



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.32 p.m. – 6.12 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Friday, 30th October 2020**

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## The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3.32 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*]

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

#### Standing Order 7(1) suspended to proceed with Questions

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Friday, 30th October 2020.

Order of Proceedings: Suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

- 5     **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I beg to move, under Standing Order 7(3), to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with Questions.

**Mr Speaker:** Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

## Questions for Oral Answer

### HOUSING, YOUTH AND SPORT

#### Q473/2020

#### Laguna Estate play park – Usage and restrictions

**Clerk:** (viii) We now proceed with Answers to Questions.

- 10     We commence with Question 473/2020, and the questioner is the Hon. E J Reyes.

- 15     **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, further to the answer provided to Questions 128 and 306/2020, can Government confirm that the children's play park between St Anne's and Notre Dame Schools at Laguna Estate is now fully operational, together with details of times when the park is open for public use as well as any age usage restrictions?

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

- 20     **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, I am glad to announce that the children's play park at Laguna Estate was opened on Monday, 14th September 2020. There is no age restriction, and the park will be open daily, like all other parks and playgrounds, specifically from 9 a.m. to 9.p.m. during the summer period and 9.a.m. to 7.p.m. during the rest of the year.

**Q474/2020**  
**Housing waiting lists –**  
**Number of applicants by category**

**Clerk:** Question 474, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing provide this House with updated details as to how many applicants are on the housing waiting lists, showing the date they first joined the waiting lists and providing a breakdown by category – that is general, medical and social lists, and by reference to room composition and entitlements by applicants?

**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 now hand over to the hon. Member opposite a schedule with the information requested.

**Answer to Q474/2020**

Information of applicants on the Housing Waiting Lists with breakdown by category is as follows:

**1RKB,** 504 active applicants of which, 64 have a medical category and 29 have a social category.

**2RKB,** 73 active applicants of which, 20 have a medical category and 1 has a social category.

**3RKB,** 102 active applicants of which, 19 have a medical category and 17 have a social category.

**4RKB,** 70 active applicants of which, 7 have a medical category and 5 have a social category.

**5RKB,** 4 active applicants of which, 1 has a medical category.

**6RKB,** 1 active applicant.

Further information in relation to dates can be obtained on the HMGoG's Statistics page, Housing, Table H.1

**Q475-478/2020**  
**Emergency housing –**  
**Future provision and allocation**

**Clerk:** Question 475, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 223/2020, can Government confirm that the same 16 tenants are still residing at the emergency homes they were allocated in May 2020, and what housing provisions are planned for them for the future?

**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 Questions 476 to 478.

**Clerk:** Question 476, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing say how many applicants currently on the housing waiting lists would be entitled to emergency housing if using a similar criterion to that used in May 2020 for the allocation of emergency homes?

**Clerk:** Question 477, the Hon. E J Reyes.

55 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Has Government, since May 2020, made any further emergency homes available to applicants on the housing waiting lists using a similar criteria as those allocated and explained through the answer given to Question 223/2020?

**Clerk:** Question 478, the Hon. E J Reyes.

60 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Does Government have intentions of making any more emergency homes available to applicants on the housing waiting lists on a similar basis to those allocated and as explained in answer to Question 223/2020?

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

65 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the Housing Department will continue to work with Civil Contingencies and other agencies, as part of the multi-agency team, to provide any emergency accommodation, as required.

70 I would like to thank all the officers who were involved initially in successfully providing free accommodation in the Retreat Centre, and the staff, and all those providing free food and other free amenities during the lockdown period, and all those also involved in successfully relocating those who were housed at the Retreat Centre. Every single person was relocated and we will continue to work and support them, to be able to meet their needs.

75 It must be understood that there are many who genuinely become homeless in these difficult times, and for those we will work tirelessly to help them as much as is humanly possible. Unfortunately, there are a few who make believe they are homeless to try to abuse the system in order to jump the queue, so to speak, in order to obtain Government rental accommodation through the back door, using the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse. This is unacceptable and unfair, and those supporting them should understand that they do so to the detriment of those  
80 who genuinely are waiting for a Government rental house. Our Government will not tolerate this sort of behaviour and will call it out, as I am doing now, every time this happens.

On a positive note, I am glad to say that my staff have managed to help many in all circumstances and that in these difficult times their true nature is demonstrated.

