



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.37 p.m. – 6.46 p.m.

Gibraltar, Friday, 26th June 2020

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.37 p.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. M L Farrell BEM GMD RD JP *in the Chair*]

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

PRAYER

Mr Speaker

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Friday, 26th June 2020.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the last meeting of Parliament, which was held on 28th May and 1st June 2020.

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Mr Speaker: May I sign the Minutes as correct? (**Members:** Aye.)

Mr Speaker signed the Minutes.

Negotiations re post-Brexit relationship with EU; Economic assistance for the business community – Statement by the Chief Minister

Clerk: Statement from the Hon. the Chief Minister.

10 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, good afternoon to you and to all Members.

Yesterday afternoon, I addressed the European Union Select Committee of the House of Lords at Westminster. In fact, neither those asking the questions nor those of us answering were in Westminster. Their lordships were in their respective homes and I was here in Gibraltar, at No. 6 Convent Place, but I was able to answer questions from their lordships on the ongoing negotiations for a future relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar and the European Union. I was also able to address matters related to how we had dealt with the coronavirus pandemic and the interplay between that difficult time and the European Union negotiations. As I told the House of Lords yesterday, I remain confident that with goodwill, energy and enthusiasm we may be able to deliver a positive outcome for those negotiations in coming months. I will endeavour to keep the House and the public abreast of all developments. The Deputy Chief Minister and I have already briefed the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Lady on the details of what is happening in respect of the discussions afoot. We will continue to do so as matters progress.

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25 Mr Speaker, it is also important that I should now move on to the economic assistance
measures we will be introducing to support our business community after the end of this month,
the end of the second quarter of the year, and once the original BEAT COVID measures expire.

Government stands by and with our private sector employees and our business community,
as we have demonstrated these past months. We have worked with the representatives of both
30 employees and businesses in this difficult period. We have propped up businesses that have
been closed by us, with payments to ensure their employees had income to put food on the
table so that no family went without, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with employees and
with businesses in order to ensure that they get through this period.

It is now time to shift that support to the next level as businesses begin to reopen in a new
and challenging environment where continued support is required but where we also need to
35 stimulate and encourage more commercial activity. We need to start the move back to a market
economy, but we must do so knowing that there is not much of a market out there, or at least
not as much of a market out there as there was and as we would wish.

In that stance we have sought to introduce measures that intervene as little as possible
whilst providing as much support as possible. This is undoubtedly a difficult balance. As a
40 Government, we want to support business through this difficult period, but equally we do not
want to dictate how businesses are run. We do not want to create market unfairness with the
way that we ensure that we provide the help required to ensure that there is no severe social
consequence from rising unemployment.

We also appreciate that businesses need certainty, and therefore the majority of these
45 measures will apply for the full third quarter of 2020 – that is to say from July next week to
September – except where I explain otherwise.

These measures are intended to support our business community and be better able to face
the challenges that our economy faces. The measures are designed also to provide support for
continued employment but ensuring that employees are now paid by their employers and not
50 directly by the taxpayer through their employers.

I can report that we have continued to discuss these issues and these measures that we are
going to propose today with the COVID Emergency Liaison and Advisory Committee (CELAC). I
am grateful to each of the CELAC representative groups – that is to say the Chamber of
Commerce, the GFSB, Unite the Union and the GGCA, the Finance Centre Council, the Gibraltar
55 Betting and Gaming Association and the Landlords Association – who have been instrumental in
guiding our thinking as we have formulated these new measures. I would like to take the
opportunity also to thank each of them for their productive and fruitful engagement.

I have today also informed the Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Roy Clinton of these
measures. Given the time constraints, it has only been possible to discuss this with them briefly
60 and I have invited their further thoughts and comments in coming days. I look forward to a
further discussion with them as we prepare the necessary legislation to give effect to these
measures. As we have to date, we will be open to any suggestions they may make that we might
be able to agree to improve these measures in some way. I have also sent the hon. Lady an
advance copy of my Statement this afternoon.

65 Mr Speaker, the measures that we intend to give effect to are as follows. First of all, I will be
making a statement early next week on our proposed changes to the payment of import duty,
which will be effective for the third quarter of 2020. As is the custom, I will announce these on
the same day that they come into force. However, I can report that the exemption for motor
vehicles will be extended for one final month. This has been a positive example of a measure
70 that has stimulated a sector of our economy that would otherwise have closed and relied on
direct Government support. It is interesting for the House to know that this measure alone has
resulted in a BEAT payment saving of some £1.4 million to the taxpayer whilst at the same time
stimulating economic activity and creating confidence as we emerge from lockdown. This is also
a sector that employs many hundreds of people and supports many more families in Gibraltar. It
75 is a sector that invests in people through training and in successful marketing of their goods and

services well beyond our frontiers. In addition, the very good news is that the cars that have been purchased over the past quarter are more environmentally friendly than the cars that are being replaced, so this is a measure that has also a positive environmental impact. It will be interesting for the whole community to know, and indeed for this House to note, that the mix of vehicles purchased and ordered in May and June is just shy of 20% hybrids and electric vehicles. That means that we are adding one fifth of the new cars on our roads this quarter to the ranks of hybrid and, to a lesser extent, electric vehicles; a very positive beginning of a transformation of the fleet on our roads.

Now moving on to rates, Government will offer a further 25% discount to the early repayment discount scheme for rates across all sectors. This enhanced rates discount will apply to all businesses who do not have rates arrears as at 31st March 2020 and who pay their rates on time. For example, in the context of the catering industry, if a restaurant business has a rates Bill of £1,000 it would ordinarily pay £500 with the early-repayment discount of 50%. With the new discount scheme, such a business would receive an enhanced early-repayment discount of a total of 75% and would therefore pay £250 only out of the £1,000 due, as long as they are up to date on 31st March and they pay on time. As at 31st March 2020 I can confirm that 92% of all businesses had actually paid their rates on time and were up to date with their rates. This is a trend that I hope to see continued and improved throughout this third quarter and this stimulus will help the market in that way also. The enhanced rates discount will not apply, however, to supermarkets and pharmacies, but will apply to all other sectors. The rates discount will only apply to commercial property, however, and will not apply to residential property. We are dealing with businesses in this type of measure.

Moving now on to rents, different percentages of discounts will apply in relation to rents. Government will now apply a 50% discount to all its commercial tenants for the third quarter of this year, which starts next week. Businesses that have enjoyed a commercial rent reduction for the second quarter of 2020 will see Government once again also encourage private landlords to give such businesses a further rent discount of 25% for the whole of this third quarter. As we did in the second quarter, Her Majesty's Government will encourage private landlords to offer this reduction in rent by applying a tax of three times to that part of the rent that the landlord has refused to discount. Further and additionally, if the discount is not applied the commercial tenants will be entitled to a three times reduction from the tax assessment of that unreduced element of the rent. By way of example, therefore, if a tenant is paying £1,000 a month in rent we would expect to see this rent reduced for the quarter to £750. Landlords who do not participate in assisting businesses in the way that we have proposed will be taxed on a total rent for the month of £1,500 and the tenant will be allowed a total deduction for rent for the month of £1,500 too. But remember that the rent would be £1,000.

Any rental increases due in any commercial premises for the period of 1st July 2020 to 31st March 2021 are hereby suspended for this period. This applies to Government commercial tenancies as well as to private landlords and their commercial tenants. This means that until 1st April 2021 no business will face a rental increase. We will shortly be introducing legislation to implement this measure.

Further, Government will be waiving all tables and chairs licence fees for external areas in their entirety up to and including 31st March 2021. Private sector landlords will also be required to reduce these rental or licence fees for tables and chairs by 50% in the same manner that I have already described for private sector rents, also until 31st March 2021. In order to avail themselves of these rent measures the tenant must not have rent arrears as at 31st March 2020.

Government will also provide an arbitrator into private landlords and tenants in order to settle any dispute in respect of the Distress Relief Fund that they have voluntarily established and which we welcome.

The intention behind these measures is to soften the blow of fixed costs which we are seeking to reasonably mitigate as businesses begin to emerge from lockdown in this difficult period. In respect of these measures I should also record that I have had a very productive and

informative meeting with the Gibraltar Catering Association (GCA) and some of their suggestions are reflected in the measures that I am introducing today. I thank the Chairman of the GCA, Gino Jimenez, and his team for their very open and positive engagement with us.

Mr Speaker, we have protected the job market by taking a snapshot of our economy as at 15th March. This has worked as intended during a period of the utmost uncertainty. We have provided stability and certainty. We must now move on to a next phase.

As from 1st July 2020 all those businesses from the excluded sector that did not benefit from BEAT payments will be able to process terminations through the Department of Employment in the normal manner. These businesses have not taken the Queen's shilling and they should not be subject to this Parliament's lock on the way that they do business. The same holds true for any business from the included sector that did not receive BEAT but who will also be able to terminate employment in the usual way.

As businesses emerge from the extraordinary lockdown that we were forced to impose, Government's focus moves from supporting individual employees towards supporting the business itself so it can support its employees and the business that it undertakes. We are seeking to ensure that these businesses have the resources they need to be able to bounce back from this crisis as the safety net we have provided will reduce as they rebuild their own liquidity and resources. We need them to be able to operate as fully as is possible and in compliance with the Unlock the Rock guidelines.

As the BEAT payments continue as a grant, the business is able to use the support it receives from Government towards meeting its ordinary course of business expenses. It is not a payment that it requires to pay on to a designated employee in the prescribed sum, as was the case with the first version of BEAT. These payments will continue throughout the entirety of the third quarter – that is to say July, August and September – and any business that received a BEAT COVID-19 contribution and any self-employed person who received a BEAT COVID-19 payment will qualify automatically for the new BEAT. There are some exceptions, such as businesses that are deemed by Government to be in substantive operation throughout. This exemption would apply, for example, to the larger businesses in the construction and ship-repair industries that are in substantive operation.

The new BEAT payment will be calculated as an average of the payments that each firm or self-employed person received over the months of April and May. Once we determine the average for these months, the amounts to be paid for July, August and September will reduce on a sliding scale. The scale will be set at 60% for July, 40% for August and 20% for September. This will give businesses today the certainty that they themselves can calculate the amounts that they will receive over the entirety of the next quarter and plan accordingly. Businesses will also have the greater part of the support in the first month. This will provide liquidity at a time when they face the biggest challenges as they work to return to normal business operations. As an example, a business that received £12,000 in April and £8,000 in May would have had an average over both months of £10,000. This business would then receive £6,000 in July, £4,000 in August and £2,000 for September.

This new BEAT scheme will follow a very simple automated system, where Government will itself contact businesses by email and ask them to confirm whether they agree to comply with the new BEAT terms. A simple email response will then enable monthly payments to the same bank accounts into which businesses received their original BEAT COVID-19 contributions or self-employed BEAT COVID-19 payments.

Businesses in the included sector that did not avail themselves of BEAT in its first incarnation will, as a gesture of goodwill, nonetheless exceptionally be considered for grants under this new incarnation of BEAT on application. Each case will, of course, be considered on a case by case basis.

The new BEAT measures will only be paid to businesses that are operating in accordance with the guidelines set out in our Unlock the Rock document. For example, a restaurant that is

180 allowed to open with 50% capacity but chooses instead to remain closed will be automatically excluded from the new BEAT payments.

There will be more technical announcements that will be made in due course to cover erroneous payments and appeals that took place in respect of the first incarnation of BEAT and how those will interface with this second incarnation of BEAT.

185 The new BEAT will come with a number of small but important conditions. The breach of any of these conditions will automatically convert the grant payments that are being given to these companies into an interest-bearing loan that the business will then have to repay to the Government on terms which I will detail below. Any non-compliance with these measures will result in the grant being converted into a loan.

190 Firstly, businesses will only be able to use the grant money solely and exclusively for meeting the necessary costs and expenses incurred in the ordinary course of business. This support should be used to make the business leaner to withstand a post-COVID-19 business environment. We will not allow a business that is in receipt of the new BEAT to declare or charge a bonus or a dividend for the period of at least six months from 1st July 2020. We do not anticipate the businesses will use the new BEAT irresponsibly but we will not tolerate any abuse
195 whatsoever.

Secondly, firms in receipt of BEAT payments will be able to terminate employment contracts with effect from 1st July 2020. However, any business that terminates more than 30% of its workforce at any time during the next six months – that is to say from 1st July this year – will automatically have their new BEAT grant also converted into a loan on the terms described
200 below and they will forfeit further unpaid BEAT amounts. Although we have relaxed the ability of BEAT-receiving firms to terminate employment contracts, we will limit these to 30% of the total number of employees for the third quarter of the year for those firms that wish to continue to avail themselves of the BEAT grant. As a consequence of this measure, any business that is in receipt of the new BEAT grant will also need to give seven days' prior notice in writing to the
205 Director of Employment of the terminations that they are seeking to make. Government will also retain the ability and discretion to adjust pro rata subsequent new BEAT payments, having regard to the number of terminations that a business in receipt of the new BEAT grant makes. This may apply even if these terminations are within the 30% threshold.

Finally, any business that is in receipt of the new BEAT grant and is found to have
210 unregistered labour will also face the conversion of their grant to a loan. Any further grant payments will also therefore be suspended to such a company. We invite all businesses to ensure that all their employees are properly and fully registered in Gibraltar according to law. To this end, I am pleased to announce a one-month amnesty for the month of July to enable all firms to ensure their employees are properly registered. With effect from 1st August 2020 we
215 will vigorously police unregistered employment and clamp down on unregistered labour. We will also increase the fines available for non-compliance.

Any new BEAT grant that is converted into a loan for the reasons I have already described for the breach of those terms will be administered by the Central Arrears Unit as a debt to Government. These loans will bear interest at the rate of 6% and will be repaid over a maximum
220 of a five-year period, payable in equal monthly instalments to cover capital and interest on a reducing balance basis. In insolvency, any new BEAT grant will be also a preferential debt due to Government for the purposes of the Insolvency Act.

