, before I move on to education, I must acknowledge with pleasure the
lesson in environmental policy provided by Sir Joe Bossano in his contribution yesterday. Joe is
absolutely correct in his analysis, including his pointing out my unfair generalisation in which I
blamed the whole of our species for the sins, grievous that they are, of just a part of it. I
570 particularly support and am hugely encouraged but not surprised that Sir Joe will incorporate
environmental principles in his new economic analysis and plan. This is something I have always
advocated and is essential if we are to avoid the disaster that awaits our descendants should we
fail. I offer my full support and assistance, as ever, to Sir Joe in his work in redefining the
economy of the future. I firmly believe that the outcome of this work could itself be an example
575 for other countries to follow. I will comment further on my work with Sir Joe a little later.

Mr Speaker, in education the future is here. From September we will have fully inclusive
mixed-gender schools devoted to awakening the learning process in our children. This is a well-
overdue update to our education system, now fully accepted by the community as a vital step in
education and in achieving full gender equality.

580 I am privileged to work with women as the heads of two of my Departments, Environment
and Education, but saddened that the top posts – for example, in the water and energy sectors –
are still all held by men. I am excited to think that co-education and the equalisation of
opportunities within and between the two new comprehensive schools, as well as the
introduction of vocational courses, will go a long way towards redressing the balance,
585 encouraging more women to take on careers in science, technology and engineering. From
September too, mental health support will be in place, which, together with our outdoor
learning opportunities and developing creativity and resilience in our children, will assist their
development as confident individuals. Our young people will be able to achieve whatever goals
they set for themselves, contributing towards tomorrow's society at all levels. We are devoted
590 to developing reflective youngsters who can think for themselves, question others and find
solutions to problems outside the restraints of conventionality.

Mr Speaker, realignment is now a reality. With each key stage contained within each sector
of education, this affords us the perfect opportunity for realistic and meaningful tracking of pupil
progress that can be accurately reported to parents and carers. Parents and carers are an
595 integral part of their children's education and play a vital role alongside the schools in shaping
our future generations.

As we know, this year we opened the first of a total of nine new schools following on from St Bernard's a couple of years ago while my colleague Mr Licudi was Minister for Education. Notre Dame School is a great addition which has been hugely enjoyed by teachers and pupils already for almost a whole academic year. It is an amazing school in every way and the lasting vigour that could be seen around opening time was contagious. The teachers were absolutely amazing in their dedication and in making the transition smooth and the move a success. Thank you, Priscilla Cruz and all your teaching and support staff. St Anne's, Bayside and Westside will open on their new sites in September. Their facilities will be second to none and they will be among the best-designed and best-equipped schools anywhere, a real asset to our future generations. There will in the comprehensives 13 laboratories in each, a mechanical workshop in Westside, a hairdressing salon in Bayside, a large sports hall each, and two Astroturf playing fields in each school. St Anne's will have a new sports hall too, with large play areas at both podium and roof levels, and of course the adventure playground coming back to the community of the area. Work is progressing well at the new St Martin's School; and Governor's Meadow, Bishop Fitzgerald and the College will follow soon, as will St Mary's, which will also be constructed new. We are continuing to work hard to create brand new, strategically designed and purpose-built schools.

My Ministry team and the Advisory Service have worked very closely with the senior leadership teams of each school to ensure that these learning environments are stimulating, exciting and welcoming places for our young learners. There has been an unprecedented level of consultation, with many staff members involved in all stages of each school project from initial design to furnishing the layouts and the procurement of equipment. It has been extremely hard work, but the schools will speak for themselves. All staff, teachers, LSAs, admin staff, technicians, attendants and cleaners have been and are working extremely hard to ensure that the schools will be ready for opening. I would like to thank the School Migration Committee, led by Joey Britto with Tony Segovia, Melba Noguera and Ian Torrilla for their diligence in taking the lead on this. The biggest task, of course, is the move of the comprehensives, for which I also need to thank the heads, Michelle Barabich and Michael Tavares, for their leadership.

All our primary schools have now embarked on our teaching and learning initiative with digital technologies. Professional development has been delivered to members of the senior leadership team, teachers and members of our core groups in every one of our primary schools. This initiative enters the next phase of its implementation this year with the secondary schools receiving their initial training and subsequent professional development. Our primary schools will continue to be provided with access to the professional development opportunities provided by this initiative over the course of this year, with a large investment in additional hardware being deployed to support the strategies our teachers are developing. This House will have the opportunity to vote these funds in the Appropriation Bill – except that the GSD Members opposite will not. The work of our teachers in this particular area is ground breaking, innovative and truly transformative.

On the curriculum, work is continuing on the implementation of the age 14-19 vocational pathways with initial courses in hairdressing and computer science scheduled to launch in September 2019 with many others to follow. This year will see consolidation of the work being done in Education in the digital technologies. We will ensure that, working with the industry, we lead in providing opportunities for our young people to train and develop their skills so that they are able to take up opportunities that the private sector in this area is providing and will continue to provide. The realignment of the curriculum at secondary schools is at an advanced stage at Key Stage 3, with a planned rollout of changes at Key Stage 4 beginning in September 2019. Next year, the existing curriculum provision at primary level will be reviewed involving all key stakeholders. This review will engage teachers, parents and members of the wider community to ensure that our primary curriculum supports the development of learners who are knowledgeable, caring, creative and resilient. Key to this is the extending of mixed ability to

all subjects in primary schools, with corresponding support being provided for teachers to ensure maximum benefit to the children.

650 The Department of Education has worked in close collaboration with our friends in the University of Gibraltar to develop a project on which they are leading, a bespoke Postgraduate Certificate in Education aligned to the vision for education in Gibraltar. This local-context programme is aligned to teaching standards in the UK and aims to develop teachers equipped with a robust understanding of the teaching and learning processes required to support students through their educational journey. This exciting new programme will take on its first cohort of students mentored and supported by the excellent practitioners in our schools.

655 Mr Speaker, with regard to higher education I am pleased to report that we currently have 759 mandatory undergraduate scholarships, 149 postgraduate scholarships and 56 discretionary scholarships ongoing. The total expended during this last financial year in respect of undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships amounted to £16½ million. The increase in allowances announced by the Chief Minister is greatly welcomed by all.

660 If I may briefly digress, Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister was kind enough to consider yesterday that there was added value in the fact that Sir Joe Bossano and I had worked together in achieving LNG as a source of power. It is of course not the first time that we have come together in this positive way. Sir Joe will recall how we worked together in the late 1980s, when he was Chief Minister, in many aspects of environment and health. Coincidentally, going through some old papers at home I came across a petition that I had organised back in 1986 as Chair of the, then, Gibraltar Union of Students. This read:

We, the undersigned, believe that no student should be prevented from undergoing a course of further education for which he/she has been accepted by an educational institution, for lack of Government financial support.

670 A few years later, the GSLP came into government under Sir Joe and ensured that this happened, and today I sit in the same Government celebrating the thousands of Gibraltarians who have benefited from the scholarship system with a further increase in student allowances.

Mr Speaker, I will continue. The very successful Washington internship, now entering its seventh year, has to date benefited 120 young people.

675 Training has been provided throughout the public service, as well as in the Student Experience Programme in our schools, in-service CPD for teachers, including iPad teaching and learning, mindfulness, special educational needs (SEN), mental health training and the Finland Educational Workshop. This year we will be investing over £600,000 in the new Teaching and Learning of Digital Technologies Apple initiative to bring this new way of teaching into all our schools, including the secondaries.

680 The minor works programme for 2018-19 mainly targeted the remaining schools that were not earmarked for replacing. Work done last year included the works on electrical upgrades and sewer diversion at St Mary's School; gutter replacement, toilet refurbishment, waterproofing, sound insulation and playground seating at St Joseph's School; St Paul's School has undergone and is undergoing major refurbishment, including to the staff area and classrooms; and works have also been done to Bishop Fitzgerald, the Hebrew School and Bleak House. Plans for the current financial year chiefly centre around the continued refurbishment of both St Joseph's and St Paul's Schools. This will include the creation of outdoor forest learning zones, converting concrete patios into gardens with trees and other plants and the opportunity for the children to grow vegetables and fruit. It is in these outdoor learning-through-play opportunities for our children that we can promote creativity, self-esteem and resilience.

685 690 Mr Speaker, importantly, all the new schools will have enhanced provision and resourcing to support pupils with special educational needs. Two more learning support facilities are being created, one in Governor's Meadow and another in St Anne's, to support more children who require more specialised input. St Martin's will have enhanced facilities which will cater for a greater variety of needs. There will be a hydrotherapy pool, a rebound therapy room, enhanced

therapy areas, some specialist classrooms, as well as general classrooms and much more space, both inside and outside, for the children to work and play in. The Early Birds Nursery provision within St Martin's will double.

700 In a hugely significant development, which I know will be welcome by parents and by many NGOs as well as by teaching staff, I am delighted to announce that as from September 2019 all our special needs co-ordinators will have a full-time post and will not have to double up with other teaching duties, with their focus on all matters connected to SEN. This will be a huge boost to the service, and particularly to those children in all our schools with special educational needs. Consistent with this, the special needs learning support assistant complement has been
705 increased. This goes some way to support the increasing numbers of pupils with special needs who are being identified.

As part of our commitment to provide nursery places to all those entitled who so wish, morning places have now been offered to all nursery-age pupils whose families have applied. This year for the first time there has been an emphasis on providing placements on a catchment
710 area basis, which will be helpful to families. More support will be given to lower primary in the afternoons, whereby the nursery LSAs will support the main body of the school in the afternoon.