85 In respect of Question 475/2020, these 16 flats were allocated to applicants on the waiting list as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown circumstances. Of these, 14 will remain in their homes and two will remain there for the time being, until they are able to return to their accommodation.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I am going to try and get a couple of clarifications. With specific reference to Question 475, the Minister has just said that 14 of these applicants remain in their  
90 homes. I do not know what the outcome has been for the other two. And when he says that 14 remain in their homes, does he mean they are going to be there now on a permanent basis, or is it just a temporary set-up?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, as I stated, these were people who were high on the list at the  
95 time, and therefore, due to COVID, we have accelerated them to be able to get them accommodation, so they will stay in those houses. It is the other two that will stay in the accommodation while COVID-19 is still around, because they are having issues.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, it is now clear that 14 are staying permanently and for  
100 the other two it is a temporary thing.

In respect of Question 476, I was asking how many applicants on the housing waiting lists would be entitled to emergency housing if we were to use the same criterion. I do not think I have had a figure back – in reply to that, because there could be applicants and they have not been given because the accommodation is available; there were only 16 available at the time.

105 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker, that includes the 14. All of the 14 were the people who had the problem, so we have looked at the lists, we have upgraded them due to COVID, and these are included in that 14 that I am stating.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** So, there is no one waiting to be allocated using the same criterion – is that the correct interpretation? I thank the Minister for nodding yes.

Mr Speaker, in Question 477 I asked if the Government had been able, since May, to make any further emergency homes available. At first, there were 16. Have any more been made available?

115 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker.

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

Looking towards the future – that was Question 478 – does Government have any intention to make any more of these emergency homes available? Perhaps the Minister can expand on that.

120 **Hon. S E Linares:** Well, Mr Speaker, I think it will be on a case-by-case basis as they make an application. We do not know. At the moment, we do not have any, so I think it is hypothetical at this stage for me to state whether we will be able to house them or not, depending on their circumstances. We are at the stage, at the moment, where we have no application, but should there be someone, or a family, whatever, who are in need, we will then deal with it as and when necessary.

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#### Q474/2020

#### Housing waiting lists – Supplementary questions

**Mr Speaker:** Did the hon. Member wish to follow up from the list given to you, which contained number information?

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me have a quick glance at this.

130 The information seems to be here, Mr Speaker, except perhaps the Minister could clarify something – for example, where he says that a certain number have a medical category, I believe within that category there is A and A+, and so on. Would he happen to have that information to hand? Or perhaps it is something he can pass on to me at a later date.

135 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I do not have any problem with passing it to him at a later stage, but I think if you have four active applicants ... I think he is mentioning the 5RKB. Is that correct, that 5RKB is the one he is honing in on? It says four active applicants, of which one has a medical category. Well, the one medical category ... Yes, there are two categories in the medical category, which are A and A+. I have not got it with me now, but it is easy for me to give him whether it is A or A+. Whichever one it is, that person is one of the five and we would have to look for 5RKB. If we have a 5RKB, then whether it is A+ or A, it would not really make much difference because we would allocate that 5RKB to the medical category.

140

145 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker, that the Minister will try to [inaudible] these. It is just for clarity. I was not referring to the 5RKB; I was referring to all of them in general. For example, the 2RKB has 20 applicants in the medical category and one is in social. Because there are 73 active applicants, if you are on the medical, are you medical A+, or not? That would help to get a better picture of the sort of priority, but I can wait a few days for the Minister to provide that information.

150 **Hon. S E Linares:** No problem. I will do so, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister be slightly more helpful in his answer in relation to 1RKB? It is well known, of course, since the last session, that over a hundred of those applicants looking for 1RKBs, who were on the list, had been waiting from 8th December 2011 to be housed in 1RKB. Does the Minister know how many of the 504 have been waiting for that length of time?

160 **Hon. S E Linares:** Well, Mr Speaker, first of all the hon. Member could look at the website. All this information that he is asking me for now is there, on the Government website. If he goes to statistics/by topic/housing and clicks the tables there, it will tell you exactly the information you are asking for. But, to be helpful, Mr Speaker – *(Interjection by Hon. E J Phillips)* Pardon?

**Hon. E J Phillips:** It would be helpful –

165 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, okay, but the hon. Member should know that he should not be asking questions which are in the public domain. But I will do so. *(Interjection by Hon. E J Phillips)* No, Mr Speaker, because I have not got the information with me – it is on the website itself – but I can tell the hon. Member that the people who apply usually get on to the 1RKB automatically. That is why the number is so high usually, because it is after that, when they are assessed and they go home, whether there is overcrowding, dampness, and all the points system comes into play ... that is when they are then relocated, whether it is 2RKB or 3RKB. Remember that a 1RKB is just a studio flat.