Further, all sectors will be subject to the usual PAYE and Social Insurance obligations with effect from 1st July 2020. Any PAYE and Social Insurance that was deferred during the second
225 quarter of 2020 will need to be repaid before 31st March 2021. Firms will therefore be able to gradually repay these deferred taxes over this period. Arrangements for these repayments will need to be co-ordinated by the Central Arrears Unit in close consultation with the Income Tax Office.

Over this third quarter, and in line with global tax administration responses to the COVID-19
230 pandemic as published by the OECD, the Income Tax Office will be expediting even further

refunds due to both personal and corporate taxpayers. The Commissioner of Income tax has confirmed that the waiver of penalties in relation to the late filing of corporate tax returns with the Income Tax Office that was first introduced in March of this year is expected to continue until 31st August this year. The waiver will apply to filing deadlines with the ITO on or after 15th March 2020. The decision to remove the current waiver will depend on how the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, but given the current process of the lifting of restrictions the ITO is expecting the waiver to be in place at least until 31st August. This will be confirmed in due course and due notice will be provided by the ITO should the waiver be extended beyond that date. It should be noted that whilst a waiver exists in relation to the raising of penalties for the late filing of corporate tax returns, the existing surcharge regime has not been amended and so companies and their advisers will need to ensure that income tax payments are made in line with existing due dates to avoid any surcharges.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to work with our hotel, airline and transport sectors to support and stimulate tourism activity at this very difficult time. We recognise that these highly valued sectors have been especially affected by the pandemic.

We have also announced, and I reiterate, that every business will need to appoint a COVID-19 officer, as outlined in our Unlock the Rock document. This officer will be tasked with communicating safety information, promoting compliance with safety protocols and procedures and also ensuring continuous coverage for responding to safety concerns raised by other employees or indeed the business's customers.

Mr Speaker, we believe these measures will help businesses in this first quarter after the worst effects of the pandemic to date and we believe that these measures represent the right balance between assistance and intervention in the market. We believe these are the measures our economy needs now.

I look forward to discussing these matters further with hon. Members in coming days and I commend this Statement to the House. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, we welcome that Statement that the Chief Minister has made on primarily the economic aspects going forward, although he did touch upon his intervention yesterday before the House of Lords Committee.

Before I go on to the economic aspects that he has centred on today, may I say that in relation to the ongoing and future negotiations on our post-Brexit arrangements I certainly appreciate the sensitivity and importance of those talks, and so do all my colleagues sitting on this side of House. He used the word 'confidence'. I will say to him that we share the hope, if not the confidence, that there are possibilities to build a modern, respectful European relationship with the European Union and indeed our neighbour, despite Brexit. It requires, of course, careful handling and not just one eye but probably two on the fundamentals, and there may be many pitfalls ahead but I certainly share the hon. Member's hope, if not confidence, that there is a lot to be discussed and indeed that in a modern, progressive way, things could be discussed and a relationship found with the European Union beyond Brexit.

Turning to the issue of the economics, if I may, I will just make some observations and ask for some clarifications from the Chief Minister, although we had a brief call today on this. Indeed, may I say as I start that I welcome the Statement, as I have already said at the outset of my contribution, because Gibraltar wanted clarification of where we were going on the economic assistance package beyond 30th June.

Of course, tackling the pandemic was a two-pronged attempt, to control the public health emergency but also not to lose sight of the economic issues that arose as a result of the pandemic. Indeed, one of the first things that we did in this House was to come here on 21st March and have the Emergency Budget. During that Emergency Budget session itself we were already talking about the need to first stabilise the economy and then boost it. The hon.

285 Member the Chief Minister knows that we then had detailed discussions with himself, members
of his team, the Financial Secretary and my colleague the Hon. Mr Clinton on aspects of the
BEAT measures as were announced for the period up to 30th June, and I made clear, both to him
and indeed publicly, that the Opposition supported the package of measures up to 30th June but
that beyond 30th June we needed to have a real discussion on the aspects and understand the
measures – and there may be things that we could agree, there may be things that we were
unable to agree – for the period beyond 30th June.

290 I say all that because while I think people listening to his Statement will welcome the clarity, I
can certainly say for them that from our perspective we are not in a position to say, as we were
in relation to the initial package, that we had discussed the detail, had influenced the package
and were, despite perhaps misgivings on granular aspects of the previous package, were broadly
content and could say publicly that we were supportive of that package.

295 In relation to these, while I certainly welcome the Hon. Chief Minister's reaching out to me
this morning, the discussions that we had on this particular aspect were the product of a
30-minute call this morning with the Financial Secretary and involving Mr Clinton. Don't get me
wrong, I do understand the pressures that there are when someone is sitting in his chair – he will
have been pulled in many directions, and indeed the Government will have been – but I would
300 say that it is a source of some regret to us that at a time of high intensity, trying to control the
pandemic, the public health emergency and the economic aspects, we found time to have
discussions on the previous package but unfortunately, for whatever reason, that time has not
been found on this aspect of the package, and here we are on the Friday before the Tuesday
when the package expires and for the first time the public is being told of the elements of the
305 package, and we found out the elements of the package at noon today.

All of that I say in the context of the fact also that one of the things that we did on
21st March when we passed the Emergency Budget was to introduce a statutory provision that
required consultation between the Chief Minister and myself on aspects of the economic
package – and consultation, if it is going to mean anything, especially if it is statutory
310 consultation, should be conducted with vigour and meaningfully, and perhaps not at the last
minute, or if not at the last minute in the last three hours before the period is up.

I say all these things and I hope the hon. Member takes it on board because he knows that
we have been constructive with him in relation to all the aspects of the pandemic and indeed on
the economic aspects of it, so he knows when I say these things that I do so from the basis that
315 we are willing to sit down with him and discuss the detail of all the measures and indeed try to
assist as much as possible in at least giving our views on it, and then it is a matter for the
Government of course to decide whether or not it takes on board these issues. Indeed, there
was such a need for clarity, and those discussions with us had not been happening, that my hon.
colleague Mr Feetham tabled questions on it, which are on the order paper and indeed when we
320 get there no doubt he will have supplementaries to ask for clarification on a number of issues
which relate to the questions that he was interested in.

We are certainly very prepared and willing to give our input on these measures and the Chief
Minister has indicated already that the Government is prepared to listen to our views on the
detail. We will certainly consider the measures that have been announced and when there is
325 perhaps better detail known on the measures I am certainly available to discuss the matter –
and so is Mr Clinton – with the Government. He knows, because we have discussed it, that we
are prepared to have those discussions with him. We will judge every issue on its merits – and I
will make some observations on that because I think there is a need perhaps for some clarity
and the hon. Member might be in a position already to clarify aspects to those people listening
330 who are running businesses, or employees who are interested in understanding how this will
affect them. So, I will ask those questions. Some of the points that I make are observations that I
have already shared with him but I will do so publicly so that his answer can also be heard by
other people who might have concerns about what the effect and impact of those measures
might be.

335 I did say to my initial reaction on this, and stepping back from the detail, if I may for a second,
we had supported the original package. The original package was, in my view, necessary but it
was a fairly blunt instrument, if I can put it that way, because at that time there was no real
visibility of the specific impact on the economy as a whole and it was necessary that measures
340 were taken in parallel to the lockdown, the social lockdown and the general lockdown of
commerce etc. And so the blunt instrument was, in effect, to put a blanket over the economy
and employees and try to safeguard jobs. I think it was absolutely the right thing to do, to
stabilise the job market and indeed the economy as a whole, and that is the reason we gave it
our support.

I am concerned about these measures at different levels and I will share those concerns
345 publicly with people listening and indeed this House. I mentioned some of these things to the
Chief Minister in our call this morning.

I am concerned about the effect on workers. Obviously I understand that the package puts a
restriction on the ability to terminate employment, and the purpose was to stabilise the job
market before and that protection cannot last forever but the assistance was very targeted last
350 time. It was targeted so that money would be injected into business for the exclusive purpose of
the payment of employees. In effect, that is what was happening and so people were
guaranteed their jobs or they were put on a specific sum and things were stabilised. What we
are seeing with this package that the Government has announced now is that instead of the
money going, guaranteed, straight to the employee, it is going to ... The businesses that applied
355 last time will get an equivalent amount to the business itself, but of course the protection
against dismissing employees will be lifted. So, I would say 'caution' because one of the things
that would concern me is whether employees are being exposed massively in a way that
certainly no longer protects them, gives business assistance – which for the last three months
was for the purpose of protecting those employees but this time may not necessarily be used by
360 business for that and may be used for something completely different – and at the same time
you will see quite a number of job losses. So, from the point of view of the protection of workers
I would say that this package is certainly not as beneficial from that perspective as the previous
package.

Secondly, I had indicated to the hon. Member before in our discussions that I, certainly in my
365 own thinking, favoured that we transition from a blunt approach to a sharp approach, if I can put
it that way. I may not have articulated it in those terms, but what I meant by that was that
rather than go for a blanket approach, that we then transition into understanding a bit more
about the sectors that were specifically affected by COVID and the consequences of it and that
we give more sectoral, targeted assistance in relation to that. That approach might lead to the
370 complexity that you might have to then formulate state aid type of applications and so on, but it
may be appropriate to do so, rather than a continued blanket approach and indeed a blanket
approach without an apparent purpose.

It brings me to the third concern that I have, and the third concern is fairness because really
what this does is that every single business that was receiving money under the previous
375 scheme, as I understand it, unless the hon. Member clarifies it otherwise, is automatically going
to receive the equivalent sum of money discounted by the sliding scale he has indicated. So,
those businesses that asked for money are going to receive more money, the equivalent amount
of money in accordance with the yardstick, for the period of the three months up to the end of
September. There may be businesses out there that, through economic wherewithal or just
380 simple civic commitment, decided not to ask the taxpayer for assistance, and those businesses
are having to compete with other businesses that asked the Government for assistance for a
three-month period, who got it for their employees but are now going to get it in a way that
does not necessarily guarantee a level playing field. In other words, there will be businesses out
there that did not get any assistance, that are now competing against businesses that are going
385 to receive assistance on an automatic basis and that assistance that those businesses are getting
is not going to go necessarily to the employees, because a business might get it, still sack 20% of

their employees and then use that money to build up stock to replenish the stock that it is going to use to then compete with the other business that is not necessarily receiving that assistance.

390 There are some serious concerns about a level playing field and how that is going to work. The hon. Member may want to clarify to those listening, and indeed to this House, how precisely that is going to work and what controls are going to be put into place. I know he has said in his Statement that there will be controls in relation to if you dismiss employees beyond a certain percentage the grant is converted into a loan. Yes, but short of that, what degree of policing and enforcement will there be? And is it right in principle that businesses should continue to receive
395 assistance against other businesses that now need to make application, because he said in his Statement that those who did not receive assistance can now, as a special concession, make an application. So, the hon. Member may want to clarify, again to those people listening, on what basis are those businesses going to make application, how is that going to be judged and against what yardstick. The BEAT payments that every single individual business got depended on how
400 many people they put on BEAT, so they will all be different unless they are going to find a sector average for different industries. The hon. Member may want to explain that. We have some serious concerns about that how that is going to work, how fair it will be and how it will impact on the job market, where we could see a significant loss of jobs, unfortunately, as we go forward.

405 I think it is important that if taxpayers' money is going to continue to be used for the next three months ... and I make clear that I continue to believe that we should assist the business and employment sector going forward, so I am not disagreeing with the hon. Member that there needs to be a package but what I am saying to him is caution, because we have only heard of the package at noon today, that the package needs to work fairly in accordance with the principles
410 that I am sure we share, but it may be that the Government have not thought of the impact of all these things and it is important that they should reflect. We are still ahead of them passing legislation, presumably, on these things, unless the hon. Member tells me that there is already draft legislation, but even if there is draft legislation there is still time for handbrakes and controls to be injected into the process to make the process indeed fairer. So, I ask him to reflect
415 on that and perhaps clarify the position as well.

There is, of course, a need for information going forward. I have said that to him privately and I welcome the assurance he has given to me that there will be more information shared with us to allow a better exchange of views on these matters based on information and analysis of the BEAT payments over the last three months how have been made and to what sectors and
420 businesses and so on. That will be helpful so that we are not blind to the rollout of these matters.

We welcome, I would say, the Government's announcement on the rates and rents measures. That is a welcome development and indeed his talk on how the tax department will administer refunds and so on going forward, that is a helpful development and therefore those
425 are issues that we back. We have some concerns on the broader aspects of the measures he has announced and we express no further view. We certainly are not in a position, as we were before, to say that we support these measures. We are willing to engage with him on the detail of it and to try to ameliorate the scheme with the concerns that we have and I have expressed today, and hopefully in his reply he can clarify some aspects of that to deal with our concerns.

430

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, thank you very much indeed.

435 I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the comments he has made during the course of his intervention, which I will deal with in the order in which he made them, if I am able to.

The first aspect of what he said dealt with my intervention yesterday before the Select Committee on the European Union of the House of Lords. I thought he was going to start by pulling me up on the fact that I had quoted the wrong platform out of the Harry Potter books. I

440 was quickly informed by my staff that it is Platform 9¾ and not 13¾ that Harry Potter pushes through in order to get to Hogwarts. Obviously he and I are as ill versed in that respect as each other, but this is a useful moment to correct the record. (*Interjection*)

445 Mr Speaker, the issue of the sensitivity that he has expressed to the negotiations of the future relationship with the European Union is one which I am grateful for. He does know a little of what we are doing in the context of the discussions that we have and he has said that he expresses hope, not confidence, in respect of what may emerge. Well, 'I still believe in a place called hope,' said one American politician once. I do not believe that you get to hope unless you have the confidence in your ability to deliver the deal that gets you there. I have confidence in the team that is going to be involved in this negotiation, I have confidence in his co-operation, I have confidence in what it is that we can all do together that might at last shine hope upon the
450 future relationship between Gibraltar and the European Union. But he is right to say that we should keep not one but two eyes on what is happening in that negotiation. I have expressed it in a slightly blunter way. I have said that we will keep a cynical eye on what it is that is proposed at every turn. We will seek the devil in the detail, for there he will be – or she, if she is wearing Prada – and we will ensure that if it is there we will find it and that there is no question of
455 anybody believing that they can hide, even in the plural, as they tried to hide in 1984, any trick that we might not pick up or be aware of. So, he knows that on this side of the House perch the hawks in that respect and that nothing is going to get past any of them, but I welcome that we should do this together, if possible.