In keeping with the philosophy of improving our education strategies, we hosted a visit from Leena Heinila, a Finnish educationalist, who conducted a series of workshops with teachers on the world-celebrated and successful Finnish skills-based educational model. In this context,
715 teachers across the lower primary sector attended a very informative conference in Finland which exposed them to different teaching and learning philosophies. The visit concentrated on kindergarten and lower-primary age groups with the aim of understanding 21st-century models, some of which we will be introducing in our schools.

Mr Speaker, the relationship between myself, the Department and the Teachers' Union is
720 excellent. We have developed the ability to talk openly, frankly, respectfully and always constructively and are making huge progress across the education sector. The Chief Minister himself yesterday dealt with matters for which he is responsible and which are also progressing. Teachers well know the regard in which we hold them and their profession and the deep personal commitment that the Chief Minister and I have to them – which I repeat on my behalf
725 today – their work and their aspirations. My regular visits to the schools are out of a genuine interest and probably what I enjoy most in my work. The relationship is reflected in the now very successful Social Partnership with NASUWT Gibraltar, which has meant that jointly with the Teachers' Union we have begun to look at Teaching and Learning Responsibility Allowances with the aim of restructuring how we remunerate additional responsibilities to a teacher's working
730 role. We have created steering committees and engaged the expertise of PwC to ensure the distribution of these allowances is fair and equitable. We have settled longstanding union claims such as the equalisation of pay between upper primary and lower primary sector posts. In addition, we have settled anomalies between secondary school allowances and introduced pro rata maternity leave allowances for teachers on supply contracts exceeding one year. We have
735 advanced in the creation of policies in schools and in the review of departmental umbrella policies. The relationship between the Department and the Union has never been closer, as evidenced by the progress made and by the fact that meetings are held on a more than weekly basis.

We have also built a close interdepartmental relationship with Human Resources and I would
740 like to stress the close working with Welfare Officer Sean Keating in supporting staff members overcome personal and health-related trauma. Support for staff has become one of the Department's prime objectives as we believe that a happy staff goes a long way to creating happy, motivated and dedicated students.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Education works together with other Departments and
745 agencies in safeguarding training, which continued to be rolled out with 245 teachers now up to date with safeguarding.

750 A number of important relevant policies are in the process of being finalised, including an attendance policy and guidelines. The Department is also dealing with the problems of drugs, alcohol and social gaming, working with other Departments, including the Ministry for Equality, aiming to establish attitudes and practices related to physical and mental well-being, including prevalence and patterns of substance misuse among our pupils. There is further interdepartmental work and collaboration with Gibraltar Voice of the Young People to develop anti-bullying strategies and rolling out of departmental bullying policy and guidelines.

755 Mr Speaker, we have made huge inroads over the past two years in improving awareness and support for mental health in our school population. Following an extensive and ongoing review of positive mental health and social and emotional well-being in both primary and secondary education, a series of evidence-based recommendations to enhance awareness and provide early detection and prevention measures, supported by specialist training, has been developed. As a result, much has already been implemented, including the formation of strategic steering groups to co-ordinate and manage organisational change and dedicated workstreams. Phase 3, with a view to better supporting students through the transition into higher education, is well under way. The Ministry and Department of Education, through Wayne Barton and Jackie Linares, have organised extensive training sessions which have emphasised early detection, prevention and the holistic development of the child/adolescent so as to avoid an escalation into mental health disorders, which unfortunately may then come to require medical input.

760 I took the opportunity at a recent mental health training session to announce the recruitment of four counsellors to be based at the schools. These will make a tremendous difference to the children, and also to the teachers and the educational psychologists who will now have this dedicated support. Evidence shows that a counselling service which provides support within an overall school strategy can be highly effective in promoting young people's welfare, supporting their learning achievement as well as alleviating and preventing the escalation of mental health problems. School-based counselling can help pupils to develop skills which make personal transitions more manageable. This may not be as spectacular as a new school building, but it is just as important. I would like to thank my own team, of course, including Sarah Payas, the educational psychologists, the SENCOs, the 'BEST' Education Services Team, as well as the Care Agency, GHA and others for working together in developing the requirements for this service. Recruitment is progressing and the counsellors will be in post in time for the start of term in September.

775 Mr Speaker, great progress has been made in achieving sustainable schools, as I mentioned earlier in the Environment part of my contribution this morning. The Department will additionally be represented at the International Teachers' Climate Change Forum in Finland in August.

780 Among other initiatives, I must once again congratulate all those involved – students, teachers and trainers – from the private and public sectors for their renewed success both in the Young Enterprise programme and in the CyberCenturion competition. Year on year they do Gibraltar proud.

On school lunches we are already engaging with potential providers to, as the Chief Minister stated in his address, provide these from September.

790 As to more initiatives to come, I am happy to confirm that we are working towards offering Arabic as an option at GCSE, being one of the several languages spoken in Gibraltar together with English, Spanish and Hebrew, which is catered for in the Hebrew schools. Sadly, I have not yet been able to bring to Parliament the widely reviewed and updated Education Act, due exclusively to the workload of the allocated legal draftsman on the inordinate amount of Brexit-related legislation, but I am still hoping to be able to publish the Bill before the House dissolves.

795 Back on the positive, I am particularly pleased to announce that we have commenced work, together with Unite the Union, the Chamber and the Federation of Small Businesses, in developing, together with the Gibraltar College, a bespoke programme of youth training,

including T-Levels and more and tied in with the new vocational courses in the comprehensives to ensure that training is available to our young people across a wide range of trades.

800 Mr Speaker, I now want to dedicate thought to the teachers, support staff, parents, carers, families and students in this year of educational transition. Change is not easy and is often stressful. A revolution can be more than that. A time of change is never comfortable. It can be exciting, even fun, but it can and does cause anxiety and worry. I have myself experienced all those emotions at different times during this year, but I have been working with an amazing
805 team, both in my Ministry and the Department, in the schools, with project managers, advisers and many more. I meet with them several times a week and they start very early in the morning and end late at night, usually with no financial remuneration for this additional effort. The journey is by no means over, but it is clear that it will be a hugely successful one. I thank each and every one of those involved in the education revolution – those who have agreed and those
810 who have had doubts; you are all a part of it, and this is all for you. Students and their families can be assured that what we can see on the horizon will become a reality of excellent facilities and first-class learning opportunities, where all are equal yet different and all will achieve to their maximum potential, regardless of what that potential is. To those I have met in my office, including those working groups seeing me after hours led by Jenique Berllaque and Natalie
815 Shoemsmith, to all those I have chatted with in the schools, including teachers and pupils, thank you for being a part of this journey.

Mr Speaker, in ending I would like to thank all those I work with, which includes the areas for which I have political responsibility but also many others with whom I work and with whom I have regular contact during the course of my work.

820 In Environment I thank Liesl Mesilio, Stephen Warr, Gerry Lane and Marcello Sanguinetti and their teams in the Department of Heritage, Environment and Climate Change; Jackie Mason, Keri Scott and the advisers, Stuart Borastero and Chris Gomila in addition to the others who I have already mentioned by name in my speech, their teams in Education, including Dymrna Holmes and her administrative team, all the headteachers and their own teams in the schools and the
825 College.

I thank Glen Banda and the Environmental Agency for all that they do, and in particular I want to thank Glen and his colleague Louis Poggio, who will be retiring this year, for many decades of excellent work between them in the interests of our environment. In particular, in the past couple of years their diligence in ensuring the absolute safety of the LNG plant is something for
830 which Gibraltar will always be grateful.

I would also like to thank Michael Caetano and his team in the GEA, and Paul Singleton and all at AquaGib for taking on new challenges while ensuring that we have power and water in our homes and places of work, and all the many contractors with whom I work, including the
835 Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic, the Botanic Gardens, the National Museum and many others; also those in Customs, the RGP, Human Resources, Culture, Planning, the Press Office and the MoD, with whom I regularly work; in my own Ministry, my PA and Personal Secretary in Environment and Education, Caryna, Gianna, Stephanie and Jessica for their unstinting loyalty and friendship; Derek Alman for his inimitable work on the new schools; and of course the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Chief Technical Officer and their own teams, who are always there
840 for me when I need them in the exercise of my duties and beyond; to all at No. 6 in the Chief Minister's office; to the Gibraltar Law Officers for their patience and support in moving through important legislation and providing advice on tap when needed; to the Unions for working with me always in order to resolve problems and fulfil opportunities in the interests of working people.

845 Finally, thanks to the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and my Cabinet colleagues for their support and their conversion – those few who needed converting – to the environmental cause. Their positive engagement and support is truly appreciated and never taken for granted. And of course, thank you and the staff of this House for their sterling work throughout the year.

850 Mr Speaker, in concluding, last week I was fortunate enough to be invited by the excellent
team at the Nautilus Project to the presentation of environmental awards at the Charles Hunt
Room in the John Mackintosh Hall. The Charles Hunt Room was full to capacity. There were
855 many awards to young people and to quite a number of businesses. My mind went back to the
exact same venue over 30 years ago, where I used to organise talks and gave them to an
audience of perhaps 15 to 20 people at most. A crowded room was a near impossibility and
businesses who must now lead were simply not engaged. How times have changed. How much
we have progressed in awareness and commitment. How satisfied I am to think that perhaps I
had at least a little bit to do with that.

But in all this satisfaction a word of warning. As Sir Joe Bossano stressed yesterday in his
environmental reality check, the environmental battle is by no means won. There is still a great
860 deal to do in our everyday lives and in recalibrating our economic principles and it has to be
done drastically but responsibly, with changes to the way we do things but imaginatively without
risking our success as a community and as an economy. This is something that not everyone can
do. There has to be a balance that risks neither the environment nor our economic well-being.
But not everyone can pull that off. It takes a Government in which responsible environmental
865 governance, commercial ambition and economic vision are equally strongly represented. It is
this Government, and only this Government, that can offer that. Let that be a sobering thought
to all those who might be misguided enough to think that there is a credible alternative to the
GSLP-Liberals in government. Mr Speaker, for our community and for our future there is simply
no other option.