175 **Hon. E J Phillips:** One final question: given the fact that many people approach us complaining that they have waited a year, two years, three years, sometimes eight years – and that is often a complaint that we receive from our constituents in relation to housing more generally – does the Government have any information as to when the 754 applicants on the list of the 1RKB and 6RKB – 754 families – will be housed, Mr Speaker?

180 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the answer to the Question was 504 for 1RKB, not seven hundred – *(Interjection by Hon. E J Phillips)* Right, but the hon. Member must understand that we also stated that we will not be issuing 1RKBs for the precise reason I have just told him, that people, when they apply, automatically go to the 1RKB, which is a studio flat, and after being reassessed – which is what we do constantly – if somebody just stays on the list and does not do anything at all, just signs every year that they want to stay on the list, we just leave them in the 504. Then they progress when they are assessed. Every single person is assessed. They go and they sign up, they are assessed, and whether they are 1RKB, 2RKB or 3RKB, they are moved to wherever their needs are.

190 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I understand the hon. Member's explanation that he has just given? Does it mean that, for example, if someone fills in a form and lists dependants – so it is obviously someone who is hoping to get on the housing list for a three- or four-bedroom house – on arrival of that form, that person is put on the 1RKB, and then it is reassessed? Is that how it works, irrespective of the family composition?

195 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, it has always worked like that, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** So, in effect, the 1RKB list is composed of people who genuinely want a 1RKB, and it is also a holding pen, as it were, of other applications pending reassessment and redeployment to other lists, depending on what their needs are?

200 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, as it has always been.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can I just add to that? In that case, how many people on the 1RKB list are awaiting assessment?

205 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I do not have that information. If the hon. Lady wants to ask that question, she may do so.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** If I can be of assistance to the hon. Lady, and perhaps even to the hon. Gentleman, that number will be a moving feast. There are assessments happening  
210 every day.

The reasoning behind this, as I understood it when it was explained to me – because it had been maintained in the time that hon. Members' party was in government, and before them, and before them – is that this enables you to have the date on which a person comes on the list, and therefore that is the date you will go back to once you have made the assessment, so the person  
215 does not miss out. If they write in to go on the list on say 1st of January and the assessment happens on 5th May, and the assessment tells them that they are entitled to a different composition, then that composition is provided for them, in points terms, from 1st January. That is why I had understood that is the date on which they are included on the list, so that you have the date of inclusion. That is when the process of assessment begins, and when the assessment is  
220 made it is taken back to that date as the date from which they would have been entitled to start accumulating points in respect of that composition which they have been determined to be entitled to.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Just for clarity, so I can understand the process, my hon. colleague has asked  
225 how many people were on the housing waiting list and the hon. Member has given this information, but as I had understood the answer, it was not that there are 504 applicants on the ... This is not the pre-list, this is the list, so why doesn't the assessment process get done when you apply to get on the pre-list? If you fill in your form, as I had understood ... I am going to give the hon. Member the understanding that I had of the procedure, and if it is wrong, perhaps he can  
230 clarify. I had understood that a housing applicant can fill in a form. You would submit it to the Housing Department. At that point, the person goes on the pre-list. (*Interjection by Hon. S E Linares*) Yes. If you are on the pre-list, surely the assessment gets done then. At some point after a period passes, the person passes from the pre-list to the actual housing waiting list, which is the statistic that my hon. colleague has asked for. He has given the figure 504, but surely the  
235 assessment has been done by then. Is that not the case?

And secondly – I will just roll up the questions, so that he can answer them together – if that is not the case and there are two assessments, the assessment when you first ask to be put on the pre-list and then the assessment you pass on to the main list, how many of the 504 are actually active applicants for 1RKB?  
240

**Hon. S E Linares:** First of all, Mr Speaker, if you are on the pre-list, you do not get assessed; you wait for a year. This was created by the GSD, by the way. You get on to the list, you wait a year, and then after a year you are assessed and you are put on a 1RKB and given 150 points in the letter. So, the official letter you get, once you make the application, is ... You make the application,  
245 you are answered with a letter saying you are now on the pre-list for 1RKB, which is on the pre-list but not included here, and then you get 150 points. After the year, you are then put on the 1RKB with 150 points, and then you are assessed. Once you are assessed, you are put in whichever category or position you go into. If you have a family, four, five or even 15 children ... Obviously, if you have 15 children, I think you will go very much higher on the list because you would be  
250 overcrowded. That is how the system works and has always worked, and we are actually reviewing the system to see if it is fit for purpose, quite frankly.



255 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I am grateful for that answer, for that clarification. Does the Minister have, then, the figure of how many of those people ...? Because five hundred and four cannot be people who are all pending assessment. Some of them will have been assessed and actually need a 1RKB, so how many of those actually need a 1RKB?