460 Mr Speaker, now on to the aspects of the economics of the Statement that I made, and I welcome that he welcomes the Statement that I made, and that he approaches it in a positive way. He says that clarification is required. I am happy to give that clarification here today, insofar as is possible, but I do rise to respond to him by reminding him that, as he knows, this is a very difficult task indeed and if we have not given him earlier sight of the proposals that I have outlined here today it is not because they existed and we were hiding them from him and
465 Mr Clinton and his colleagues, it is because the designing of them has taken us to the wire. In other words, no sooner had the proposals landed on my desk finally formed than I was picking up the telephone to him and ringing him. There was no delay between those two and there was no other time available, because this is, whether we like it or not, a small administration, and even much larger administrations have got to the wire before they have been able to make such
470 announcements. Administrations with hundreds of thousands of public sector employees have not been able to do things faster than we have been able to. I think that is therefore a moment to reflect once again the gratitude of the Government to the engagement of all the groups and the CELAC, the gratitude of the Government to all the officials on the Government side who are working with us, and my gratitude in particular to the Minister for Financial Services and to the
475 Financial Secretary for the work they have done with me on this package. So he must not for one moment think that it was a desire not to let him into the designing of these measures, because when we met last time, although he says we met with more time etc., actually we met with just about the same time. In other words, we had already formulated a view after consultation and we were therefore meeting with him after, before we elevated to legislation – and we have not
480 yet elevated to legislation. We are now going to try and work out that detail in order to give effect to these measures, and that is where I hope that he will be able to assist in forming part of the consideration that we bring to these matters so that we can work together.

485 So, Mr Speaker, I do think there is going to be any difference in the way that we approached it the first time and the way that we approach it now, but I do think that it is important that we do understand that the work that is required to deliver these measures and to then deliver them into legislation is highly complex, and what we will not do – and I invite him to share this principle with us – is enter into an internal debate and make the perfect the enemy of the good. There were many things that we would have done with more precision, if we could, in March, in April, in May and in June, but if we were doing it with that level of precision we might find
490 ourselves in the situation that other economies have found themselves in, with no payments yet

made to people who need the money. There are very advanced economies where working people and where the self-employed have yet to receive a penny of the assistance that they are told in statements by their governments they are going to get.

495 What has happened here is that the shield that this House, jointly in the work that we did, put around employees in particular was one that was ready to be delivered in time for the end of the first month when they needed that money. Employers paid in March and at the end of April the public money was there to be the wage that put the food on those workers' tables. As a result, there are likely to have been more than one or two unfairnesses. Some people who might need money, who might have been entitled, were just on the cusp of rules. We can look at that
500 in slower order. There may be some people who should not have been entitled who perhaps in the wash we will see, and we might be able to seek some redress potentially in the future in that respect. But what we cannot do as a Government, what we as a Government have not got the luxury of is just time to debate and talk ad nauseam. We have real human realities that we had to contend with – and I am talking just the economics – both in May, April and now. Indeed, if I
505 may say so – with respect, Mr Speaker, these are strange times ... the things I find myself saying – it was actually Mr Clinton who said during the course of that Emergency Budget, 'Look, we've got to do this with as little red tape as possible.' That was the Government's view and we sought to do that, and we sought to do it together in a way that delivered as little red tape as possible.

Now, as we move into this second phase, the things that the hon. Gentleman has said
510 suggest that he is concerned that we are not putting as much of a shield around employees and working people. Well, he will find that the Government is, first of all, wishing to protect working people. And why do we want this measure to be a measure that protects working people? Because the best way to protect working people is to protect the engines of the economy that provide for their employment. There is a fork in the road now, which is to either decide that we
515 continue to pump money into paying people's salaries, which he told me in March/April he would be very concerned to do after the first quarter and I shared his view, it was an area of agreement – I think he actually said it in this House – or we go into the mode of ensuring that we use public money, as has been the case in other economies, to give grants to businesses to enable them to keep going so that they can get their dynamo going, so that they protect
520 employment, and there may be some loss of employment in the course of that process.

If he is going to say – not just for the purpose of trying to garner votes, because I assume that six months after a General Election none of us are going to be foolish enough to be in that business – that what he wants to do is to protect employment and go down the Trotskyite route of simply paying for every employee in this economy, he might find he has more than one
525 person on this side on his side. We might all be prepared to have an enlightenment of that sort, but let's be serious about what it is that we are going to do here, because this is a salutary process.

This is to return an economy to the market, an economy that we have put into suspended animation and hibernation. We put it into a coma, and the way that we put it into a coma was by
530 paying all the employees. We paid some employees who might be earning five times the BEAT COVID amount just the BEAT COVID amount, and we paid some employees who may be earning less than the BEAT COVID amount perhaps a little more than they were sometimes earning because there was no deduction of PAYE and Social Insurance. Is that the road for the next quarter and the quarter beyond? Well, I think he will agree with me that that is not the route
535 now. What we are trying to do is to ensure that we are giving grants to businesses in the sums that we are proposing in order that those businesses are able to protect employment, but with the caveat, that I believe this House will unanimously support, that those businesses must have the right to be able to hire and fire. Indeed, the Hon. Mr Feetham said, in the context of the insolvency debate, that those businesses should not potentially have even the protection of not
540 being put into administration or into compulsory winding up. So, we are going to take the view which hon. Members took when they voted in favour of the measure that we brought, that the winding-up provisions should be protected against until the end of the year so long as the

circumstances appertain, namely that the coronavirus conditions might be in effect. But what we must not seek to pretend to do is that we are going to continue simply to pay all the salaries of all the people in all of the businesses that we shut down, even though they are now open, because I do not think that there is any view on the side of the House that he represents that that should be the case and I do not think that that is a view that is in any event sustainable, as he will agree. And so therefore when he talks about wanting to protect employment ... when we analyse that, I think that he will agree with me during the course of our further discussions in the future that this is one of the best ways of protecting employment; in other words, to put – if the Hon. the Minister for the Environment will forgive me – gas into the tank of these businesses so that they can continue to stand on their own two feet and provide employment for this community in the way that they do.

I therefore will not take as chastisement, because I would assume it was not intended to be chastisement, the fact that he was a little put out that we spoke only today and that we were able to give him an overview of these measures, which is not too different to the overview I have given this House, and that the detail is to come, because as he rightly seeks to remind me, the legislative provision that we may rely on – and the Government may come to the House to simply pass legislative measures, but otherwise we may rely on the legislative provision that we passed in March which enables me to amend primary legislation by regulation – that that has to be done in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, I am not going to ascribe myself, in the role of Chief Minister, any particular attributes. That is up to everybody else and indeed is probably up to historians – and I always have the comfort that the best historian in town is sitting next to me – but I will ascribe this to myself: I am probably the Chief Minister who has most consulted in keeping with the definition of the word ‘consult’ that the hon. Gentleman has given. I have been sat alongside the Hon. the Father of the House in previous times, when he was a Minister but he was not the one responsible for this. ‘Consultation’ amounted to a call being received and the Leader of the Opposition being told what the Chief Minister had decided, but simply because the legislation said ‘consult’ a call was made before an announcement was made. He knows that that is not the approach that I have taken with him and with Mr Clinton. Indeed, today’s call was not that; it was a call upon the moment of having been able to make the decisions and in anticipation of the work that is to be done, because the work on the detail is to be done and the analysis in respect of the payments already made is analysis that will be shared and that I hope will lead us all to the same conclusions, and I do hope also to be able to continue down the road of the next quarter being a quarter of measures that have been agreed, or at least broadly agreed, across the floor of the House between the hon. Gentleman and Mr Clinton and the Government because the detail, of course, is to come.

The hon. Gentleman then said that they would judge every issue on its merits. I thought that was a little superfluous, in the sense that we all judge all issues on their merits, but it did put in mind some of the remarks that the Hon. Mr Bossino had made over the course of the past weekend when he said in an interview with one of the local newspapers, ‘We need a package for business, we need support for business, we need more for tourism.’ If I may say so with respect to the hon. Member, there was not much there other than ‘We need ...’ – generalities – ‘we need perhaps to think about ... we need again to reflect on ...’ Being in Government is about actually having to make decisions, and to have to decide means to have to act, and for that reason the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, I hope, will be our ally now that we are starting to take those decisions in taking these things forward – no longer as blunt an instrument as before but still nonetheless relatively blunt.

These are not yet normal times. In the same way as the Rock is not yet unlocked, the economy is not yet back. There are not the numbers of tourists in Main Street that there were. There are not the numbers of people in our restaurants, in no small measure because the permits that are being granted do not permit it. These are still extraordinary times and, though we might sharpen our pencil, we are still, unfortunately, in the space of rather blunt action

595 required, the sort of action that any other year we would not be considering in this place. I do
hope, and I am sure that we all agree, that hopefully soon this will all pass.

He then made three points that he said he was concerned about. The first is the issue of
effect on workers. Well, that is the key issue for the Government. The Government's biggest
600 concerns are the two allied matters of protecting workers and protecting and assisting the
businesses that employ those workers. You cannot have one without the other. If Mr Feetham's
position were to appertain and the businesses were to be permitted to go to the wall on an
insolvency basis, the employees lose their jobs. If the position is that we do not provide any
support to businesses and we stop paying the workers, the workers are likely to be made
605 unemployed. If we pay the workers directly, then the businesses become no more than
paymasters for the amounts that the taxpayer is contributing to those businesses. I think
working people's representative organisations and businesses' representative organisations
have understood that there needs to be a happy medium as we move forward into this
alternative moment.

Coming to his second point of trying to be more precise on sectors, there is the very difficult
610 issue of state aid. State aid is an area of vexed legal understanding. It is an area of huge
complexity. We are still in the transitional period in our membership of the European Union and
therefore European state aid rules appertain. We have to be very careful with that. We have
already had to notify some parts of the assistance that we are providing on loans etc. Other
states have notified matters relating to state aid and have got approvals, but usually states that
615 have manufacturing industries. It is not so easy to get approval from the European Commission
on aid in the sorts of sectors that we represent, but we are still doing it and we may be able to
be a little bit more precise about how we pursue these matters. So, when it comes to targeting
industries or sectors in particular, there is that difficulty. The hon. Gentleman can get up and
say, as he has, 'Well, we need to be more targeted' etc. There is a world of complex pain behind
620 that and the biggest pain is not having to do the work to persuade the Commission of that – that
is what we are here for; the biggest pain is that the Commission might say no, you cannot give
the aid, and then you have to either not give the aid, if you have not given it already, or you have
to recover the aid, and that could be a killer blow to a business, especially in a year like this. So,
what I would say to the hon. Gentleman is it is sometimes very easy to say these things and to
625 say – understanding as he does, no doubt – that they are complex, but not to unravel that that
complexity can actually lead to greater danger for businesses, and danger for businesses is
danger for their employees because they could end up out of those jobs.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the issue of fairness, which is one that we have been very concerned
about. The Government has wanted to achieve the greatest level of fairness in this respect. Here
630 is the level playing field of the sectors and the level playing field of those who have received
money before versus those who have, out of a sense of civic duty, not wanted to claim money
before, even though they might have been entitled to. This is an issue that he knows that we
addressed today in the context of our conversation, it is an issue that I have addressed in the
course of my speech, and what we want to do is to ensure that now those who have not
635 previously claimed are able to claim.

He then said to me, taking that challenge one step further, 'Ah, but those who have already
claimed will automatically qualify when you contact them; those who have not will not
automatically qualify.' Well, I put it to him that that is a fact which it is impossible to avoid. It is
impossible to avoid for a simple reason. If a party has previously registered and received, it is
640 registered with us. Another business would not be registered with us. Would it be possible for us
to identify such a business? Not impossible. We might be able to merge all of the data that we
have and set out all of the businesses that we have and see which are those that have not
claimed and see which are those that are in the included sectors and contact them. But that
would be a very longwinded way of doing it that would cause huge difficulty. Better to say 'If you
645 were entitled to claim and you did not, and now you believe you need to, contact us on this
email'. So I put it to him that the sin that he identified is cured by the sacrament that we have

set out, which is, needless to say, that we would consider very favourably ... I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's mirth, Mr Speaker, but it is contagious, as ever. Since he was 12 he has had this contagious mirth. (*Interjection*) It is exactly the way that we can cure the problem. In other words, this is the way for those businesses to be able to seek that assistance now. So, I believe that the potential unfairness that he says he had identified had been dealt with in the context of what I set out in my original Statement, but working together on the detail I hope that we will be able to be satisfied, also together, by the end of this process that the regulations that we put in place for this purpose will have dealt with that in time before any application, automatic or otherwise, is dealt with.

Mr Speaker, the Government does not want to see a significant loss of jobs going forward, which is one of the things that he said concerned him. It has been our key factor in trying to design not just these measures but it was also the key factor in designing the original measures, and it was as much our guiding principle as it was theirs and so he must not for one moment think that that has changed, but we have to understand how it is that we transition now back to a market economy.

He then said that he did not know whether the Government had thought of these things. If we were in another political moment I might have called him presumptuous for saying that, but as he knows that much of what he raised with me in this House are things that he raised with me during the context of our telephone conversation and that we dealt with, he does know that these are matters that the Government had considered. But as to the detail, what we will not do is pretend that we can, on our own, produce the best piece of legislation. I am sure that together we will be able to produce a better piece of legislation.

In terms of rent and rates I am pleased that he welcomed the measures that we have provided for and I am convinced that if we continue in the spirit that we pursued in March and in April, when we designed the measures that then became the first iteration of the business and employee assistance terms, we will be able together also to deliver positive terms to assist businesses and protect employment in our economy going forward. On this I know that he realises that the Government is a willing partner for co-operation to protect employment, to protect businesses in our economy and to take this economy forward to the prosperous heights it was at before the pandemic hit.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon.

Hon Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, thank you.