870 Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

Minister for Tourism, Employment, Commercial Aviation and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):
875 Mr Speaker, both the Chief Minister and the Father of the House have spoken during their
contributions of the excellent employment figures. We have record numbers employed, record
numbers of Gibraltarians employed and consistently low records of Gibraltarian unemployment,
and it is worth reminding the House of some of these figures. As at October 2018, the total
number of employee jobs in Gibraltar has once again risen to a new record high. We have
880 experienced a 7% growth over the year, from 28,029 to 29,995. This is yet again the highest
number ever recorded and twice the increased growth in jobs compared to the 3.5% increase
recorded in 2017. The average gross annual earnings in October 2018 were £30,496.79, another
record high, and that is an increase of 3.1%. Average salaries in Gibraltar generally are therefore
rising faster than inflation. Private sector growth has risen by 1,940, from 22,029 to 23,969 in
885 October 2018. The public sector, on the other hand, has seen a marginal increase of ½% over the
year to 5,522 when compared to the figures in October 2017. Under this Government we
continue to see record low unemployment like never before. In 2018 the yearly average was
again a record low of 52 – that is over the whole year – *a reduction of 88%* in unemployment
since 2011. In the last quarter of 2018 we again achieved a record-breaking figure with the last
890 quarter average of unemployment at 44, the lowest level ever recorded in unemployment
history since records began. In 2019, as the Chief Minister has already indicated, we have
continued to maintain low unemployment levels.

Mr Speaker, none of this is a fluke. None of this has happened by accident. The growth in
number of employees generally is a reflection of the growth we continue to see in the economy.
895 It is not an isolated event over a year or over a short period. This is growth which we have seen
consistently since 2011. That is almost eight years of growth. The Government must be doing
something right.

When it comes to unemployment, this is not a numbers game. It never has been for us. This
is not about massaging or manipulating numbers to show a particular figure or a particular
900 picture. When unemployment used to be, in GSD days, 300 or 400 – or, in fact, more than 1,000,

as the Hon. Mr Feetham clearly admitted, just before the 2011 elections – these were not just figures or statistics to be bandied around in press releases or during the Budget debate; these were 300 or 400, or perhaps more than 1,000 people with homes, with families and, above all, with hope and expectation that the Government would do something to assist them in finding meaningful jobs. That is what Sir Joe set out to do in 2011 when he devised a strategy to get all of these individuals into the employment market: to give them hope. Hon. Members will recall how much they criticised Sir Joe for the Future Job Strategy. If ever there was a moment for Hon. Members to eat their words, this is it. But this is not about scoring political points or saying to the Opposition, ‘You didn’t know what you were talking about’ – even though that would be true; this is about having been able to turn around the lives of hundreds and hundreds of individuals who were able to wake up each morning and think that they had something to look forward to, a job which would enable them to lead normal family lives, to aspire to and to be able to purchase a home in one of Government’s affordable housing schemes.

And yes, we do take pride in what we have achieved and it is right to pay tribute to Sir Joe’s vision, foresight and sheer hard work in implementing what he believed in, what he genuinely thought and felt was the right thing to do, what was the right strategy to invest in. Ultimately, we were investing in people, in individuals, where each of them mattered. And yes, it worked – boy, did it work! The results are there for all to see, so we have much to thank Sir Joe for. And what Sir Joe started was ably continued by Neil Costa when he took over the employment portfolio with the implementation of new systems and schemes to assist those looking for work and the revamping of the Industrial Tribunal, which was renamed the Employment Tribunal. All I had to do was to pick up the baton and continue where they left off. Of course it is true that politicians can devise strategies, schemes or systems, but it is the people on the ground that have to implement these. They have to do the hard graft. It is a testament to the team at the Employment Service and their hard work that we are able to come to this House year after year and show how people’s lives have been transformed.

The Employment Service has undergone significant internal change. Employment officials meet regularly with various businesses and sector representatives. The aim of this initiative is to determine how services can be improved. It also serves to obtain first hand an understanding of the current and future employment-related needs of the business community. We have seen great success in reducing the number of persons unemployed year on year, as we have seen from the figures. This is a direct result of the work undertaken by experienced employment officers, who provide advice, information and support to registered persons who are either unemployed or looking for alternative employment. The important thing is that the system works, and it works well. The enhanced provisions of the Employment Service see dedicated employment officers and employment co-ordinators working together in providing the best possible support and advice to service users. This also includes assessing individual needs and circumstances, matching skills, qualifications and experience to available vacancies and identifying possible future career opportunities. The Department of Employment has again strengthened its relationships and avenues of communication with other Departments and agencies with respect to employability. The Department provides support with interview skills, writing CVs and cover letters. This service is delivered in conjunction with the Youth Service and the Citizens Advice Bureau. This provides greater reach to cater for the broad spectrum of jobseekers and their individual needs.

The Department of Employment, as from 1st April 2019, introduced a registration of vacancy fee which covers, for a particular position, all administrative work and costs arising from the registration of a vacancy: the filing of notices of terms of engagement, variations of engagement of which there can be more than one, and termination of engagement. As we said at the time, many employers were already paying the registration fee by not complying with the statutory requirement to have a vacancy registered for a 10-day period before it was filled. We also explained at the time that the absence of a fee led to some employers registering vacancies which did not actually exist or have to fill at the time. This then allowed them to fill the vacancy

at short notice without having to pay any fee at all. The result was that this distorted the job market. It was impossible to have a true picture at any particular time of the jobs which were available. Again, this was not just about being able to build a picture from a statistical point of view; it was about knowing what jobs were actually available so that those looking for work could be matched to those jobs and would not have to face the disappointment of being sent to an employer who had registered a vacancy only to find that the vacancy did not, in reality, exist. The introduction of the very modest £17 fee assists to avoid the administrative waste which existed, creates a true picture of the vacancies available and assists those who require it the most, namely the individuals who are seeking employment. Initial figures since the introduction of the fee show that the system is working and is having the desired effect. Having said that, following a meeting I have had with the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses, I have agreed that this fee will be reviewed once the figures for six months after the introduction of the fee are available.

Mr Speaker, the Labour Inspectorate continues to operate diligently and efficiently. This Government is committed to the eradication of illegal labour by ensuring that all businesses are compliant within the Employment Regulations. The new strategy and programme of inspections across the various industries commenced last year and has worked to further reinforce the relationship between the Department of Employment and the business community. It is in the interests of all people in business to have a level playing field.

Regarding health and safety at work, the Inspectorate continues to provide an excellent level of service dealing with matters that often encompass work in high-risk areas. The Inspectorate not only works with the contractors and developers managing projects, but also opens its doors to anyone who requires best practice guidance and advice in respect of health and safety issues at work. I am pleased to say that Gibraltar has not seen a fatality at work for over eight years now.

Finally on employment, the Department of Employment is making great advancements towards meeting the Government's commitment on e-government. In fact, the Department will be the first Government organisation to have a fully digital interactive service for its users, allowing for direct administrative interaction with back-office systems and the processing of applications and requests through the Government's new online portal. The system, now in its final stages of development and testing, will cater for a full range of employment e-services.

Turning to tourism, in the last year the Gibraltar Tourist Board has again been hard at work promoting and marketing Gibraltar in order to position ourselves as a destination which is one of the most popular in the western Mediterranean. The work of the Gibraltar Tourist Board is ably supported by the local tourism, retail and hospitality industry.

In 2018, total visitor numbers increased by 1.3% and tourist expenditure was up by 8.6%. For a third year in a row, the total arrivals at hotels reached record highs, increasing by 6.4% over 2017, with tourist arrivals at hotels increasing by 4% over the previous year. The new Holiday Inn Express has been extremely successful and we now look forward to the opening of the Indigo Hotel in Corral Road. I am therefore encouraged and happy to inform Parliament that the Government's strategy for tourism is producing actual results. Activity on the ground is seen and felt and has resulted in growth.

Mr Speaker, this summer British Airways will increase the number of flights to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. An extra three flights per week will operate to London Heathrow and a further six flights per week to London Gatwick. EasyJet has taken advantage of the slots made available by Monarch with the introduction of a twice-weekly service to London Luton Airport. EasyJet are also increasing their frequency to Manchester Airport to four flights per week during the summer and three per week during the winter. This increase in frequency is a positive move by easyJet. We continue to pursue new UK regional opportunities, although these are restricted to a small pool of carriers with suitable aircraft types able to operate on Gibraltar's short runway.

Mr Speaker, 13 cruise ships will be making inaugural calls to Gibraltar this year. Two hundred and eight ships are currently scheduled to call at Gibraltar in 2020, representing a slight increase

1005 over 2019, and passenger numbers are expected to be, in 2020, over 15% higher than in 2019. In
2018 we saw 407,000 passengers coming to Gibraltar on cruise ships. This represented a 3%
increase over the previous year. It is, however, true that 2019 will see a slight dip in numbers.
There are cyclical reasons that affect cruise calls. These include ships being taken out of service
1010 while cruise companies await delivery of new ships and the redeployment of ships due to new
itineraries or geographical redeployment of ships to new and emerging markets. The
Government is satisfied that the reduction in cruise calls in 2019 is related to operational
decisions by cruise companies, rather than reasons concerning Gibraltar as a destination. As I
have already said, we are already seeing positive growth for 2020.