It was very kind of the Chief Minister to brief me earlier with an advance copy of his Statement, albeit just literally minutes before he rose. Unfortunately, given the short notice I was given, as well as the general lack of consultation with me, unlike that afforded to the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Clinton, I have really been given no recourse to look into these measures in depth in my own time to receive feedback from those sectors and individuals that it will affect the most and make my thoughts available to the electorate, so I will take some time on that.

At this point I can only say that, as well as to echo many of the clarifications that the Leader of the Opposition is still seeking, that I hope that the measures genuinely live up to the gravity of the times that we are living in, that they take into account and into consideration the long-term environmental needs of our community, and of course that they truly prioritise those who need it the most. This has not, unfortunately, always been the case. So, the Chief Minister will receive my thoughts shortly on these measures.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the observations of the hon. Lady. I sent her my Statement as soon as it was finished in fact, because the Hon. Leader of the Opposition had had, earlier in the day, the positions that we had agreed. I made sure I sent her my Statement literally as soon as I finished it, with all the bits about the House of Lords in etc. which I had not obviously discussed with him. I think I gave her 30 minutes' notice of my full Statement, which I am always mindful of is the sort of notice that a Leader of the Opposition gets in the United Kingdom from the Prime Minister in respect of a statement. That is what is usually considered generous. The report on the war in Iraq, which I think was 50 volumes, the Leader of the Opposition I think had from the morning before in order to read it, so she must not think that we are being ungenerous by giving her advanced copies of the Statement – which was, I thought, the way that she sought to present her statement. But she is shaking her head, so I will accept that she was not trying to pretend that she had not been generously provided for, which I am pleased to see and I very much look forward to hearing what points it is that she does bring to us in the context of having a greater opportunity to consider these measures. We will be open to whatever points she makes.

We have designed, as she can see now in the context of the report I have given to the House, many of the measures not just to protect those who are most in need in our community but also with the environmental factor in mind. Indeed, I was able happily to report to the House that one fifth of all the vehicles sold are hybrid or electric vehicles, which I think is a very good thing indeed, and of course all of the vehicles sold are new vehicles which will be less polluting than the older vehicles that they will replace.

She said it has not always been the case that assistance has reached those in the greatest need. I would put it to her that, in the case of the measures that we are dealing with, that actually is not correct, that actually the measures that we designed in March have reached the working people that they were designed to reach directly. Indeed, employers became vassals for communication of moneys between the Government and the taxpayer and employees. They became the route for employees who needed the money to receive the taxpayer's contribution for that very difficult period, and I think in the context of the modern political history of Gibraltar, the period for which the civil administration has been responsible for our affairs, there has never been a more direct injection of taxpayers' capital to those who might most need it in our community. That does not mean that everybody who needs it has got what they need or what they say they want – which is too often, unfortunately, an issue in this community, that people judge what they need by what they want, and we have to be very careful, in the administration of the taxpayer's money, that we agree what it is that people need and that we then provide that, not what they might wish for or want. Otherwise, it is a slippery slope to the *a mi me pertenece* culture that has been oft referred to in this House when we have been told that we give people too much of what they want rather than the sort of medicine that others might suggest that they need.

Mr Speaker, I will say no more and look forward to hearing from the hon. Lady when she has had an opportunity to reflect more fully on the matters that are set out in the speech.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Daniel Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I was going to ask the Chief Minister to give way in order to clarify a statement that he has made in relation to me in my position in relation to the Insolvency Bill that this Parliament recently debated, because what he has said is a misrepresentation, I have to say, of the position. I am going to phrase it in terms of a question, so that then I can essentially invite the Hon. the Chief Minister to correct the record – which he probably will not – in relation to what he said.

Mr Speaker, when we are considering all these measures, essentially what the Government is doing and what we are doing as a Parliament is effectively undertaking a balancing exercise. So,

750 in these BEAT measures the Government is, for example, balancing the desire to protect
businesses as going concerns with also the desire to protect employment. By doing one,
hopefully you can also do the other, but they are not exactly the same; there is a tension there.
It is about balancing, for example, the fact that you are spending a considerable amount of
755 taxpayers' money with obviously the need to protect employment and the need to protect
businesses.

With insolvency, in the Bill that the hon. Gentleman brought to Parliament a few weeks ago it
is about protecting businesses, companies and entities, but it is also about protecting creditors.
Our point from this side of the House was that we ought to be protecting companies from the
ability of creditors to apply for a liquidator – for example, those companies that have become
760 insolvent or are likely to become insolvent as a consequence of the COVID crisis – and that if you
had a company or an entity that was already insolvent unrelated to the COVID crisis, or becomes
insolvent unrelated to the COVID crisis, that in those types of cases our duty as a Parliament is in
fact to protect creditors, who also deserve the protection of this Parliament.

That was our position, but of course we had promised the Government that we would
765 support it because even though we were not able to persuade the Government or the Minister
to take on board the points that we were making, on the whole we felt that we needed to
protect those businesses that might become insolvent or were insolvent as a consequence of the
COVID crisis. That is the point. So, even though we had grave reservations about the way that
the Bill had been structured, on the whole we supported it. That is our position.

770 My question is – and I am grateful for Mr Speaker's indulgence – will the Government ...? I
have seen in the course of my own practice, and I have spoken to practitioners, both lawyers
and also insolvency practitioners, that the Bill as presently drafted, or the Act now because it has
been passed, is problematical in the sense that it goes too far in preventing creditors from
applying to appoint liquidators in circumstances where those companies were already insolvent
775 even last year. For example, I have come across a case where a creditor has given a company
time to pay and time to pay and time to pay, and it was obvious by the end of December of last
year that the company was in grave financial difficulty, likely to have become insolvent, and
nothing could be done about it. And of course because you then have all those other protections
for creditors in terms of insolvent trading etc., it does create an injustice for those creditors in
780 those types of cases. I would ask whether the Government is going to reconsider its position and
perhaps bring amendments to the House in order to deal with that narrow aspect which would
deal with issues that we have with the Act.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I knew that the Man U fans could not keep their counsel
given what happened last night. They had to get up and try and rile me and I have done
everything possible to ensure that I did not fall into the trap of setting out on the record that
Liverpool have won the premiership for the first time in 30 years, but I have had to do it and in
790 doing so he pretends to have a point to make, which is that ... He said 'me and my position'.
Every time he gets up to speak I am reminded of that ... I think it is a song, *Me, Myself and I*.

There is no misinterpretation on the part of the Government. The Bill that he spoke against
and voted for – remarkably – actually already provides for the problem that he has identified to
be dealt with. In other words, it seeks to provide protection only for companies that come across
795 issues which create solvency concerns and difficulties as a result of the COVID crisis. It does not
cure solvency or insolvency issues which arise before the crisis or are happening during the crisis
but are unrelated to the crisis. That, I think, is patently obvious. He does not want to accept it,
but I read him a very good piece by another silk which set out more accurately at the time what
it was that the Bill should do and did.

800 Mr Speaker, the Government will continue to take advice on this, as we do, of course, to see
how the Bill is working now it is an Act in practice, and if there were any issues which we came

805 across which brought to us any concern that had to be addressed we would, either by way of regulation if it is provided for under the Insolvency Act, or by way of Act if we need to come back to this place or otherwise – because there is now the opportunity to do other things by agreement or consultation – bring such amendment as were necessary, but we really do not think that that is the case. We really actually think that all of the things that he has said are provided for in the Bill.

810 I do not know of any decision of the Supreme Court that suggests the opposite, or indeed of any concern, in what we consider to be the best qualified people to advise us in this respect, that identifies these issues which they tell us have been cured in any event. I know that that is not ever going to stop him from getting up and wanting to have his say but it is not that I will not correct the record because it requires correcting; it is just that he wants to not just paraphrase me now in a way that is convenient to him and which *Hansard* has traditionally not availed him of an alibi for, but now he wants to traduce what it is that an Act of this Parliament does into
815 suiting the purpose that he provides for. There is a place to do that: it is a courtroom, not a Parliament.

PAPERS TO BE LAID

Clerk: (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be laid – the Hon. the Chief Minister.

820 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Ombudsman's Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2019, the Audit of the Council of the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority for the year ended 31st March 2020 and a Command Paper for Regulations to provide for the recognition of trade unions.

825 **Mr Speaker:** Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

HOUSING, YOUTH AND SPORT

Q299-302/2020

**Government rental homes –
Unlawful occupation**

Clerk: We now proceed to Answers to Oral Questions.
We commence with Question 299/2020 and the questioner is the Hon. E J Reyes.

830 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can Government provide details of costs, and to whom these were paid, in respect of legal actions taken for unlawful occupation of the rental homes which were the subject of Questions 161-162/2019 and Question 14/2020?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

835 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 300 to 302.

Clerk: Question 300, the Hon. E J Reyes.

840 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 14/2020, can the Minister for Housing update this House as to the outcome of the case of unlawful occupation of a rental home which the Housing Department was investigating?

Clerk: Question 301, the Hon. E J Reyes.

845 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 130/2020, can Government update this House as to the outcome of the investigation into possible unlawful occupation of a rental home?

Clerk: Question 302, the Hon. E J Reyes.

850 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government inform this House how many cases of unlawful occupation of Government rental homes are currently being investigated by the relevant authorities?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

855 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the Housing Department is currently investigating five cases of unlawful occupation, one being the case quoted in my answer to Question 14/2020. Due to the difficulties encountered during COVID-19, these cases are taking longer than expected.

860 To date, a total of £5,250 has been paid to Triay and Triay in respect of legal actions taken due to unlawful occupation.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I please double-check something with the Minister?

865 There are five cases that are currently being dealt with and I think he then added that those five included the one he referred to in Question 14. Is there any identification for the case that they were looking into, if possible, because he had used the word 'possible' unlawful occupation – it was not necessarily deemed yet to be unlawful. That is the subject of my Question 301.

870

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, the investigation is still ongoing and it is taking longer due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are still investigating that one and therefore there is no solution at the moment, so we have got to wait.

875 **Hon. E J Reyes:** And it is not included in that figure of five, obviously?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, it is. That means that we have four and one – the one that you are mentioning plus another four. It is part of the five.

880 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mathematics is obviously not my forte, Mr Speaker. I understand the concept that four and one can be five, but is that one the case I am referring to in Question 300 or is it the one I am referring to in Question 301; or are both the answer he gave me to Question 14 and the answer he gave me to Question 130 are both the same, and one case, and therefore my mathematics will add?

885

Hon. S E Linares: They are all the same case.

Q303/2020
Government housing –
Rent arrears

890 **Clerk:** Question 303, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details to this House in respect of the total amount of housing rent arrears owing on a monthly basis as at May and June 2020?

895 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the total amount of housing rent arrears owing in May 2020 amounts to £4,765,840.76. The total amount of housing rent arrears owing in June 2020 cannot be calculated until the month is complete.

900

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I understand we are in the last days of June. Is it right then to deduce that the figure he is giving me for owing in May is what it was when it came to the end of May? So, you do the stock from 1st June and say from yesterday and backwards? Is that correct, that therefore the June figures will be calculated in July but would include not the date as from 1st June but as on the last day of June? Is that correct?

905

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, sir.

910

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just one additional question, if I may, in relation to housing rent arrears, is there any reason why, insofar as arrears are concerned, it has been difficult to move the needle? It has been in that state for approximately 12 months, so far as £4.6 million, £4.7 million. Are there any reasons why the Government is finding difficulty in reducing that further? It has been some time that this significant amount of money has been outstanding. I know the Government has made efforts before, in the last Parliament, to reduce the total amount and I am not criticising them for that – I encourage it, obviously – but is there a reason for a very significant slowdown in recovery and an amount gravitating at £4.7 million for the last 12 months?

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920

Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker, there is not any reason as such. All that has happened is probably there has been a bit of a stalemate, again during the pandemic, and it is to do with the fact that we are changing systems on how we collect rent. We do not have a counter, for example, and therefore we have to change systems with clients on how they pay their rent.

So, basically there is not any difference and we will still try to get the rent as much as we can and, as we did with the last Parliament, we will work hard and we will do whatever we need to do to recover that.

925

Q304/2020
Government housing –
Building of new rental homes

Clerk: Question 304, the Hon. E J Reyes.

930 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide this House with updated details of its commitments to build new homes for rental, indicating by when these homes are expected to be ready for allocation?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

935 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, HM Government is in the process of calculating how many rental homes are required and the best mix of composition. The completion of the allocation of affordable homes will be an important part of this assessment.

940 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I understand the party says the Government is carrying out an exercise to see what sort of room compositions the housing would need, but my question was in respect of rental homes and he then answers me with affordable homes. Affordable homes are those for purchase. I am purposely asking this question for the building of new rental homes.

945 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the answer was that in determining the number of rental homes the sale of the affordable homes is a relevant factor in having a final calculation. We need the numbers of homes available and the room composition of those homes, and one of the factors that will affect that is the take-up of the affordable homes for sale from those on the waiting list, so that is what will be affected and you cannot really have a calculation that is complete until you finish the exercise in the round.

950 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I just ask: when does the Minister expect to have finished that assessment process to enable him to reach a figure on the kind of rental housing, or at least a recommendation for the Government to then reach a figure on the kind of rental housing that it might build?

955 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, that will be determined on the sales as well of the new estates. We have already completed Hassan Centenary Terrace. We now go to Bob Peliza and Chatham Views. Remember that we have in that list, as the Chief Minister said, we have Cat-1s, which are the people who release Government accommodation as they buy. That is part of the assessment, so it will be when all the sales are complete.

960 **Hon. K Azopardi:** The hon. Member will recall that in his manifesto there was a figure of 300 to 500 rental units mentioned. Is that the kind of ballpark we are looking at, or is it a different figure?

965 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, what it mentions in the manifesto is 300 to 500 inclusive of elderly pensioners' flats. That is part of the assessment, so we might need 300 elderly flats and not necessarily the rest.