We continue to engage with the cruise industry at the Seatrade Global events, as members of
1015 MedCruise and Gibraltar will continue once again to be represented at the International Cruise
Summit in Madrid next November. Gibraltar is known for its consistent and proactive approach
towards the industry. Gibraltar's place on the board of directors of MedCruise, representing
large ports in the western Mediterranean, goes a long way in ensuring that the destination is at
the forefront of the cruise industry. It also allows us access to the most up-to-date information
1020 on the trends for the sector.

In our main market, the UK, the Year of Culture campaign continues apace. The campaign is
once again supported by an extensive online and offline media campaign in the UK with some
emphasis being given to hosting the Gibraltar 2019 NatWest International Island Games.

As announced earlier this year, the Gibraltar Tourist Board is launching its biggest trade
1025 initiative in over a decade. Calling the scheme Gibraltar 2020, the Tourist Board will be running
monthly familiarisation trips with the aim of bringing 200 agents from the UK to Gibraltar over
the next two years. We will work with tour operators and airline companies in the UK, and in
Gibraltar with hoteliers, ground agents and tourist sites. Local agents wishing to participate in
these events need to complete an online training programme. Departure points will alternate
1030 from each of Gibraltar's UK airport hubs. The campaign will be supported by a trade and
consumer campaign, driving awareness of the destination and its key selling points to the UK
market, particularly in a post-Brexit era.

Another market worth pursuing is MICE, which stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences
and Exhibitions. The Gibraltar Tourist Board participated in the MICE Forum Europe, in
1035 Benidorm, an event which brought together Europe's leading MICE buyers and suppliers to
meet, network and build new connections. The Gibraltar Tourist Board will also be represented
at another event organised by the same entity in Tenerife in December this year. The GTB will be
present at the Meetings Show in London from 26th to 27th June and will be hosting a pre-dinner
event for MICE agents on 25th June in London. The GTB's website now has a dedicated section
1040 for the MICE market with specific information required by buyers in this industry. The Gibraltar
Tourist Board website, which was relaunched not too long ago, is now available in five
languages. Our activity on social media has increased and now includes very successful
competitions made possible with the co-operation of our tourism partners. The ability to
measure activity on social media and on our website is a great asset when planning strategies
1045 for marketing, in the UK particularly, every year.

When it comes to promoting Gibraltar's tourism product to the Spanish market, the GTB was
once again present in the FITUR travel exhibition in Madrid. In the surrounding areas, Gibraltar
works with one of the largest tour excursion companies, TUI, and their local agents to promote
the destination on all of the coaches coming into Gibraltar from the two coastal areas nearest to
1050 Gibraltar in Spain. In addition, Gibraltar is currently advertising on radio and in some
publications in the nearby Spanish market.

We continue to promote niche market tourism and once again we will be represented at the
Rutland Bird Fair from 16th to 18th August. Event-led tourism continues to be a priority for this
Government – from backgammon to darts, chess, music, food and literature.

1055 I was delighted once again to introduce the Gibraltar Lecture at the *FT Weekend* Oxford
Literary Festival earlier this year. The lecture was sponsored by the Gibunco Group of companies

and is part of the yearly activities carried out to promote the Gibunco Gibraltar International Literary Festival. The Government sponsors the green room for the festival at Oxford. We are already looking forward to another festival in Gibraltar in November and we are very grateful to the Gibunco Group for their continued support in sponsoring the event. The festival has led the way to becoming not only more accessible but also digital. Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal continues as Patron of the Festival and for this we are very honoured and grateful.

1060
1065 Mr Speaker, before finishing on tourism, I just want to echo something which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned, which was the very sad demise earlier this year, in a sudden and unexpected way, of – (*Interjection*) The Deputy Chief Minister, I said.

Hon. A J Isola: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, you said.

1070 **Hon. G H Licudi:** No, the Deputy Chief Minister, not Deputy Leader of the Opposition, mentioned the sad death of Ian Leyde, who worked for many years at our London office, and for my part I want to extend my own condolences to his mother, his wife and his three children.

1075 Mr Speaker, I turn to the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service. Last year, the organisation responded to 1,215 operational calls, which included actual fires, emergencies and, in some cases, false alarms. In addition, fire control operators also mobilised the GHA Ambulance on 5,820 occasions. The introduction of the Geographical Information System last year has substantially improved the deployment of resources attending emergency incidents and providing our officers on the ground with vital information. New to Gibraltar is the rollout of telephone CPR, which provides our fire control operators with the skills necessary to offer guidance to callers or members of the public who are willing to assist someone who has suffered a cardiac arrest. The service is in the final stages of development.

1080 The GFRS counsellor continues to work with partner agencies on an initiative to introduce a multi-agency forum that will support the treatment of emergency services personnel suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The introduction of traumatic incident management as part of Emergency Services' duty of care to its staff is a vital support tool that is intended to enhance not just the prompt recovery of persons suffering from PTSD but also to mitigate the risk of long-term effects to emergency workers who have had abnormally negative experiences in the fulfilment of their duties.

1085 Mr Speaker, the GFRS has completed the second phase of its fleet replacement programme with the purchase of two new fire appliances. Both of these appliances are water tenders, primarily designated for firefighting operations. The combined value of these appliances is in excess of £290,000. Both these vehicles are fully operational and are proving to be a successful investment. The ultimate beneficiary of the replacement programme will be our community and it is with this in mind that the Government has made the funding available. It will enable the GFRS to perform their duties in a more professional and efficient manner using the latest resources and technology available.

1090 Mr Speaker, on the Airport Fire and Rescue Service, during the last nine months the focus has been on bringing online the new firefighting vehicles purchased in the last financial year. This has resulted in the introduction of different firefighting techniques, which together with the enhanced capabilities offers a far more robust and safer response capability for the benefit of both firefighters and anyone involved in an incident.

1100 Gibraltar Airport has recovered considerably since the collapse of Monarch Airlines in October 2017, with existing partner airlines adding new routes and increasing frequencies on existing routes, as I have already mentioned. It is of course true that, following the demise of Monarch, passenger numbers in 2018 were down. I am, however, pleased to report that from January to April 2019 passenger numbers through the terminal have shown an overall increase of over 19% compared to the same period in 2018. This rate of growth is expected to continue for the rest of the year. In fact, *anna.aero*, a leading online airline network news and analysis

website, has stated that Gibraltar was the fastest-growing country market in the second quarter of 2019.

1110 The Government is also very pleased to see that Fonnafly, a Norwegian-based helicopter operator, has already transported one of its helicopters to Gibraltar in order to offer tours and taxi flights to nearby destinations. The helicopter will be locally based permanently and the operator is seeking to expand its services, which will benefit both the tourist product and our current air travel services.

1115 Mr Speaker, on the Gibraltar Port Authority, throughout 2018 we saw positive growth in the GPA. However, in some areas, particularly in bunkering calls, there has been a fall in activity of just over 7% on the previous year. Currently, there is a global downturn in bunkering activity. However, one of the key factors that has affected activity locally is that during the latter half of 2018 two bunkering companies encountered difficulties in maintaining normal operating levels
1120 in Gibraltar. On both occasions the reasons behind the downturn were external to Gibraltar and due to other aspects of the businesses internationally. Nevertheless, I am happy to report that one of these operators is already back to near normal operating levels. The other is working hard to achieve the same. Given that there is no shortage of interest to develop new bunkering opportunities in Gibraltar from existing and new operators, I am entirely confident that the
1125 matter will be resolved very soon. Gibraltar is and will continue to be one of the biggest bunkering ports in the Mediterranean. Allied to this is a whole range of activities and services to the shipping and maritime world, from crew changes to underwater hull cleaning to provision of spare parts, food and lube oils. All the services which one would expect in a port of high repute are not only available but are being delivered in the customary Gibraltarian way – to a very high
1130 standard. That is why people keep coming back.

We continue to see positive figures in superyacht visits, with growth of just under 2% on last year. We continue to market Gibraltar as a destination of choice in this space and the Government, along with the GPA, Gibraltar Maritime Administration and the Gibraltar Tourist Board, hosted a stand at the Monaco Yacht Show in 2018. Our presence at this prestigious event
1135 is an important component in promoting Gibraltar within the yachting world. Our strong marketing approach in this sector means that Gibraltar continues to be a popular destination for some of the biggest and newest super and mega yachts in the world. These visits range from calls due to the repositioning of vessels to making crew changes or taking advantage of the many other maritime services that are on offer in our Port.

1140 The GPA's marketing strategy continues to produce good results. During the last 12 months the GPA has attended a variety of bunkering, cruising and general shipping events held in major maritime hubs, most notably Posidonia in Athens, where the GPA hosted a stand with key sponsors and partners. Gibraltar's maritime profile will be given a huge boost this year with Maritime Week Gibraltar, a new initiative scheduled to take place this year in late June. The
1145 Government, GPA, Gibraltar Maritime Administration and Petrosport have joined forces to create this new initiative, a major biennial event designed to showcase and promote Gibraltar's thriving maritime sector to a wide international audience. The aim of the initiative is to drive more maritime-related business to Gibraltar. I am delighted with the interest in Maritime Week Gibraltar and anticipate strong international participation. My thanks go to the local sponsors,
1150 without whom this event would not be possible.

Mr Speaker, the new LNG terminal at Waterport is generating considerable interest worldwide. I am pleased to report that we have already finalised the legal framework for LNG bunkering licensing as well the technical framework. LNG bunkering plans for Gibraltar will not
1155 include the use of the existing terminal for the supply or storage of LNG for ships. This will be performed via ship-to-ship transfer. Gibraltar will be one of the leading wave of ports that stand ready to support the changeover to this type of fuel in the coming years. LNG is expected to significantly improve the environmental performance of shipping worldwide. We are delighted to be part of this process and the keen interest that this investment is generating for our Port.

1160 Mr Speaker, I am delighted to report that the new GPA offices were inaugurated in October 2018 and I am pleased to say that both staff and visitors alike have been very impressed with the facilities. The upgraded VTS system is working very well and provides much needed additional capacity in respect of surveillance of all operations in BGTW, including enhanced night-time surveillance and monitoring capabilities.

1165 Regarding maritime assets, the Royal Gibraltar Police afforded the GPA the possibility of taking over one of their vessels. Initial tests carried out on the ex-RGP launch, renamed *Admiral Rooke*, indicated that it was suitable for port use. The vessel was then sent to Gibdock for maintenance and rebranding. During the refit process, a number of additional critical issues came to light, delaying the introduction of the *Admiral Rooke* into service. The launch should be ready for operations early this summer.

1170 Mr Speaker, with regard to the Gibraltar Maritime Administration, I am proud to say that the Gibraltar Shipping Registry is celebrating its 25th year anniversary. Against the backdrop of Brexit the overall Gibraltar fleet, both ships and yachts, stands at 1,313, which is an increase of 4% on last year. This is a notable statistic that serves to demonstrate that quality of service and overall technical performance is valued above the continued uncertainty over Brexit and the slower than anticipated recovery in the world shipping markets. In part, our success as a registry is a result of a lot of hard work in visiting new and established ship owners and managers, listening to their concerns with regard to Brexit and taking on board how the GMA can improve and adapt to changing circumstances. In support of this, the GMA is committed to travel to all safe ports to conduct inspections, surveys and audits to the highest standards in order to build and continue to have a working rapport with our clients.

1180 The GMA continues to work closely with the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency and other members of the Red Ensign Group. This year, the Maritime Administrator visited the Red Ensign Group annual conference held in the British Overseas Territory of Monserrat. The GMA was able to report its progress on the implementation of the Triple I code under the IMO convention. During the conference the GMA extended an invitation for training to Red Ensign Group Cat 2 members to share our expertise here in Gibraltar with regard to Port State Control inspections, in which Gibraltar is regarded as leader within the Red Ensign Group. This invitation has been accepted by Guernsey, who will send a surveyor to Gibraltar in September.

1190 As part of our modernisation and digitalisation process, the GMA's new seafarers' portal is now fully active. The GMA can now offer clients online registration and issuance of provisional and full-term certificates for seafarers. 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. We also expect to have a new and more interactive website.

1195 Mr Speaker, I now turn to the University of Gibraltar. This is, as hon. Members know, an autonomous educational institution established by the University of Gibraltar Act 2015. I am, however, happy to report on progress at the University. There have been a number of changes at the University over the last year. There is a new board of governors led by Albert Langston as its chairman. Prof. Catherine Bachleda has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor after acting in this position for almost a year. I congratulate Prof. Bachleda on her appointment.

1200 Important progress has been made for the regulation of the University, which has involved the passing into law of the University of Gibraltar (Regulation and Accountability) Regulations 2018, whereby the GRA was appointed as the University's independent regulator. The University has subsequently completed its first regulatory reporting cycle with GRA in a satisfactory manner. In September 2018, the University of Gibraltar (Academic Board) Regulations 2018 were published, formally establishing the University's Academic Board in line with the University of Gibraltar Act 2015.

1210 Sadly, this year we will say goodbye to Lord Luce, who is stepping down as Chancellor of the University after four years in office. Lord Luce, as we all know, has been a great friend of Gibraltar and has been an asset to the University as its first Chancellor. His experience and

1215 expertise has at all times been available to the University and this has been invaluable. I want to thank Lord Luce once again for his service and his commitment to the Gibraltar University. Recently, Lord Luce launched, in Gibraltar, the Chancellor's Lecture at the University. This is intended to be a yearly event. The inaugural Chancellor's Lecture was delivered by Lord Geidt on the Monarchy and the Commonwealth. This was illuminating and was well received by all present.

1220 Following a launch in 2018, the University's undergraduate Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) degree welcomed its first cohort of students, including the first two students funded by Parasol Scholarships. Developed in line with the UK Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code and commended by an external validation panel of experts, this industry-focused degree includes an important placement component that has been very well supported by local firms, allowing students to gain first-class industry experience. September 2018 also saw the University welcome its first students to its Master's in Marine Science and Climate Change. Students following this programme benefit from the support of Government Departments, including in particular the Department of the Environment. The Postgraduate Certificate in Education is on track to start in September of this year. Designed and developed by the University of Gibraltar in partnership with the Department of Education and Kingston University, it is the first time that this qualification will be offered in Gibraltar. Another first for Gibraltar is the commencement, also in September 2019, of the University's locally delivered Master of Business Administration (MBA). This means Gibraltar's professionals and graduates now have the option of studying for this elite business qualification at our University rather than via distance learning. There has been continued growth of the University's PhD research programme. There are now 17 PhD research students, mainly local, who are conducting meaningful research that will benefit the wider community. October 2018 saw the enrolment of the first two full-time Commonwealth Scholarship PhD students supported by the University's Institute of Life and Earth Sciences and the Institute for Gibraltar and Mediterranean Studies.

1235 As well as strong development of the University's academic programmes, the University is also making progress with its professional courses portfolio. We have seen a continuation of Law and Taxation Professional Certificates, together with other professional courses that also link closely with industry, including CILEx on law, CII on insurance, AAT on accounting, and short courses for digital innovation, business improvement, financial and management accounting, and sports coaching. Moreover, in recognition of the quality of many of its industry focused short courses, the University received membership of the CPD Certification Service providing recognised independent Continuous Professional Development accreditation compatible with global CPD principles.

1245 I am also pleased to report that the University has achieved Approved Learning Provider status for the Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme for those transitioning from MoD life to Civilian life. The University's Europa Point Language Centre received Approved Provider Centre status for Cambridge Assessment English. The University has been licensed by ACCA as a computer-based examination centre, allowing external examination candidates to sit their professional accountancy examinations online at the University. In May 2019 the University launched its first Professional Certificate of Competence in Blockchain and Smart Contracts. This is linked to the creation by the University in October 2018 of a Key Advisory Group for New Technologies in Education involving sector experts drawn from local industry and commerce. One-day Blockchain educational workshops were held in November 2018 and February 2019.

1255 The University's strategic plan for 2019-22 has recently been published following extensive consultations. The strategic plan sets out a path to create an institution of excellence in teaching, learning and research. Also of note, the University has recently appointed a Director of Quality to ensure that all University of Gibraltar degrees continue to be aligned to UK quality standards and simultaneously support the University's efforts of continuously enhancing the student experience. The University's standards are being recognised internationally too. Speaking of the recent PGCE programme, the external validation panel of experts described the

1260

1265 University's programme as 'ambitious and imaginative', 'innovative and high quality' and one that should 'enhance the education of children in Gibraltar'. The UK higher education representative body, GuildHE, recently described the University as 'small by design, strong links to local businesses, and committed to high-quality provision', while influential higher education publication *Wonkhe* wrote the following: 'The regulatory structures surrounding the University of Gibraltar are fascinating. It's like the English system drawn in miniature.'

1270 Mr Speaker, the international higher education sector is highly competitive and the University is keenly aware that it must market itself effectively. Its marketing efforts have included participation in student recruitment fairs and other promotional drives in countries as far afield as India and South America, as well as efforts closer to home in the UK, Spain and Morocco. This, alongside local and regional activity, aims to pitch the University shoulder to shoulder with global educational institutions.

1275 It would not be possible to attract international students without the availability of reasonably priced student accommodation, and the completion of the two residential student blocks which will be available for the start of the next academic year in September 2019 is an important milestone for the University. Equally important is the extra space that is needed to further expand its programmes, and this will be provided by the planned expansion to the adjacent St Christopher's School buildings.

1280 This year has also seen the University's collaborative ClimACT project draw to a close. It was a three-year project and over those three years the local ClimACT tripartite has facilitated a series of workshops for teachers in order to discuss and exchange ideas around the topic of education for sustainable development. As a result of these seminars, teachers themselves have shaped the aim, structure and operation of the framework for Gibraltar, this being the inception of Sustainable Schools Gibraltar.

1285 The University has prioritised the development of international relationships that reinforce its international standing and provide opportunities for its students. These have included agreements and discussions with the Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories; an MoU with the University of North Carolina in Wilmington; more recently, signing an agreement with Broward College, Florida to facilitate the transfer of students from Broward to the University; and also joining the Association of Commonwealth Universities as an Educational Affiliate Member. Commonwealth universities are able to network extensively and effectively through the ACU, sharing problems, solutions and good practice in a variety of higher education environments.

1295 The University will also be awarded the presidency of the Mediterranean Studies Association (MSA) when the Association meets later this year. The MSA is an organisation which promotes the scholarly study of the Mediterranean region in all aspects and disciplines. The presidency will be for a full year, ending with Gibraltar hosting the MSA conference during the last week of May 2020.

1300 There will, I am sure, be further and significant developments concerning the University which will be announced during the course of this current financial year. As we have seen, although still in its infancy it is clear that the University is making excellent progress and making its mark in global education. It is also supporting local businesses through its professional development programmes, as had always been envisaged and planned. It is extensively used as a venue for conferences, seminars and lectures. The University is clearly an asset to the community and will, I have no doubt, continue to grow in its importance as a teaching and learning institution.