970 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Sorry, I apologise for cutting in, but the hon. Member ... Yes, obviously the manifesto does say including the elderly, but the hon. Member I assume accepts the view that there is a need for rental housing outside of the elderly and there needs to be an assessment for that. Or is it that he is saying with his last answer that if the Government were to find that there is a need for 300 rental units for the elderly it will somehow impact on the ability to build on their recommendation of the numbers that they will build for general housing for rent?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, what we are trying to say is that this is a composite picture. I cannot remember if the hon. Gentleman ever held the housing portfolio – he shakes his head. **(Hon. K Azopardi:** Absolutely not!) It is a composite picture, so you have got the people on the

980 housing waiting list *simpliciter*, but a lot of those people are people who are waiting to buy the
affordable homes. So, once you have allocated all of the affordable homes you have a clearer
picture of the housing waiting list, although you also have indications from those who are left on
the housing waiting list that they are keen not to be allocated a rental home, and there are some
985 people who are there for that purpose, but simply to wait for the next round of affordable
housing, if it comes. You also have people on that housing waiting list who are housed, some of
them over-housed, and some of those people who are over-housed are elderly people who may
now find themselves in a two- or three-bedroom property and who are asking to be put into an
elderly person's facility – not a residential facility, not an institutional care facility, but a 'pension
flat' I think is the lexicon. (Hon. S E Linares: Yes.)

990 You have got to do all that exercise because once you then see how many people want a
pensioner flat, you say, 'Okay, well, once I build all those pensioner flats I know I need' – let's
just use easy numbers – '10 three-bedrooms, 10 two-bedrooms and 10 four-bedrooms, and I
know that I get five four-bedrooms, five two-bedrooms and five three-bedrooms by building
flats for these pensioners, so I don't need to build 10 of each of these, I need to build only five of
995 each of these if I build 15 pensioner flats.' So, to get a composite picture of how much you need
to build for rental, which is accurate and which puts the taxpayer's money to the most valuable
use, you need that full composite picture of how the list is going to develop.

1000 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, if I may, the Minister in his original answer to me made a
reference to Hassan Centenary Terraces. If I understood properly, he said that all those had now
been sold. Is that what he said in his answer?

1005 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, not all of them are sold, but we are talking about minimum
numbers left which are still to sell. I think it is just over 20 that are left, but we are going to
continue, despite that, to sell Bob Peliza and Chatham.

Q305/2020

Gibraltar Football Association – Memorandum of understanding

Clerk: Question 305, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1010 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Q149/2019, can the Minister for Sport now
provide this House with a copy of the memorandum of understanding signed with the Gibraltar
Football Association?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

1015 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the memorandum of
understanding with the Gibraltar Football Association has yet to be signed.

1020 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister had provided me with that exact same answer in
Question 123/2020 when he said, if I quote him, 'the memorandum of understanding is ready
but not yet signed', and he indicated it was going to happen, as far as he was wishing, sooner
rather than later. Does he have any indication of by when the parties can get together to
actually sign it?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker, and I understand the hon. Member putting this question
because I did say that they were very close to signing, but this was in March and obviously the

1025 Victoria Stadium has not even been used during March, April and May and not even now is being used fully. I can tell the hon. Member that I have a meeting scheduled very early in July, which is next week, when I hope they will be able to be in a position to sign this.

1030 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I ask what the reason for the hold-up was? Was it simply issues relating to the pandemic or was it some other technical or other operational reason relating to the content of the MoU?

1035 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, there were very minor issues when I did answer the question and it was nearly to be signed. So, there were just one or two issues which were not controversial or anything like that, but then the pandemic came in, and it basically stopped the whole thing and that is precisely why there has been no movement on the memorandum of understanding.

Q306/2020

**Laguna Estate –
Refurbishment works; children’s play park**

Clerk: Question 306, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1040 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer given to Question 128/2020, can Government provide updated details of when the refurbishment works at Laguna Estate are expected to be fully completed?

1045 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 307.

1050 **Clerk:** Question 307, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1055 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 12/2020, can Government confirm that the children’s play park in between St Anne’s and Notre Dame Schools at Laguna Estate is now fully operational, together with details of timings when the park is open for public use?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

1060 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, as per my previous answer to Question 128/2020, the original items of work are in snagging stages and practically complete. I am very pleased to be able to announce that after our multi-million-pound investment the works at Laguna are now in their final stages. The remaining lifts are being commissioned and would have already been operating had it not been for the COVID period. The park will be handed over in the last weeks of August. If it had not been for COVID, it would have been handed over in mid-June.

1065 We are in talks with the committee to further improve parking issues, matters relating to litter and anti-social behaviour and the general continued improvement of the estates. We have been the first Government to invest tens of millions of pounds in Laguna Estate, often despite others telling us not to, but we have done so because we are committed to the people who live there, as we are to all Government tenants.

1070 These works have taken longer than any of us would have wanted. The need to add a three-
phase supply is one of the main causes of the delay, as well as a distinct lack of co-operation
from a small number of tenants who have held up works, but we have now substantially
finished. Laguna has been transformed. Now we start on some common areas to finally
embellish these. The Government is proud of the investment we have made in Laguna.

1075 Additionally, we have made a massive investment in the schools that serve the children of
Laguna and the children of the catchment area. Another huge source of pride for us: the park
between the two schools.

1080 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, in relation to the question, which is Q307 – that is on the play
park in between the two schools – in January the Minister gave me a date when the park would
be ready and operational: in six weeks' time. If that is what he said in January, then by mid-
March it should have been inaugurated, which is before works had to be stopped due to the
unfortunate COVID pandemic and so on. Am I then correct in having heard him say that he
hopes to have it ready by August? Why such a big delay?

1085 **Hon. S E Linares:** Well, Mr Speaker, as I stated in the answer to the question, it would have
been handed over, I said March/April, in six weeks – the date was June. Now, because of COVID,
it goes two weeks into August. So, basically there has been delay from when I said it. It goes on
to June. We are in the pandemic and it has been extended, due to the pandemic, to August.

1090 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I am not quite understanding. The Minister told me in January
that he expected it to be ready in six weeks. Six weeks after January would have placed me in
the middle of March. He is now using a date of June, so I do not know ... Why is there a delay
from March to June? It just does not add up to me ... I do not know.

1095 **Hon. S E Linares:** What does not add up maybe to you is that March was exactly when we
started the lockdown and when we started all the –

Hon. E J Reyes: It should have been ready.

1100 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, it should have been ready, of course, but there were delays at the
beginning of March and therefore everything was stopped. We thought, 'Well, we will have it
ready by June.' We did not know what was happening in March, April or May, so we had an idea
we would probably have it ready by June, but even June is a problematic date because of all the
pandemic. Therefore the hon. Member must understand that yes, I might have said middle of
1105 March, six weeks ... yes, I did say it, but due to all these problems that we have encountered it
has not been able to be done then. I would have liked it at that date but it has not happened and
therefore all I have to do is go back to the contractor and say, 'Why haven't you done it?' They
come back to me saying, 'Well, Minister, we are in the middle of a pandemic and these are the
problems.'

1110 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, when he was giving me the specific answer to Question 306
about the general refurbishment works, the Minister said that it is now in the final stages and it
has to undergo snagging and so on. Does the snagging element also apply to the play park, or is
that snagging element the only thing pending?

1115 **Hon. S E Linares:** I am hopeful that it will be both together. That means we get the estate and
at the same time they do the snagging of the park, because rest assured that I am the first
person, together with the hon. Member, who wants the park open.

Q308/2020
New sports facilities –
Outstanding remedial and completion works

Clerk: Question 308, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Further to the answer given to Question 1/2020, can the Minister for Sport update this House with details of what facilities still require remedial or completion works at the newly built sports facilities?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the sports facilities are already in use at Europa Stadium for rugby, squash, cricket and darts.

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The items remaining to be completed at Europa are as follows: small areas of artificial turf to be completed and another small area to be repaired – the specialist contractor was on site, was interrupted by the COVID shutdown, and will return shortly once paperwork is arranged; the cricket match wicket is defective and will be replaced; the renewable energy system is being tested and commissioned; ball-stop netting has been ordered; the large multi-purpose sports hall which was converted into the Nightingale field hospital will be restored when no longer required by the Civil Contingencies; some external items are in progress, including bin store and University wall.

1135

Following the construction shutdown arising from the COVID-19 period, which affected works at Lathbury Stadium, work has now resumed on the athletics track, multi-purpose pitch and fitting-out of ancillary buildings, including changing rooms. The swimming pool room is also being fitted out and the pool installation specialists are expected to return to Gibraltar in the next few days. Issues arise from the ability of external contractors being able to arrive in Gibraltar.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1145

When the Minister was giving me the details of Europa, referring to certain areas of the artificial turf and so on, does the Minister have any knowledge ...? We had a subject of exchange before. There had been a subsidence of land behind one of the rugby goals and so on. Is he referring to that area as part of his answer, or are these totally separate entities?

1150

Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker, because it happens to be the same area and therefore the turf was not finished then because, remember, these are specialist people who have to fly over to finish the turf and therefore they were doing what the hon. Member knows with the little slope – they were fixing it – and therefore the turf had not been rolled over. So therefore, they have fixed it and all that is needed now is for the specialists to come to finish off like say the carpet finish at the end. So, basically that is why that part was not finished, and all the others.

1155

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Unfortunately, the cricket wicket that needs to be replaced. Is this because of a manufacturer's fault and it will be replaced at their expense, or is it an additional expense and the Government now has to foot that bill?

1160

Hon. S E Linares: The hon. Member can rest assured that the Government will not pay for this defect.

1165

Hon. E J Reyes: I do not know if the Minister has any notes there ... I know we have had the setbacks and uncertainties of works due to the pandemic, but does he have any approximate

dates? Being towards the end of June now, it very much would be the middle of the cricket season. Would that be ready before the completion of the summer months, which is when, traditionally, cricket is played?

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Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, to be honest, I am not even worried about that. What I am worried about are the phases of Unlock the Rock more than this, and I can tell you that the GSLA is working very closely to see what sort of things they can do, even if the pitch is finished, in order to implement sports activities and training and all that. So, it is in conjunction with finishing the whole of the works. We could have all the works finished but then they cannot finish the league because of the phasing of the Unlock the Rock.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I am asking, Mr Speaker, because, for example, within the restrictions and so on at least rugby had been able – in a limited way but has been able – to at least carry out better training using some facilities and so on. There does not seem to be quite the same amount of facilities, other than just simply the nets, for the cricket people. I do not know ... The Minister perhaps could have some more information, so that those in the cricket fraternity do not feel that they are getting a smaller cutting from the big cake, compared, for example, to their rugby counterparts.

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Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, he can rest assured that rugby has not even been playing. They have done individual training, which is what they are allowed to do, so there is nothing for him to be ... as in whether rugby gets more or less. In fact, you could even argue that cricket is better off because they have got the nets, whilst rugby is a contact sport, it is a physical sport, and therefore you cannot have social distancing whilst you are playing rugby. Cricket you probably could, whilst rugby you cannot.

1190

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q309/2020

Dudley Ward and Keightley Way Tunnels – Ventilation and lighting

Clerk: Question 309, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1195

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm when it will introduce ventilation and better lighting at Dudley Ward and Keightley Way Tunnels?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Member for Housing, Youth and Sport.

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Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the Government can confirm that the studies identifying the ventilation required within Dudley Ward Tunnel has now been completed. The assessment of works and costs will now be required. The lighting within Dudley Ward Tunnel was upgraded in 2010 and substantially improved for the Island Games. There are no immediate plans for this to be upgraded further. Regular maintenance of the lighting within the tunnel is undertaken by the GEA periodically.

1205

Works within Keightley Way Tunnel are linked to the waste water treatment plant earmarked for the area of Brewery Crusher at Europa Point. As part of the waste water treatment plant project, new pipelines will be taken from the area of Little Bay through Keightley Way Tunnel. Since there will be significant works within the tunnel as part of the pipeline project, it is intended to carry out improvements to Keightley Way Tunnel at the same time.

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1215 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful for the answer. I am aware that there is some maintenance to the lighting in Dudley Ward particularly. I know that after filing this question, miraculously that became more regular and lighting was improved. I have to declare an interest and I obviously want to see the Chief Minister heading for me when it is well lit in that tunnel, Mr Speaker, when he is on his electric bike. I was wondering because this has been a complaint that I have received over a number of months during the pandemic and before the pandemic, and then miraculously, once we had filed a question, there seemed to be replacement bulbs throughout Dudley Ward tunnel.

1220 Insofar as ventilation is concerned, I understand that an assessment is going to be made insofar as the cost of that is concerned. I have been given to understand by people in the industry that that is actually quite a significant cost. Does the Minister know roughly in what ballpark range that cost will be, or is the Government unaware as to the extent to which this will cost the taxpayer quite significant sums for ventilation? (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*)

1225 **Hon. S E Linares:** The assessment that we have had, Mr Speaker, and the study that we have done have different options because – if the hon. Member knows – there are different tunnelling systems within that tunnel and we have to look at which is the best option. Therefore, there are other options. One of the options could be putting extractor fans, type of thing, in the ceiling, but another is opening other areas which would bring in air. This is where we are at the moment, so I would not like to commit myself to which option we are looking at.

1235 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful for that answer, but clearly there are going to be significant costs in either direction, whether it is pumped up through or it is opened out to allow for ventilation.

1240 Just insofar as the pedestrian access that the Chief Minister ... an exchange we just had there, he is of course right that there is a warning to pedestrians about that particular tunnel. However – (*Interjection*) I would say it is a warning. It is regularly utilised by members of the public and in fact law enforcement officers as well who use it as a pedestrian route, and many during the COVID crisis were using that as a thoroughfare.

But also their manifesto itself envisages passage through the tunnel. If he would care to listen to me, instead of conversing with others across the floor of the House ... In his manifesto itself, and I will quote it:

We will also enhance these with better lighting where necessary and seek to make pedestrian access safer.

1245 So, his manifesto itself acknowledges that it is honoured in its breach, this rule, insofar as the pedestrianisation. I agree it is a fairly dangerous tunnel within which to run and walk, but many people do in our community and we have to ... But that is the reality. The Government have obviously put in their manifesto that they would seek to make pedestrian access safer, acknowledging the fact that people do do that, and I would be grateful to learn from the Hon. the Minister as to what measures they have in place to make pedestrian access through that tunnel safer than it already is.