1305 Mr Speaker, I now turn to Civil Contingencies. The Office of Civil Contingencies works very closely with the Emergency Services and other first responders in addressing the increasing and diversifying threats that we face. Threats continue to intensify and evolve and we must therefore remain prepared to respond and recover from a range of complex challenges. In the last couple of years we have seen how the UK has fallen victim to appalling terrorist attacks in Manchester and London as well as the audacious use of a nerve agent by state actors on the

1315 streets of Salisbury. Sadly, the threat from terror attacks continues to be all too familiar and it is
a threat that knows no international boundaries. The barbaric events in Christchurch, New
Zealand, and in Sri Lanka are such a reminder had we ever needed one. In recent months, we
1320 have seen the effects of the emerging threat from drones and the large-scale disruption that
these caused in both Gatwick and Heathrow Airports, some disruption of which has also been
felt in Gibraltar. We must also not forget the growing threat from cyber terrorism as nations
become more reliant on technology. We have seen how the UK has had its critical national
infrastructure threatened by attacks like the disruption at Bristol Airport in September, as well as
private information compromised in large-scale data breaches like Marriott and Equifax. Like the
1325 threat from international terrorism, these emerging threats are unaffected by international
boundaries. Gibraltar must be alive to all of these threats.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's National Risk Register has continued to evolve in line with the threat
environment. It captures the most significant risks that we face as a community, based on how
likely they are to happen and what their impacts might be. Some of the plans that have recently
1330 been renewed include the Major Incident Plan; Brexit no-deal planning; cybersecurity; the Mass
Casualty Plan; the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan; the Chemical, Biological, Radiological
and Nuclear Explosives (CBRN(e)) Response Framework; the LNG Plan; and marauding terrorist
attack. In terms of the CBRN(e) threat, the events that took place in Salisbury last year serve to
demonstrate the scale and impact that an incident of this nature can have on the community.
CBRN(e) response is a very specialised operation and the Office of Civil Contingencies has been
1335 in close contact with the National CBRN Centre, which is part of the UK's Counter Terrorism
Policing, to ensure that Gibraltar is best prepared to respond to such a threat. In December
2018, 18 members of our emergency services and other first responders qualified as CBRN
Operational and Tactical Commanders and we have also had two CBRN Strategic Commanders
qualified in May 2019.

1340 Multi-agency interoperability training lies at the heart of our preparedness. Throughout the
past 12 months a significant number of training events have been conducted, mainly aimed at
those who are at the sharp end of emergency response and recovery. Considerable effort and
resources go into each training event. We can never be too prepared. We can, however, ensure
that our organisations are as best prepared as possible to respond to any emergency or major
1345 incident.

Finally, on Social Security, I can report that the total amount of benefits paid out by the
Department in the financial year 2018-19 was £43,261,000 – over 80% of that in old age
pensions.

1350 Mr Speaker, we continue to take positive steps to improve services and to position ourselves
ahead of the competition in order to secure a positive future for Gibraltar and face the
challenges over the next few years – not least Brexit, if it ever happens.

Gibraltar is doing well. Whatever the challenges to come, we will face them with the
determination, hard work and commitment to our nation that Gibraltarians and all those who
live in this special place which we call home have always shown; and, as always, we will emerge
1355 stronger.

Last but not least, Mr Speaker, my sincere thanks to all my staff and everyone at the various
Departments which fall under my responsibility. I am deeply grateful for their work, their
continued support and their dedication.

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

1360

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Paul Balban.

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, this year I will once
again aim to make my contribution as concise and to the point as possible.

1365 The Ministry for Infrastructure and Planning works hard every year to ensure that all funding
approved in Parliament is put to the best use in order to achieve the maximum benefit for the

community. A large part of the Ministry is responsible for and dedicated to delivering real change in the way that we live, but especially in the way that we move. The Ministry predominantly lives and breathes traffic and transport while keeping a watchful eye on construction and development, as this may have a direct bearing on the way that we move. The mainstay of daily work is centred around mobility, trying to ensure that we may become a happier, fitter and healthier nation over time. We all want all of these things but the real challenge, especially for a nation with one of the greatest vehicle ownership rates in the world, is getting there.

Government has gone very far indeed in providing green and open spaces. Commonwealth Park has been an amazing success story and makes a massive environmental statement; the newly announced Mid Town Park will do likewise, providing another much-needed carbon sink. But this alone will not eradicate the root of our problem. We cannot reduce our carbon footprint by simply planting trees or paying for a carbon offset. We all have to play our part, however small that may be. Our daily dependence on vehicles is simply unsustainable and in many cases quite difficult to justify in terms of the short distances travelled relative to the environmental effect caused.

Slowly, more and more of us are developing a greater awareness of our environment, our emissions, about plastics, about recycling and even about what we eat and how this affects our environment. Greta Thurman recently brought the word 'environment' right into our very living rooms, the news channels constantly bringing environment issues to the forefront. An environmental emergency was recently declared and great work is being done worldwide by NGOs, charities and individuals but also within our own community to help raise awareness – the ESG and the Nautilus Project immediately spring to mind: people who give up their personal time for what they believe in and for the good of our planet.

Mr Speaker, I always thought that there was very little that a single person could do for the environment. I also even thought that, compared to large cities and large countries, there was very little that Gibraltar could contribute. Now I believe that I was wrong because if we do not all row in the same direction, we the developed world will destroy the planet – if we have not done so already; and unfortunately we are not rowing in the same direction. A single person can save between one and two tonnes of carbon dioxide per year by simply walking or cycling to work, and this puts things into perspective. Today I see more people cycling in Gibraltar – the Department installs bicycle racks, and bicycles just seem to appear – but we have a long way to go as a community, and although I am very proud of progress so far, if we do not up our game we will pay the price as a species. Lung cancer has now become the leading cause of cancer in Gibraltar. How much of this can be attributed to our environment, smoking, poor diet and lack of activity?

Mr Speaker, nestled intrinsically within the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan is the word 'environment'. The STTPP is nothing more than an environmental plan, a blueprint, a road map. There are huge challenges along the way. But change is change, and human nature does not adapt easily to change at first. This will be our collective challenge. We all want a greener, healthier, cleaner, fitter Gibraltar, but we just do not want this utopian dream to inconvenience daily life in any way. The STTPP focuses on this change and gives us the tools to try to harness the great potential that there is for change. It must, however, be a joint effort and it must involve us all. We have to make the STTPP *our* plan, the people's plan. We have got to want this, all of us, so that it has a truly positive impact on our health and on our lives.

Someone close to me recently said, 'Balban, you are like Yin and Yang – people love or hate you depending on the zone they live in.' Mr Speaker, that is a sad reality – well, at least for me. So harsh is the sentiment when it comes to personal transport, lifestyle and parking that one can either agree, appreciate and accept the reasoning and message behind the plan, or violently oppose and criticise it. The strength and dichotomy of feeling is astounding. Yet, just like in Chinese philosophy – Yin and Yang describes how opposite or contrary forces actually complement each other and are interconnected – in the same way, the STTPP is a puzzle of

1420 many pieces, some similar, others opposing, and until all of these pieces come together it is impossible, at least for the moment, to see their interaction and what the final result will show.

The Residential Parking Scheme makes parking easier for those who live within a given zone, yet it gently discourages the same from driving into other residential areas and occupying free parking spaces there for long periods of time, hence depriving the residents there of their own parking. However, parking is still available by way of free parking within given hours and by way of pay and display.

1425 I recently had the opportunity to network with officials of the Borough of Walthamstow in East London. They have recently embarked upon a scheme creating open spaces in the community. They work closely with the UK charity Living Streets. Though these schemes are aimed at giving streets back to the community by making them more attractive through tree planting, providing cycling routes and improving pedestrian safety so that people are able to enjoy their surroundings, their experiences have been very similar to ours. Local residents have been strongly and vociferously against these changes at first and it is most comforting to know that Gibraltar is not unique in this respect.

1430 Even though environmental objectives are for the benefit of all, people generally do not take kindly to change, at least at first. Furthermore, it is not just change that is unpopular, but indeed the mere thought of change or even a rumour of change can stir unrest. Following rumours that have recently been gathering momentum, residents of Varyl Begg Estate can rest assured that there are no changes envisaged to their current parking arrangements that will affect them in any way. There are no clandestine plans brewing within the Ministry. Furthermore, this parking arrangement will be administered by the Ministry for Housing and policed by their private agents and not parking management officers.

1440 Mr Speaker, this past financial year has seen zone 3 come to life. This zone has been relatively easy to see through, simply because this zone is far larger than previous zones. Sandpits, New Harbours and South Pavilion car parks also add to the parking stock available within the area. A further new parking facility has recently been built within the South District in what was a dilapidated and derelict Rosia Lane. This car park will provide 47 new parking spaces with infrastructure for two electric vehicles. There will also be some provision to park motorbikes within the facility. This facility will become operational once the final security features are fitted and the allocation process is complete. Visitor parking is also far easier to provide for non-zone permit holders between 8 a.m. and 2 a.m. Further areas will shortly be provided within zone 3 for this purpose as part of the tweaks planned.

1445 Zone 2, although still spoken about, no longer attracts as much attention. The Ministry has now had time to consider in part the effects that the Residential Parking Scheme has had on other sectors of the community, not least blue badge holders and the business community who require access to parking to go about their daily work. I am most grateful to the Chamber of Commerce and the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses for their support of our initiatives and for sharing their views with us. We will shortly be making an announcement that will be welcomed by the business community, allowing them to access all residential parking zones except zone 2, which will continue to be accessed as normal via the loading and unloading areas within the delivery hubs.

1460 Blue badge holders will also shortly be able to access a greater number of parking spaces by way of the newly introduced parking clocks. An announcement to this effect will also be made shortly. Once these few further initiatives have been rolled out and given time to assess, we will be ready to move ahead with the Residential Parking Scheme.

1465 Mr Speaker, pay and display parking continues to be the preferred and most effective method for sharing public parking space. It prevents cars remaining in parking spaces for weeks and months on end. Pay and display parking also ensures that those who require to drive may still be able to do so and find parking away from their own residential areas. Pay and display also provides the necessary turnaround that helps people access businesses for relatively short periods of time – for example, restaurants and shops – and so, to this end, extra pay and display

parking has been recently provided at Europort and outside Atlantic Suites. Last financial year, parking spaces were also increased along Waterport Road and a dedicated motorcycle parking area was built in the same area.

1475 In an attempt to improve parking for blue badge holders, a new clock system was recently implemented so that parking turnaround could be encouraged. The clock permits parking for up to three hours, as is the practice adopted in the UK. A small number of blue bays have been designated timed bays. This pilot scheme will be assessed and improved upon as necessary. The Ministry is aware that respectful blue badge users not only have to live with the daily abuse of a system which is very difficult to police, but are also confronted with many issues that affect their
1480 ability to carry out their daily activity. To this end, the Ministry will shortly be announcing a further enhancement to the benefits of the scheme, which will also start on a pilot basis. Holders of a blue badge will be able to park using their time clock in conjunction with a specific parking permit within other residential parking zones. This will hopefully help improve accessibility.

1485 Gibraltar Parking and Management Services Limited is responsible for all the operational functions regarding parking and parking enforcement in Gibraltar. A full review of the operation, facilities and parking hardware is currently being carried out within all car parking facilities with a view to upgrading equipment and procedures to meet modern-day smart technologies. To this end, older pay and display machines and barrier systems are being replaced by modern equipment. Locally, our payment platforms have the unenviable task of catering for coins of
1490 different currencies. This creates many difficulties. All new machines now accept card payments, which supports the worldwide trend towards cashless systems. Over time, the aim will be to become predominantly cashless, where possible.

A full review of the present CCTV network is also being undertaken with a view to updating the present systems to improve their resilience in tacking vandalism, damage and abuse.

1495 Monthly rental parking provides a very critical resource, especially in areas where on-street parking is poor. These parking facilities are even more crucial within zone 2, where there is fierce competition between residents, local visitors and tourists for parking. The provision of this type of parking is increasing, providing residents with that guaranteed parking space which is very much in demand. Ocean Spa Plaza car park will be completely operational within the next few
1500 months and will be providing over 100 parking spaces available for rent.

We will also, over time, be introducing smart parking technology in Gibraltar, offering services in line with all major cities worldwide. These systems will provide valuable data, which is so critical in today's digital age. Data and its management are key in trying to understand parking habits and needs within a community. It also provides the means to be able to guide car users,
1505 especially visitors to Gibraltar, to specific car park facilities where parking is available. This is crucial to help control and effectively manage traffic and parking stock. Data also provides insight into parking behaviour and the length of stay of cars in a given space. This data can then be used to change permitted maximum parking times to suit the business and personal needs of the population. Parking stock will then be linked to a parking app which will allow top ups permitting payment over mobile devices. New parking apps will direct drivers to vacant spaces rather than encourage that endless search for parking which results in greater emissions and cost. Online payment of FPNs will also be made possible via this system. A new website presently under construction will provide online forms, together with information on services and road condition. It will be possible to renew parking permits online. New policing vehicles
1510 fitted with ANPR technology will patrol streets to pick out incorrectly parked vehicles or those with expired roadworthiness certificates. This technology will greatly assist policing on the ground. I would like to thank GPMSL for their hard work over the past year providing this critical role, doing a job that is hugely demanding and unpopular.

1515 Mr Speaker, cycling is arguably the frontrunner in the race to sustainable personal transport for medium-length trips. With this in mind, a number of bicycle-related initiatives have been rolled out this past financial year. Cycling along Main Street and Irish Town has now been permitted for almost a year and it has provided an area where anyone wishing to cycle in safety
1520

is able to do so while respecting the pedestrians. This area has been well received by certain sectors that are open to consider the bicycle as a means of transport. Most of the complaints received, however, have been as a result of cyclists disrespecting the natural direction of traffic flow and failing to respect the operational hours. However, children on cycling proficiency courses and charity events have enjoyed the use of this area during the specified operational hours. A few tweaks have been made, opening up further tributaries along Main Street and Irish Town to increase the value of the scheme. In the coming months, further areas will be opened to bicycles, thereby improving connections and providing shortcuts between areas, making cycling an even more efficient mode of transport.

Cycle lane infrastructure is presently being considered for Gibraltar as a means of improving safety and encouraging take-up. Shared spaces will shortly be provided along the Saluting Battery and within Wellington Front to facilitate access to bicycles. Much-needed cycle racks have been fitted around Gibraltar but especially around the Europort area, which sees the most bicycles being used for work. Further racks will continue to be provided over the next financial year.

The Redibike Scheme was recently extended to Beachview Terraces, Catalan Bay and Governor's Parade in an attempt to reach out to hotels, their guests and the beaches on the Eastside. Although the uptake of the bicycle sharing scheme is not as great as one would have hoped for, usage continues to grow and the scheme has been a stepping stone for some to try out a bike and then eventually perhaps buy one of their own. That in itself is such a positive effect.

The Royal Gibraltar Police have spearheaded bicycle proficiency courses for years. I personally undertook a course with them over 35 year ago. I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank them today for the excellent work that they have done over the many years that these courses have been going on. These courses began in 1978, led by PCs Galia, Field, Gomez and the late PC Felices. These courses provided, and still do to this day, schoolchildren with the basic skills of balance and cycling awareness within the safety of a playground environment where very useful skills were taught.

This financial year, the Ministry have engaged with the Royal Gibraltar Police and Youth.gi, aiming to take these proficiency courses to the next level, empowering children and adults alike to learn how to cycle safely and become road savvy. The urban environment is full of challenges to overcome and a cyclist today needs to have the necessary tools to be confident when cycling. To this end, the Ministry has been working closely with the BikeAbility Trust in the UK and their subcontracted instructors. Gibraltar now has six provisionally qualified instructors, who will be shortly engaging with schools and the community at large. These courses will range from teaching someone how to cycle to teaching cyclists how to ride safely on busy roads. I am very excited to see this initiative take off. Furthermore, there are currently two instructors working in Cambridge training to become fully qualified cycling instructors. I would like to thank all of the six newly qualified local instructors and wish Martin Graffione and Simon Debono success. I would also like to thank their respective departmental heads, who have been instrumental in supporting this initiative.

With growing awareness comes an increased demand for cleaner, more breathable, safer and liveable streets. Finally on the matter of bicycles, the Ministry is looking at possible ways of allowing access for cargo bikes and e-cargo bikes for the delivery of goods for extended periods of time within the pedestrianised area of Main Street and Irish Town on a pilot basis. This would mean that businesses would no longer need to enter these roads before the 9.15 a.m. curfew.

This year, pedestrian improvements have been made at Corral Road and Market Place by way of two much-needed pedestrian crossings. At Chatham Counterguard, new and more aesthetically pleasing cannon-shaped barriers and planters have been placed to safeguard pedestrians and clients of the restaurants in the area. Main Street will also shortly be seeing an uplift of its security barriers to more ornate and decorative ones which are more in keeping with Gibraltar and the attractiveness of Main Street.

1575 Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's buses are a key and very critical part of transport within the STTPP. Encouraging modal change requires an efficient and reliable bus service and the Gibraltar Bus Company provides exactly this. There is little reason not to consider the bus offering in Gibraltar, which is predominantly free for locals with the exception of the night bus services. The Bus Tracker app has been revolutionary in putting the bus service right into the hands of the user.

1580 The recent reintroduction of the request bus stop at certain bus stops has greatly improved the service timing and made the ride more comfortable for both the user and the bus driver. New bus stop signs are replacing dated signs throughout Gibraltar. The new signs are designed to be more user friendly, providing clearer information regarding the name and location of the bus stop, the bus routes servicing the bus stop with their respective ending termini and the
1585 specific bus routes' direction. The Bus Company will shortly be introducing new bus maps and timetabling information at all of its main bus stops. The bus stop signs feature new branding which helps clearly identify the bus stops, the new logo representing public transport in Gibraltar.

This year has also seen the introduction of a new school bus route departing from the South District every weekday during school term time. The new school bus service tackles the issues brought to our attention by users who were concerned that route buses were full at school peak times. This shows that bus use is increasing and is therefore a good problem to have.

I would like to thank all those down at the Gibraltar Bus Company, the bus manager, his management team and all the bus drivers, who work long hours day, night and into the early hours of the morning on weekends via the night bus. They provide a service so that we are able
1595 to go out and enjoy the nightlife safely and sustainably.

Mr Speaker, turning now to Technical Services, the Department continues to provide technical support on construction, engineering and traffic-related matters, as well as meeting their responsibilities of maintaining public infrastructure including coastal engineering works, cliff stabilisation, the repair of retaining walls, highways resurfacing and highways and sewer
1600 maintenance. In addition, the Technical Services Department also provides support on the implementation of several key projects related to the STTPP.

This past financial year, the Highways section has been involved in major resurfacing works along Rodger's Road, St Joseph's Road and Upper Witham's Road. Furthermore, having taken
1605 into careful consideration the timing of major construction projects throughout Gibraltar, road resurfacing schemes have now been completed or are ongoing throughout many sections of road network including Queensway, Glacis Road and Laguna Estate. Other sections of road will also be tackled this financial year. Some sections have not been resurfaced between stretches of new asphalt as other major road works or developments are due to commence shortly. The
1610 feedback so far has been great.