1255 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Well, Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman needs to understand that what I was saying to him from a sedentary position is that it is presently, whoever it is used by, law enforcement agencies or otherwise, a tunnel that is closed to pedestrians. A law enforcement agent is, in pursuit of his activity, able to enter places which are otherwise shut, but if a law enforcement agent outside of his law enforcement capabilities is acting in breach of the law he is acting as much in breach of the law as anybody else. The fact that he is a law enforcement agent at work has nothing to do with what he is doing otherwise. It is not to say that law enforcement agents do not park their cars on double yellows. That does happen. What we need to do is both realise that people are doing this but also acknowledge

that those who do it are acting in breach of the law until the law changes, and the law will not change until it is safer for them to do it than it is today. The project, therefore, is not just to improve the lighting but to improve the ventilation and to provide a safe pedestrian access through the tunnel, which is potentially possible on one of the sides.

1265 Mr Speaker, I am not going to talk about who I have seen in that tunnel whilst I have been in a perfectly legal form of conveyance and they may have been in an entirely illegal method of transiting that particular area of our geography – far be it from me to snitch on anyone in this House – but I would say that we all share the concern that those who are going through there are going through there when it is not safe. I think that this was made ... If not before, it was
1270 certainly illegal at the time of the refurbishment of the canopy area when hon. Members were in office. It may have been illegal before even, but this was explicit from then, and before it can be made legal and Government therefore can assume the risk of people being in that tunnel it has to be made much safer than it can be today for those who wander where angels fear to tread.

1275 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. K Azopardi: Sir, can I ask the Chief Minister ...? I think on this aspect he has a manifesto commitment on it. I think Members on this side share their view that the tunnels should be made safer for pedestrians because it is being used quite frequently, I would say on a daily basis,
1280 by lots of people, either walking or.... Anyone who either walks or runs round the Rock, clearly, is running through that tunnel, unless you are Superman and can jump over the Rock, so clearly it is being used. Does the Chief Minister or indeed the Minister have an idea on the kind of process and timescale for this to happen?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, this is already a work in progress, and like all our manifesto commitments it provided for that they should be completed within the lifetime of this Parliament, when we will once again stand before the electorate to be judged on our record. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is the case. He is surely not going to suggest that he, having been in government and having been a veteran of the political class, believes that anything set
1285 out in our manifesto was going to be done the morning after we were elected. That would be miraculous.

But of course there are other ways round, Mr Speaker. There are some great triathletes amongst us Gibraltarians, who swim the area around the jetty right on to the other side. If you
1290 matched up some of us here you might get a few athletes, but I have not seen any triathletes here yet. If you are going round the Rock, you can go on a bike and do that stretch on the bike. At the moment, if you run it, although it is good for you to run it is not good for you to break the law and run through that tunnel because it is not safe. The Government wants to make it safe and then wants to make it legal, and during the lifetime of this Parliament we are committed to doing so.

1300 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I understand the hon. Member says ... and of course I was not suggesting, because it would have been wrong for me to suggest, that as soon as the Parliament is inaugurated we would expect the whole manifesto to be completed. I was simply asking for an indication. In the same way as I am not expecting every single manifesto commitment to be
1305 completed within the first x months or whatever it is, equally surely the people of Gibraltar do not need to wait until the eve of the election four years into the tenure of this Parliament to see the rollout of absolutely everything in their manifesto. So, what I was really asking for was an indication. The hon. Member may not be in a position to give us an indication because simply that work has not been done, and that may be the position, but if he is able to give us an
1310 indication, then for those runners there are out there who are listening to these proceedings it would be a source of comfort that that will indeed be made safer.

1315 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is not possible with any degree of accuracy to provide an estimate of time. The hon. Gentleman knows that a lot of what we were doing has been delayed because of the whole quarter of the year that has been taken up by the COVID emergency. This is not an excuse, it is a reality. People just seem to have forgotten the intensity of the blockage to activity that the pandemic represented until a couple of weeks ago, and indeed the possibility that this could happen again during the course of the autumn or the winter next year. So, I am not going to try and set out a timetable which we might then find as a hostage to fortune, because I think it is unfair to raise people's hopes that something is going to happen in a particular time given what we now know.

1320
1325 Whenever we are giving estimates we are giving estimates which are our best estimate of the time that something will take, and if we do not hit that time it is because something technically has gone wrong or some other *novus actus* intervenes. In this context, we know that there is the potential for eventualities to occur which are outside our control, and therefore we do not want to set out a time to which we might reasonably be held because of that.

1330 Therefore, I think it is fair, really, in respect of the generality of the manifesto, which I have also already said may not be deliverable in the way that we imagined before COVID happened, just having been rid of one quarter, already, of a year out of the four, if you miss deadlines in three and a half years' time I think it is not an excuse, it is a reality that for one quarter of one year of the Parliament activity had to stop. That has an effect, especially with a dynamic, hyperactive Government like ours that has factored every minute into the equation in order to be able to best deliver the maximum that we can for the people of Gibraltar in the time that they have given us the privilege to serve them for a third consecutive time in government.

1335

Mr Speaker: Next question.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q310/2020

**Eco Wave Farm –
Status and future**

Clerk: Question 310, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1340 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, further to Written Question 49/2020, can the Government update the House on the status and future of the Eco Wave Farm in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1345 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, Eco Wave is a private company and we are not aware of any change in its status. The Gibraltar plant continues to produce small amounts of electricity. Eco Wave has shown an interest in expanding the current network in Gibraltar. It is assessing options and looking at possible locations.

1350 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Whilst, Mr Speaker, it is right that it is a private company, it clearly entered into an agreement with the Government insofar as the feed into the general network insofar as power generated from this project. That is right, isn't it?

1355 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, it entered into an agreement whereby they would set up the plant at their expense and the Government would purchase the electricity that they produced from it.

1360 **Hon. E J Phillips:** It would appear from the answer to the question that the project itself is really, insofar as expanding it from the 100 kW to the 500 mW ... that we are still nowhere near approvals and permits. As in the Written Question that I put to the House in January, we are nowhere near that stage, are we, insofar as the Government's position on approving any further expansion?

1365 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, nowhere near that stage. The plant is a pilot plant. It has not produced the amount of power that we would have liked, but it is their plant. They are using it as a pilot. They are changing a lot of what they are doing. They are very well regarded internationally – in fact, they have won international awards – but we are not in a position yet ... Although we have been talking to them about the possibility of expansion and possible locations, but obviously they would have to guarantee that they were able to produce the
1370 electricity that we would require.

Hon. E J Phillips: I wonder whether the Minister could help me with this. In their manifesto they said:

Following a successful pilot at the Eastside of wave power generation, Government will seek to expand energy generation from this initiative to its maximum capacity within 4 years and explore alternative locations to deploy additional power generation from this ample source.

1375 The Minister said in his reply to my previous question that the amount of energy that was received was very low indeed, and therefore I am not too sure how he can reconcile that with a manifesto statement that it was actually a successful pilot.

1380 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, it is a successful pilot in the sense that it is generating power from wave action in a way that no other technology that I am aware of has produced. Therefore it is successful. Therefore they are developing this. They are, I know, looking at establishing plants in other parts of the world. I believe they have got major support in Sweden and I know they have been working in Central America. So, it is successful in the fact that it can generate electricity. They have to convince us now that they are able to generate the amount that we want, and these discussions will continue.

1385 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker the Minister talks about successfully generating electricity, but in relation to the answer that he gave in January he talked about that the amount of energy fed into the grid on the average month, was 0.0003% of Gibraltar's total energy consumption. On my calculation, that is enough to boil 10 kettles a month, Mr Speaker, and therefore this is an
1390 unsuccessful project, is it not, Mr Speaker?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it is generating electricity in a way that has not been generated –

1395 **A Member:** It isn't generating enough electricity for an electric bike! (*Interjection and laughter*)

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it is not for me –

1400 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** He doesn't know how an electric bike works!

1405 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** It is not for me to defend their technology. The Government is willing to support new technologies in power generation, in the generation of renewable energy, and has in fact been talking to other possible potential suppliers of electricity and it encourages them, at no risk to the Government because the Government has not invested funds into this, and therefore this is something that the Government will do.

1410 If we turn away any potential new technology, then we will never achieve things that we could achieve. This is a technology that needs more work and as long as it does not cost the Government any money, as long as it does not take up any space that we particularly need for anything else, this is the sort of thing that I think we have a duty to encourage and to support. I make no apology for it. If they convince us they have been learning from the brand new plant that they have ... They have changed some of the elements, they have changed some of the systems, they have changed some of the materials they have used. If they then convince us that they are able to supply a significant amount of our energy needs, then we will continue to engage with them. Until then, we shall wait and see.

1415

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, the Minister will no doubt know that the proposed expansion from 100 KW to 5 MW will in fact take that pier out by about 1.5 km or a mile. Given the visual impact of this kind of machinery going out 1.5 km into our water and beyond it, doesn't he think that it is a completely impractical project?

1420

Hon. Chief Minister: We are combining it with the extension of the runway.

1425 **Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, no one has ever said that this pier will be extended. No one has ever said it. The hon. Member has imagined it. If the hon. Member prefers us not to engage with any novel technology and stay in the past – like they would have done with diesel power generation – then he should tell us that, but we are going to carry on. As long as we are not risking Government funds we are going to carry on talking to people who may bring in new things, which may be novel when they start and may then take off in the future. I make no apology.

1430

But it is not the intention to extend the pier. They are looking and talking to us about other parts of the coastline that can be used.

1435 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, just one further question and then I will sit down. The Minister talked, in his answer to the question, about the company being well regarded, internationally known, and that it has won lots of awards, but he also said in his written question, and repeated it today, that the Government had not issued any permits or approvals to the company for the expansion of this particular project. I would like him to help me with this: in the prospectus delivered by the company and in its financial accounts, it confirms in its prospectus to investors the company has obtained all necessary permits and approvals and the project is thus in ready-to-build phase. Is that statement, contained in the company prospectus in relation to the Gibraltar project, correct or incorrect?

1440

1445 **Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, is that a statement made by the company about an expansion of the project?

Hon. E J Phillips: Yes.

Hon. Chief Minister: Don't take it at face value.

1450

Hon. E J Phillips: I will read it.

1455 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Mr Speaker... Sorry, if I might just... The hon. Gentleman is long
enough in the tooth as a parliamentarian to know that we are not going to take at face value
anything that he reads us without reading it in context. So, if he wants us to have regard to that
and then determine whether what the company has said is somehow contrary to the position
that the Government has set out, he can give us notice of the full document, we can have regard
1460 to it and then, once we have read it, we can give him a more considered answer. If he likes, we
can set aside this question – if you agree – whilst we do that and then give him a more informed
comment. This is not cross-examination, where the hon. Gentleman reads us a section that
might be convenient in the context of giving an answer. *(Interjection by Hon. E J Phillips)* The
hon. Gentleman says, from a sedentary position, I do it all the time. Mr Speaker, everything that
I do is intended to set out the full context of the reason why the Government is right about a
1465 particular thing.

Mr Speaker: I think the Chief Minister has made a reasonable suggestion. Therefore, would
you be able to provide the Chief Minister with a copy of that document so he can determine
whether its face value is such as you have put it to him?

1470 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, true to the co-operation and generally when the Chief Minister
says to me, when there is a public document available, 'Go and get it yourself, Mr Phillips,'
perhaps the Chief Minister could go and get it himself. I will send him the link, of course, and he
can print it off himself, but the question is quite clear. The statement in their prospectus says
1475 this:

The expansion of the power plant in Gibraltar is expected to take 24 months, commencing July 2019. The
company has obtained the necessary permits and approvals and the project is thus in ready-to-build phase.

The Minister is on record as saying that he has not granted permission or permits in relation
to this project. The company says one thing, the Government says another. As a parliamentarian
of this jurisdiction, I would like to believe that the Government is making an accurate statement
to this community, but in their prospectus they say something different. All I am asking for is
1480 reassurance that the information that he has placed before the House is correct and the
statement made by the company is incorrect and, in fact, false.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, given that I know that the statements made by the
Government in this House are correct and the Government is not answerable for what anybody
1485 else says – in particular a company, whether or not a company has a relationship with the
Government – the Government has no interest in perusing the company's prospectus other than
in order to be able to give the hon. Gentleman a full answer. If, in that context, he does not want
to give us a copy, I am sure that we can just move on and get on to the next thing.

1490 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I could just interrupt here and ask a question:
from this interchange I notice that the answers by the Hon. Minister beg the question as to how
much exactly the Government is actually prioritising these green technology ventures. My hon.
Friend Dr John Cortes said something like 'as long as it does not cost the taxpayer', and my
question would be then why would the Government not want this to be an investment for
1495 Government, given that it should be an investment that should be perfectly in line with the
Government's green commitment to Gibraltar for a greener Gibraltar. I think this would be a
priority in terms of investment for green technologies. Why is the Government saying 'as long as
it does not cost anything'?

1500 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Mr Speaker, because – as the Minister for Public Finance – the Government would not consider itself an investor in trying to find new technology that can be marketed by a third party for their profit and gain. The Government is ready to be a willing participant in the development of technology where Gibraltar is used as a test bed, as an example to the world, something that we have done successfully in the past, but not as an investor in that technology in the context of the equivalent of venture capitalism.

1505 Sometimes, Mr Speaker, I do find that there is a duality in the positions that the Government has to face, not necessarily from the hon. Member but from Members generally. In one instance we are told ‘This is risky stuff, you are risking taxpayers’ money, don’t go anywhere near it,’ and in the other instance we are told ‘Why don’t you risk some taxpayers’ money in case this is a good thing in the long run?’ We take a more measured, reasonable and moderate approach, which is to say we are ready to work and participate with those who are innovative in the way that they present technology, even in the face of criticism from those who are not as forward thinking.

1510 In saying that, I am not for one moment seeking to slight the Hon. Mr Phillips, who was running the line of questioning before – I think we have made clear that we do not want to engage in the context of what a company may have said versus what the position of the Government is; the position of the Government is the position set out in the Government’s books of permits etc. – but an earlier incarnation of the same Opposition that thought, for example, that a Jaguar burning hoards of petrol was a better method of conveyance than a Tesla, which was then an emerging method of technology. Well, Speaker, we bet on the Tesla.