In addition, the new mini-roundabout at Devil's Tower Road was completed last year and now the provisional pilot roundabout outside the now completed Ocean Spa Plaza development is about to be made permanent. This roundabout has been the subject of much criticism by the Opposition, who have simply not understood that resurfacing and road infrastructural works of
1615 this nature need to be carried out at the right time so as not to risk unnecessary damage while construction works are still ongoing. The Highways section have kept a watchful eye on this area to ensure that the surface, although uneven, was still kept to the minimum standard required. The developer will now be carrying out and funding these works as agreed.

The Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the public highway, which have been challenging of late due to the vast amount of construction projects under way.

I am pleased to announce that the final phase of the project to fill in the paving joints on Main Street was completed last year.

With respect to cliff stabilisation and rockfall prevention projects during the 2018-19 financial year, the Department has been involved in numerous schemes within the Upper Rock. This has
1625 seen the stabilisation works carried out at O'Hara's Battery, Queen's Road, the Apes Den,

1630 St Michael's Cave, Spur Battery Road and Green Lodge Battery. These areas are all located in places which are frequented by locals and visitors to Gibraltar alike and it is important that within the limitations of living in a place like Gibraltar, where rock falls are inevitable, these areas are kept as safe as possible.

1635 During the past year, the Technical Services Department was also involved with works to a number of retaining walls including Willis's Road, Windmill Hill Road, Spur Battery, Line Wall Road, Sir Herbert Miles Road and Castle Steps. During the current year the Department will continue to monitor our retaining walls and effect repairs as necessary but will focus their efforts in the area of Blackstrap Cove, where movement of the ground has been observed.

1640 Turning to sewers, during the past year the Infrastructure section of the Department have continued to maintain the public sewerage network as part of Government's commitment in this area. Major desilting and relining works were carried out to the main sewer running under part of Line Wall Road extending southwards along Lovers' Lane. These works are considered essential given the condition of the sewer in this location and the disruption that can be caused in the event of a failure of the sewerage network.

1645 Works were also completed along Rosia Bay, Europa Point, Crutchett's Ramp, Cooperage Lane and Queensway to provide additional flood alleviation measures. The Department will this year continue its major desilting and cleansing works of the sewer network and will be carrying out upgrade works where necessary. Other works will include gully cleansing, manhole repairs and the general upkeep of the public storm and sewerage networks.

1650 Given the sharp rise in developments in Gibraltar, the Department continues to provide advice to both developers and the DPC on the impact that these various developments can have on our existing sewerage network.

1655 Finally, funding is once again being provided this year for the purchase of equipment to allow the Sewer Infrastructure section to continue to expand and provide an enhanced service in respect of its inspections of the sewer network. This also applies to the Garage and Workshop, where funding for new equipment is also being provided. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles, despite suffering from a lack of resources.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of all the sections within the Technical Services Department for their hard work and commitment during the year.

1660 I will now turn my attention to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department (DVLD). The DVLD this year has been extremely busy preparing for all possibilities, not least a no-deal Brexit. Although negotiations are still ongoing, I can confidently say that very good progress has been made and no stone has been left unturned when it has come to Gibraltar's transport.

1665 I must start by thanking the Chief Examiner, who for the past year has been literally living out of his suitcase not only travelling on Brexit-related business but also attending to all his other engagements and commitments within all of the European bodies and transport-related committees that Gibraltar is part of, while still managing the ever-busier MoT Test Centre. As a person with solid connections and very well respected by our counterparts in the UK, the DVLA and other fora within Europe, he will be greatly missed. I wish him and his family all the very best on his retirement later this year and wish to thank him for all of his hard work and support of the Ministry.

1670 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 allows the public transport offering to improve. They also manage the busy morning Main Street delivery window. I would like to thank them for a difficult job well done.

1675 A huge amount of work has been carried out and is still ongoing with respect to our Gibraltar driving licences in order to ensure that we can continue to drive throughout the EU under any Brexit scenario. Although the UK did extend the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic to Gibraltar, which in a no-deal scenario will allow our drivers to be issued with an International Driving Permit (IDP) to enable them to continue to drive throughout all 1949 Convention

1680 contracting parties, Government has successfully negotiated that upon the UK's ratification of
the 1968 Vienna Convention this Convention also be extended to Gibraltar. It follows that the
DVLD, together with the Government Law Offices, have worked extensively to achieve this
1685 agreement within very short timescales. Therefore, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, all is now in
place to unsure that local drivers can use an International Driving Permit in conjunction with the
present driving licence, allowing us to be able to drive throughout the whole of Europe and
indeed the world. Nevertheless, negotiations are still ongoing between the DVLD and the
Department for Transport in the UK for Gibraltar's present photocard licences to be included in
all driving licence recognising agreements that the UK signs with other member states. If
1690 successful, this will allow our driving licence to be accepted throughout the EU on its own and
without the IDP. Hence, there may not even be a need to apply for IDPs for access to certain
member states. Moreover, agreements are also in place for registration certificates, or log
books, and roadworthiness certificates, MoT certificates. Therefore, in the case that the UK
leaves the EU without a deal, all the necessary practical procedures and processes are already in
place to allow our drivers to continue to drive throughout the EU seamlessly.

1695 Mr Speaker, although further delayed because of Brexit negotiations being undertaken by the
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency in the UK, the DVLD has now finalised and agreed
negotiations and administrative procedures regarding the digital tachograph card, almost
complete. Although applications for these cards will be expedited at the DVLD, due to our small
demand the DVLA will be personalising and providing our cards. This will allow our drivers,
1700 undertakings and law enforcement agencies to be able to have these cards readily available in
the very near future. These negotiations have been lengthy and extensive; however, I am
extremely happy to announce that there will be no cost involved to Government for this process
other than the cost of issuing the cards themselves.

1705 Mr Speaker, the motorcycle compulsory basic training (CBT) continues to be a tremendous
success and is a valuable tool for reducing accidents on the road caused by inexperienced
drivers. Feedback continues to be extremely positive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of staff down at Eastern Beach for
their very hard work and dedication throughout this very tough year, especially those dealing
with all the pressures that Brexit has brought upon them, especially at the public counter.

1710 Mr Speaker, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar recently announced the publication of a
consultation paper on the regulation of personal transporters. This is a subject that appears to
be raising much discussion within social media. The greatest problem faced will unfortunately be
the lack of respect for other road users. These devices can already be seen travelling through
pedestrianised areas, along pavements, going against the flow of traffic and being ridden
1715 dangerously. Unfortunately, this works against the acceptance of these devices within the
community, as they would be highly difficult to police. In the end, pedestrian and child safety
will be of paramount importance when considering the future of these devices. Nevertheless,
feedback so far has been extremely poor. Few have responded to the official consultation paper,
yet debate continues afloat within social media groups among limited groups. I actively
1720 encourage those with opinions to make these known via the consultation paper so that a final
decision will consider the opinions of the public at large.

1725 Mr Speaker, finally, I will 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 2018 there were a total of
538 applications. Many of these have related to large-scale developments that involve complex
planning considerations, including the consideration of environmental effects through the
environmental impact assessment (EIA) process. The EIA process involves extensive discussions
with applicants, developers and stakeholders with the intention of mitigating environmental
impacts and achieving high standards of architectural design, attractive townscapes and good-
quality environments for residents and visitors alike.

1730 In 2018, there were 57 planning, building and demolition applications submitted by
Government and the MoD which sought advice and guidance from the Development and
Planning Commission. A total of 13 public meetings of the DPC were held this past financial year.
1735 Additionally, the DPC's subcommittee met 38 times to determine minor applications, which
greatly helps to speed up the decision-making process for more minor applications. Agendas and
minutes of DPC meetings continue to be made available online. During the course of this year
the Government is aiming to introduce live streaming of all meetings of the DPC. This will greatly
enhance the ability of the general public to view the important work of the DPC and adds further
to an open and transparent planning system.

The e-planning service continues to operate successfully, allowing easy access to application
1740 details for the public and providing a platform through which applicants can submit their
applications online. Town Planning staff will continue to develop this e-planning system. During
the course of this year we will also be working towards a solution that will allow applicants to
pay application fees online.

Turning to matters of urban renewal, I am pleased to say that the Tax Relief on Facade
1745 Improvements Scheme continues to operate well, with the aim of encouraging property owners
to improve the appearance of their buildings. There were 14 applications under this scheme in
2018 with a total value of works of over £½ million. The Urban Renewal section has been active
in approaching landlords to carry out improvements to facades. Our focus continues to be on
1750 identifying specific buildings in need of refurbishment and encouraging owners to undertake
improvement works, thereby bringing new life into these urban areas. Additionally, four sites
have been embellished with new street art images, bringing life to otherwise featureless and
uninteresting areas. More sites are currently being considered.

The Building Control section continues to work hard in ensuring that buildings are built to the
1755 appropriate standards. During 2018, the section issued approximately 320 Certificates of Fitness
or Completion certifying completed works. This figure has increased from last year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff of the Department of Town
Planning and Building Control for their dedication and hard work throughout the year in what
can often be a difficult and controversial area of work.

I would like to thank all my personal ministerial staff, whom I share most of my working day
1760 with, for all their help, support and very hard work during the past year and always. I would also
like to thank my Traffic Team, namely Dylan Infante, for taking on such an immensely
complicated and technical brief as is the STTPP. I also wish to thank all members of the Traffic
and Transport Commission, many of whom give up their personal time to attend the many
meetings throughout the year.

1765 Finally, I also wish to thank you, Mr Speaker, the Clerk and all parliamentary staff for their
help and very long hours throughout the year.

I commend the Bill to the House. *(Banging on desks)*

1770 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I think that might be a convenient moment to adjourn until
three o'clock this afternoon.

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

The House adjourned at 12.47 p.m.