1520 That was the best environmental option for Gibraltar and we were proved right, but that was already a developing technology.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

Q311/2020
AQMesh monitors –
Criteria re location and installation

1525 **Clerk:** Question 311, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, how does the Government decide on the location and installation of the AQMesh monitors?

1530 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Environmental Agency operates three AQMesh pods, which are currently located at Line Wall Road, Rosia Road clock tower and Europort Road.

1535 Locations are determined by identifying emission sources – such as power generation, major traffic routes and industry – which are near dense residential areas. These are discussed between the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the Environmental Agency, as well as the NGOs. We do consult further. For example, one monitor was placed for a time at the Frontier following representations from the ESG and the GGCA. The pods allow for an indication of the pollution concentrations of different pollutants in these areas to supplement Gibraltar’s extensive air-quality monitoring programme. Another consideration in finding a secure location for the AQMesh pods is that the asset is protected from vandalism and interference in order to keep the data intact.

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1545 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, am I right in thinking that an AQMesh monitor was installed today along Lovers Lane?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No. Well, I do not know. It would not be. The only one that was moved was moved a couple of weeks ago, before the Line Wall Road exercise, to the area of the Haven/City Hall, that kind of area. If a monitor was put in place today at that end of Line Wall Road, it may have been a diffusion tube, but I am not aware of any deployment today.

Q312-13/2020

**Clean Air Bill and Air Pollution Control Plan –
Timescale for introduction**

Clerk: Question 312, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1555 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I suspect I already know the answer to this question: can the Government confirm when it intends to introduce a Clean Air Bill?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1560 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** I would love to know whether you got it right.
I will answer this question together with Question 313.

Clerk: Question 313, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1565 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government confirm when it will introduce an Air Pollution Control Plan?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1570 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the Clean Air Bill, the Pollution Control Plan and the Air Quality Commission are all due to be proceeded with by the end of this year.

Q314/2020

**Queensway green lung –
Update on progress**

Clerk: Question 314, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1575 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government update the House on its Queensway green lung commitment?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1580 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Delighted to do so, Mr Speaker.

Plans on the first phase of Romney car park and the link to Commonwealth Park are being prepared with a view to commencing works within the next two months. Midtown Park, which

has been delayed due to the COVID restrictions, is progressing, with the trees now expected to be planted in the autumn. Other works will be undertaken in coming months as plans are finalised and necessary approvals obtained.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just with another eye on traffic, does the Minister know what mitigation will be put in place to avoid build-up of traffic in that area? If you are looking at the entire green stretch, and with Line Wall Road being closed on certain days of course, is there any impact on Queensway?

1590

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, that is a transport question rather than an environment question. A lot of work has been done to deal with those issues but I think that is the sort of question of which there should be specific notice given, and we would be delighted to engage on that.

1595

I would say this: all of the naysayers seem to have got it wrong in respect of how terrible Queensway was supposed to be on Mondays when Line Wall Road closed; it is no better than on Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, although that is an intervention in relation to traffic, I would not agree with that analysis at all. In fact, the representations that we receive from members of the public are completely the opposite of that. I am not too sure whether that is representative of the political divide, but it is certainly representative of a community still struggling to deal with the closure of Line Wall Road for many practical reasons. Therefore, some of the data that the hon. Gentleman has referred to insofar as the monitors are concerned may well reveal the truth of pollution and the potential increase along Queensway given the closure of Line Wall Road, but we will have to agree to disagree in relation to what the Chief Minister has just said.

1605

Hon. Chief Minister: I assume that there was a question in there – because it is Question Time, after all.

1610

Mr Speaker, we do not think that we have to agree to disagree. I think that there is an opportunity here to try and do things in a way that is more collaborative, and that in fact in principle we might all agree that closing Line Wall Road is a good thing because the anecdotal evidence – and we are talking about evidence that the Government has which is not constituents turning up who might be disposed or not disposed to a particular change – is actually quite the opposite. It is that there are none of the issues that the hon. Gentleman says have been brought to him. I do note that he says they have been brought to him and I take that of course at face value and I accept that, but he has not said that it is his view. He has said it is the view of those who have come to him, and there is a big difference.

1615

The Government's own view, because we are making these assessments for ourselves, is that, in terms of traffic, that is not the case and in fact that the issues that we need to deal with in Queensway are not related to the move of traffic on certain days to now from Line Wall road; they are about flow at Queensway, and those are the ones that are being addressed and are being looked at in the context of the new arrangements to be entered into.

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1625

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q315/2020
Black smoke emissions from ships –
Delay in bringing legislation

Clerk: Question 315, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government explain the delay in bringing legislation controlling black smoke emissions from ships?

1630 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Bill to control emissions of smoke by ships has been finalised. When the question was drafted a week or so ago the answer was we expected to publish this within
1635 weeks. We managed to publish it today.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, we did not know, of course, on this side of the House that the Government had that advanced plan in relation to dark smoke or black smoke as described – how would we know? – but I am grateful that there is an opportunity to debate this issue in the
1640 House when the Bill passes the relevant time period.

I wonder whether the Minister could help me with this. It has been put to me by a member of the public that it is not only black smoke, dark smoke, as described insofar as the legislation controlling those elements, but also in relation to nitrogen-dioxide emissions, fine and ultra-fine emissions and VOC emitted during bunkering. So, it is not just black smoke, as far as I
1645 understand the position – and I am still learning about this area, of course – but there are particulates and other dangerous emissions that the Minister may have in mind in terms of controlling those substances as well. Does the Minister know, off the top of his head ...? It is slightly beyond the scope of the question but does relate to emissions more generally, but if the Minister could help this House as to what legislation it may well bring to control these noxious
1650 emissions as well, it would be helpful.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker. It is well outside the scope. The scope of the question was specifically the legislation on the black smoke emissions from ships, which has been published today. The others are wider considerations which would involve the Hon. Minister for
1655 the Port. If there is a specific question on that, then I am sure we could take it at some future meeting of the House.

Hon. E J Phillips: The only reason I have raised that question, of course, is because in the context the question I asked about bringing legislation controlling black smoke emissions from
1660 ships, which I assume is a question that could be answered by the Minister for the Port or indeed the Minister for the Environment. So, other noxious fumes emanating from ships would also be included in that general description – that is why he might have that information to hand. If he does not, that is fine. Of course there are very deep concerns within our community as regards the bunkering activity and the distance between the shore, and residents who live in
1665 that area are very concerned about these elements into the environment and the effect on their health. That is the reason why I have asked that supplementary.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it is a different question. Dark smoke from ships is a specific type of smoke produced in specific circumstances. The Bill refers to those and we will
1670 debate them, no doubt, when it comes before the House after the six weeks are up.

The other issues, and there are lots of steps and measures that are taken in order to make our bunkering safe, and certainly as safe as is possible, but these are issues that have to be discussed with proper time and I am sure my colleague the Minister for the Port would have a
lot to say given that bunkering is run by the Port Authority.

1675

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one more very small question, then: so the Government is not ruling out legislation in relation to nitrogen-dioxide fine and ultra-fine emissions?

1680 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member my colleague has said, this is a totally different question to what was on the order paper.

1685 The hon. Member has made a statement that these emissions are there when bunkering occurs. The information I have specifically from the Captain of the Port is that bunkering simply involves the provision of fuel through a pipe from one vessel to another and during that process there is absolutely no soot and no dangerous chemicals are emitted.

We will have time to debate this at a later stage if the hon. Member wants to ask a specific question, but I thought it was important to clarify that the information that the hon. Member apparently has been given seems to be wrong.

1690 **Mr Speaker:** May I? In the past two questions the hon. Member has digressed slightly. Can I ask him to go back to and to keep in ...?

Hon. E J Phillips: Yes. I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker.

Q316/2020
Single-use plastic –
Bill banning use

Clerk: Question 316, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1695 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, when will the Government publish a Bill banning the use of single-use plastic?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1700 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the Government has so far introduced the following legislation regarding plastics.

In November 2017, the plastic microbeads importation ban under the Imports and Exports Act 1986. The ban applies to all plastic microbeads.

1705 In June 2019, the single-use plastic products importation ban under the Imports and Exports Act 1986. This importation ban applies to a defined list of products, in line with EU legislation. The ban aims to progressively encapsulate all products of single-use plastic within the local environment. Currently, work is under way to further enhance the existing single-use plastic products ban. It will also capture further single-use plastic products not currently banned from importation.

1710 In September 2019, the plastic bag importation ban under the Imports and Exports Act 1986. This importation ban applies to most plastic bags of a thickness of less than 100 microns. A total ban on use will be considered in due course, once the effect of this legislation has been assessed.

1715 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Insofar as the steps that the Hon. Minister has set out in terms of the measures that the Government itself has deployed in the last Parliament, what assessment has it made insofar as the impact that that has had? Clearly, if the Minister is going to go down the route of single-use plastic banning, of course there would need to be an assessment as to how far these measures have impacted on that, and I would be grateful to know what data has been received by the Government to try and make that assessment early.

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1725 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Discussions are ongoing between the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the Customs Department. The ban actually came into effect at the end of December, or January this year, so there has not been a lot of time, but we are jointly planning to look at business and see – involving also the Environmental Agency, which has a role in looking at establishments of this nature – whether there has been any significant reduction in the use of plastic bags. Following that, I think it will take some months to do. We will see whether we need to step up or introduce any other legislation.

Q317/2020
Waste sewage plant –
Update

1730 **Clerk:** Question 317, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government update this House on its commitment to build a waste sewage plant?

1735 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): The Government, Mr Speaker, remains committed to building the sewage plant. The release of untreated sewage into the sea remains unacceptable.

1740 Delays to the contract have been caused by the fact that one of the partners of the joint venture that was successful in the tender went into administration during the course of last year and alternative arrangements are in the process of being made. In the meantime, the technical works have continued in preparation and a new design is awaited following comments from the Development and Planning Commission.

1745 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Hon. the Minister reveal the name of the joint venture partner that went into administration?

1750 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, I just wanted to be sure that I did not break any rules. The joint venture was a joint venture between Northumbrian Water – which, as the hon. Member will know, is one of the co-owners of AquaGib – and Modern Water, and it was Modern Water that went into administration last year.

1755 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, as a result of clearly difficult news for this project, has the Government retendered for the project?

1760 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, as I said, alternative arrangements are being made. We are looking at the legal implications and whether the other part can assume the whole contract. I would rather say no more at this stage, but I would be very happy to share this behind the Speaker's Chair. We are looking at options so that it does not delay it unduly. This was obviously circumstances completely beyond our control and we are very keen to resolve the administrative issues to be able to proceed.

1765 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Have there been any adverse costs to the Government insofar as this administration is concerned, of this particular company; and, if so, is the Government going to take steps to recover these sums through the administration?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, not as far as I know, but again I would need notice for that information.

1770

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q318/2020

**Midtown car park –
Noise pollution re vibration of louvres**

Clerk: Question 318, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm whether it intends to deal with the noise pollution arising from the vibration of the horizontal thin slats at Midtown?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1780

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Environmental Agency received complaints and, following an investigation to establish a nuisance, an abatement notice was served under the Public Health Act on 20th December 2019 to the proprietors. The abatement notice allowed 60 days for works to be carried out to attenuate the noise.

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Noise consultants were appointed and noise surveys were carried out in order to determine the cause of the noise and to propose attenuation measures. The survey was submitted to the Environmental Agency on 11th March this year, where the consultants found that the noise was from strong winds passing through the louvres on the first and second-floor car park of Midtown by the east and south elevation of Building E. It was found that the noise was passing through the car park and becoming audible on Queensway. Engineering solutions were proposed which entailed providing vertical supports to the louvres on the first and second floors.

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An extension of time to comply with the abatement notice was granted due to the construction restrictions imposed during the general lockdown. A permit during this period was not granted to the developer, as the site of Midtown was not considered a self-contained site as it is partially occupied by residents and businesses. With restrictions eased and supply chains improving, works are to start with a start date to be confirmed imminently.

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Q319/2020

**Europort Avenue –
Loud construction work during the night**

Clerk: Question 319, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1800

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm why loud construction work is being permitted at Europort Avenue in the middle of the night?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Government has not permitted any construction works at Europort Avenue for extended hours, let alone in the middle of the night.

1810 The Environmental Agency received a complaint from a resident on 6th March 2020 regarding the use of a crane at the EuroCity site being used past the site operator's permitted time. The complaint was regarding noise that happened retrospectively, so an assessment was not possible; however, the matter was raised with the site manager. There have been no other complaints lodged and no permits for extended hours have been granted.

I would urge everyone with noise complaints to contact the Environmental Agency and not rely on posting on social media.

1815 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am not too sure what the hon. Member is referring to insofar as posting on social media is concerned, but we did receive a number of complaints about loud noise in the middle of the night, at one or two o'clock in the morning. I am sure the Minister would agree with me that it is surely unacceptable in residential areas for work, despite it being EuroCity or anywhere else in Gibraltar, to disturb residents at that time in the morning for construction work. Would he not agree?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, that is what I have said in my answer.

1825 Regarding social media, it may be that complaints have come to the hon. Member's notice either through social media or from people who have also posted on social media. Unfortunately, it is now generally accepted that that is the way to deal with complaints, but if they are not lodged with the Environmental Agency, then they may not come to our notice and we may not be able to deal with them.

My earlier question on the slats clearly shows a sequence of events: there was a proper complaint and it has been properly dealt with. This is my appeal and I am sure the hon. Member opposite will agree with me.

1830

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q320/2020
Loud exhausts –
Mobile decibel meters and FPNs

Clerk: Question 320, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1835 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, how many offenders have been issued with on-the-spot fixed penalty notices resulting from the use of mobile decibel meters in the last 12 months in respect of loud exhausts?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

1840 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, in the 2019-20 policing year, 43 persons have been dealt with by the Royal Gibraltar Police for having ineffective exhausts. Of the 43 persons, 14 were dealt with by fixed penalty notices and 29 were reported for process by summons.

1845 Mr Speaker, I need to point out that not all of them will have involved the use of decibel meters. In some cases – for example, a hole in the exhaust – it is very obvious that it is too loud.

1850 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I would have thought, Mr Speaker, that as far as an assessment of those 43 cases is concerned, the main evidence required to prosecute an offender, or indeed impose a fine, would be as a result of this particular mobile decibel meter being utilised in the course of those 43. Is it difficult to obtain that assessment of how it is done? I am trying to ascertain how

the authorities use this particular device to measure noise, because you would have thought that if it can be used it would be used all the time, and many of us know anecdotally of particularly noisy motorcycles that irritate residents and individuals alike.

1855 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the point I made is that if the exhaust has a hole in it, it is a faulty exhaust and therefore it is clear. If a police officer, for example, hears a motorcycle making too much noise, stops the driver and then they see there is a hole in the exhaust, then clearly that did not require a decibel meter. That is the point I am making.

Q321/2020
North Gorge –
Unlawful removal of trees by developer

Clerk: Question 321, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm the outcome of the investigation into the unlawful removal of trees at North Gorge by a local developer?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, this matter is subject to legal proceedings and so it is not appropriate to comment at this time.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, are those proceedings by the Office of Prosecutions and Litigation, or proceedings by another authority? Are they criminal or are they civil proceedings?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I would need to check, but I believe it is the Town Planner who issues these proceedings.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q322/2020
Barbary Macaques –
Numbers culled since 2011

Clerk: Question 322, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm how many Barbary Macaques have been culled since 8th December 2011, by reference to each year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, no Barbary Macaques have been culled since 8th December 2011 in the sense of being put down by selection, which is what 'culling' means.

Hon. E J Phillips: Does the Minister have any reference to any other means by which Barbary Macaques' lives have been terminated, Mr Speaker?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, we have to make the distinction between going out ... One of the legal dictionary's definitions of 'culling' is 'reduce the population of a wild animal by selective slaughter', and certainly we have not done that. This was done in the past but we have not done that.

1895

I am happy to share some figures. Macaques are put down, for example, where they are badly injured or where they are unwell; where, for example, they become aggressive and become what is known by the team up there as 'biters' – they go out and they bite people; or where they have been ostracised and become unstable and they become difficult to control. I can tell the hon. Member, if I can go back in time: this year zero to the end of May, in 2019 there were seven such cases, in 2018 five, in 2017 three, none in 2016 or 2015, one in 2014, four in 2013, and five in 2012. But if I can take the hon. Member back to the culls of the old days, there were 27 in 2003, 20 in 2002, and in 1999 no fewer than 50 were culled in the true sense of the word.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I was not around during that time, (*Interjections*) so there is no real point in having a debate about what the GSD ... Let's get on with politics in the last eight years, if we can. There is no point going back. The people of Gibraltar do not want to hear the details of what happened before; they are only concerned with what is happening now.

1910

Clearly, Mr Speaker, What the Government obviously announce is that there is a selective form of termination of life of a Barbary Macaque. The answer to my question was 'culling'. He has corrected me, but it is a form of selection, is it not, for those with injuries, those that are ostracised, those that become 'biters' as he has described? Surely there is a form of assessment and selection of those particular animals for termination, and therefore I would ask him this: what is the process by which that decision is made?

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, this is an important point because our macaques, apart from being so important to us in our history, are also sentient animals.

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The hon. Gentleman says he does not want to go back more than eight years. I am surprised that he says that. I assume it is because he realises that this is not convenient for them, to have their record more than eight years ago brought up on this. They are constantly trying to refer us to how well they did in their time in government – how low the debt was, how high the reserves were, how fantastic the Constitution they delivered was – and that is 14-15 years ago. So it is very peculiar that they do not want to talk about this particular issue. They do not want to go back when this is the matter to have regard to, but they do want to go back all the way to 1996 about some things that they want to talk about then.

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We are not going to take their advice on what it is that we look back at and what we do not look back at. We are going to say that we stand on our record of the past, the good and the bad. We all make mistakes and we all do things well. One of the things they did particularly badly was culling of the apes. They controlled the population by the execution of members of the species. Slaughter, execution, murder: those words all mean the same. That is not what is happening here. What is happening here is that some of the species have to be put down and they have to be put down for the reasons the hon. Gentleman addresses. That is, in our view, even in the very low numbers that we are seeing, a matter of extreme regret because we do not want to be involved in this at all. If there needs to be a control of population, we do it by splitting the population up, we do it by trying to find zoos that will take the population – the hon. Gentleman knows that we have done that in the past – but where there is an injury from which there will not be recovery, the sorts of reasons where it is humane to unfortunately take the life ... You might say, 'Well, look, you are practising euthanasia in relation to apes and you are not bringing an argument to practise euthanasia generally,' and the answer to that would probably be yes,

1940 there is a scheme whereby, in the right circumstances, despite it is not what we want to do, on
advice we are told that the most humane way to deal with that macaque is to put it down. We
do that with great, great reluctance. That is the view of the whole Cabinet. We take this very
seriously and we have considered it very carefully and that is why the numbers have changed in
1945 in that particular situation. We have not done so, but we genuinely and sincerely believe ...

He was not a member of the GSD then, so it is not an attack on him. He must take this
honestly from us. We genuinely and sincerely believe it was the wrong way to approach the
problem to cull – I will put it no more emotionally than that – in the numbers that we saw at the
time, and it is not a trap that we are going to fall into. We just do not think it is an appropriate
1950 way to deal with them.

The hon. Gentleman I know, apart from ... I am not going to say where I have seen him
jogging generally, given what I have said about being in those places, but apart from that I have
also seen him, quite remarkably – he is a better runner than he is a parliamentarian – at the top
of the Rock. He will have seen in the mornings that the Rock now is full of apes. It is quite lovely
1955 to see, especially to see them with their young, and it is quite remarkable to see how they are so
close to the species that we represent in the way that they care for their young and they feel in
the way that we feel, so we are not going to go anywhere near the sort of selective culling to
control the population that was the case before.

Q323/2020
Sandy Bay –
Maintenance programme

Clerk: Question 323, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what maintenance programme is in
place for Sandy Bay?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):
Mr Speaker, I am assuming the hon. Member is referring to the routine beach maintenance
programmes. These commence prior to the bathing season and continue throughout the
season. They include repairs to and re-laying of concrete walkways; reconditioning of umbrella
1970 stores, toilet and changing room facilities; and setting up recycling bin pods. During the season,
daily cleaning is carried out.

As hon. Members know, Sandy Bay is now one of our most magnificent beaches as a result of
the investment we made in the development of the groyne. This has made the beach very
popular indeed and improved it tremendously. Again, it cost a lot of money, which they
1975 complained about, but it was the right investment for our people.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, he has picked up on the significant investment that was made
at Sandy Bay. I think it was approximately £11 million that was spent on the groyne and the
installation of the works there. It is my understanding that the maintenance contract for Sandy
1980 Bay was linked somehow to that particular project. The information that I am receiving from
members of the public who believe that there is substandard maintenance of that particular
beach has indicated that there was some contractual relationship with the company to provide a
form of maintenance over that beach. I would be grateful if he could clarify that. If that is wrong,
I will go back to those members of the public who have raised this with me.

1985 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, if the hon. Member had pointed out that he was asking about the groynes and breakwater, then I assume that my hon. Friend the Minister for Technical Services would have answered. I do know that the Technical Services Department monitors the groynes and breakwater regularly and carries out repairs and maintenance as and when necessary and I am told that they are expecting to carry out further maintenance works next year, but I think if there was a specific question then the Technical Services Department would be the one best placed to answer that one.

1990 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Just to be helpful, I did say maintenance programme in relation to Sandy Bay; it may have been encapsulated within the question.

1995 I did not hear an answer in relation to whether there is a contract. There is not?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I am not aware and my hon. Friend is shaking his head, so I suspect not.

Q324/2020

Drinking water in public Government entities – Testing

Clerk: Question 324, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

2000 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Who does Government contract for the sampling of water bacteria in public Government entities, and how often are these tests performed?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

2005 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the Environmental Agency carries out the task of sampling Gibraltar's potable water supply network. Samples at different points of the network are taken throughout Gibraltar on a monthly basis as per the requirements of EU Directive 98/83/EC and the Public Health (Potable Water) Rules 1994. The purpose of these samples is to provide information on the organoleptic and microbiological quality of the water supplied, and the effectiveness of drinking-water treatment.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, if the Hon. the Minister for the Environment just said that they test it monthly, then would the Government not concede that it took its eye off the ball during the COVID lockdown period on this front, whereby no flushing ... or something appears to have taken place leading to the legionella bacteria situation in the schools?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, that is not the case. The Environmental Agency continued with its sampling throughout the period, and legionella is not captured by these directives. Legionella is tested for at the request of different entities, as far as I am aware.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: So, Mr Speaker, in that case, how was it actually discovered, this bacteria, given the frequency and the fact that the hon. Member claims that it is not the same type of investigation process?

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the legionnaires' was identified, as the hon. Lady knows, in a particular Department and therefore she might want to pose the question directly – I think there may be a question on the order paper on that – to that Department. But I think the answer would be the opposite of what she suggested. In other words, because the

2030 Government did not take its eye off the ball and did seek that the tests were done, and then when the tests were done there was a requirement to act in keeping with the result.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I appreciate the answer from the Chief Minister but I do not understand. If these tests are done frequently – and, from my understanding from health and safety experts, this bacteria grows when flushing is not taking place frequently enough – and if the Government ascertained that the flushing is taking place as frequently as it is, how did this actually even happen in the first place?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, our understanding from health and safety experts is different. We understand that the criteria that would appertain to require a test to be carried out were those identified in that particular instance in the Department of Education, and the results, when they came back, required that we act in keeping with the results. But as I said, that was a matter for the Department of Education and I understand there is another question on the order paper that deals with this – or I may be confusing that issue.

2045 I think that the hon. Lady really gave the game away when she said, ‘Did you take your eye off the ball?’ and the hon. Gentleman said, ‘Actually, no, it is a completely different ball that we are talking about and the Government did promote that there should be a test because there was concern, and then, because we promoted that there should be a test, we got a result which indicated that it was something that we had to act upon, and we acted upon it.’

2050 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I was not playing any games, so I have not given anything away; I am just here to ask questions.

2055 I would ask the Chief Minister if he would accept that it just appears that there is a correlation between the fact that schools were closed during this COVID period, and therefore it points to some type of supervisory or maintenance neglect that in that same time this bacteria formed? I ask him whether this may have had anything to do with the fact that there was little activity and maybe little workmanship during the COVID period and effectively less maintenance.

2060 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am not for a moment suggesting that the hon. Lady is here to play games. I do accept that she is just here to ask questions – that is why she is there – and we are just here to do the job that we were elected to do, which is to run the administration.

2065 In running the administration, because the schools were closed and because therefore there would be stagnant water, it was rightly identified that there might be a problem with legionnaires’ and there was therefore the pressing of the button to carry out the test. Because we had identified that the test needed to be carried out, when we got the results of that test and they indicated that there was a problem we acted to ensure that we provided for the safety of the children, the teachers and the other staff of the schools in the way that required us to act.

2070 What I am saying to the hon. Lady is that the Government’s actions betray the opposite of what she was suggesting; in other words, the Government’s actions betray the fact that we were alive to the issue, that we promoted the test and that the test resulted in a result which was not the one we wanted but is the one we got and had to deal with and was one of the possible results arising from the promotion of the test.

2075 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I just ask from that: if the Government were alive to the risk of the presence of the bacteria in the water system in the schools, why wasn’t the test carried out before the schools were reopened?

2080 **Hon. Chief Minister:** For a very simple reason, Mr Speaker: the tests were carried out before the schools reopened; the results were not provided before the schools reopened.

2085 If the hon. Gentleman then wants to take it a step further and say ‘Why were the tests not
carried out earlier, before the schools reopened?’ the answer is very simple: because those tests
were carried out when the decision was made as to when the schools were going to reopen and
that gap was as short as possible because we wanted children to go back as soon as we had
made decisions that we were able to move in that direction. These were extraordinary times –
they still are – and the timings were not working in the way that we would have expected them
to work. Acting in good faith, when you have a concern, you say, ‘This must be done because it is
something that we are concerned to ensure is not there for our children.’ You carry out the test,
it is there, and therefore you have to act to protect our children and our teachers. I think this is
2090 really to ensure that, insofar as we are able, from the moment that the decision is made we put
in train the systems that we have to put in train.

Hon. K Azopardi: I appreciate that. Obviously the tests were not ... There is an interregnum.
Indeed, I think the Minister, when he gave the interview, explained that tests were taken and
2095 then it took, about a few days, maybe seven or eight, whatever it was. But there was literature
about the risks on this, publicly available internationally since at least mid-April, so if the
Government were alive to it and the tests had been carried out earlier then it could easily have
received the test results before the schools were open. That is the point I am really asking the
Chief Minister.

2100 The Chief Minister knows that the Government and the Opposition have had an exchange of
press releases on these issues, so we just take that point, really, and I am only rising to ask the
question more specifically because he made the point that the Government were alive to the
risk. So, when specifically were the Government alive to the risk?

2105 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, this is a question which the Hon. the Minister for Education
may have more details on, but I want to make this point. You are alive to the risk, but if you are
not clear about when you are actually going to be able to open – 100% sure that you are going
to be able to open on a particular date – then doing the test is just a moving feast because you
do the test, you go back to stagnation, literally, and then you have got to carry out the test again
2110 until you are sure that you are going to open, because stagnation is going to lead to the
potential for the legionnaires’ to either come back if you have had it and have to cure it again, or
to re-implant itself.

Mr Speaker, I think that this is not an issue on which splitting hairs is going to take us in any
more certain a direction because the Government acted in the way it had to act in order to
2115 ensure that we provided that safe system of work for our teachers and that safe environment
for our children.

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn
until Thursday, 2nd July at 3.30 in the afternoon.

2120 **Mr Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to
Thursday, 2nd July at 3.30 in the afternoon.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 2nd July
at 3.30. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

The House will now adjourn to Thursday, 2nd July at 3.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.46 p.m.