260 **Hon. S E Linares:** I have not got that figure because it has to be assessed. The figure might have been 2,000 or 1,000, but 504 are the ones that are now in the 1RKB. Those need to be assessed. They are in the position of being assessed. You could have asked the question how many are on the pre-list, and I could have given it, but the question has not been posed.

265 **Hon. Chief Minister:** They can ask you the question with a particular date and you can give it for that particular date, but it will change.

**Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, it will change on a daily basis.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** The same question to you.

270 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I do not think the hon. Member is understanding my question. It cannot be that there are 504 applicants who have not been assessed, surely. Some might have been assessed and want a 1RKB.

275 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, that is true.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** And that is what I am asking.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** He does not have it.

280 **Hon. K Azopardi:** That is what I am asking: how many of those actually need a 1RKB?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Or have been assessed?

285 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, this is the point I was making to the hon. Lady before. He is asking exactly the same question that she asked; he is following her question and asking it again.

The point is this: that number will change because, every day, assessments are being done. And so he is right to think that number is a composite number, made up of both those that are actually assessed as needing 1RKB and those that are in the process of being assessed for a determination of whether they need a 1RKB or a different composition. But because the assessments are happening every day, it is one of those typical parliamentary questions where you need either to give us a date on which you want the answer, or we need to give you a date so that the answer we are giving you is correct.

290 I put it to the hon. Gentleman that if he were to put that question for the next meeting – and to the hon. Lady – with the date of the question, or ‘as at today’, or when we reply to it we say ‘as at today we are replying to it’, then he will be able to have the number, which is a moving feast, of those pending assessment and those assessed as requiring a 1RKB. If we were giving it on the day that the hon. Member got the number that he is giving, you should then have those two factors – the actual 1RKB assessments and those to be assessed, some of which may end up being one 1RKB assessments also.

300 **Mr Speaker:** We need to move on now. *(Interjection)* No, we need to move on now.

**Clerk:** Question – *(Interjection by Hon. E J Reyes)*

305 **Mr Speaker:** Yes, of course.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, in Question 474 I used the plural. I wanted the number of applicants on the housing waiting *lists* – in the plural – and the Minister, in his answer, has alluded to, I think, *[inaudible]* The number on the pre-list is missing from the schedule he has handed out.  
310 Does he have the overall number of people on the pre-list?

**Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker.

**Q479/2020**

**Government rental homes –  
Investigations and costs re unlawful occupation**

**Clerk:** Question 479, the Hon. E J Reyes.

315 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, further to the answer provided to Question 302/2020, can Government update this House in respect of the outcome of the five investigations into illegal occupations of rental homes, together with individual corresponding details of the legal fees paid and to whom for each of these investigations?

320 **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 480.

325 **Clerk:** Question 480, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**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?

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

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, of the five cases of unlawful occupation, three were dealt with by the Housing Department, incurring no extra costs. Two cases are currently being investigated and costs cannot be determined yet.  
335

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I do not want to sound a bit silly, but in answering Question 480 he is confirming that there are only currently two, which happen to be leftovers from the other one – yes?

340 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q481/2020**

**Government rental homes –  
Non-emergency repairs and outstanding works**

345 **Clerk:** Question 481, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 222/2020, can Government indicate to this House the date when non-emergency repairs will be recommenced in respect of rental homes, together with details of any special arrangements which may need to be undertaken in order to catch up with pending/outstanding works?

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

355 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, non-emergency works have already commenced. There is a significant pool of contractors who have been working tremendously hard in order to catch up on routine jobs, working through the more urgent jobs first. We are nearly there. I must remind the hon. Member that emergency works were exempt from the COVID regulations from day one.

360 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, we have had some tenants saying that the Housing Works Agency has told them that they are only dealing with emergency repairs. The Minister has confirmed that they have started a programme now as well for non-emergency. Who is deciding the priorities for those that are not classified as high emergencies?

365 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, since this question was posed we have moved back to emergency works. Therefore, what has happened is that when this question was posed we were doing non-emergency works, but now, due to COVID again, we have had to restrict it to only emergency works. We were hopeful that during this time we could change again, back to having the companies working, and we would do it as and when. If the house is empty, we can get the companies in and do the work; but if there are people inside the House, how can we have people working, with masks and all the problems that COVID would bring with it? We are very cautious as to the work, and that is done by the Housing Works Agency itself. They decide, but they are restricted at the moment to only emergency works.

375 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister clarify when they went from doing non-emergency works to just emergency again?

**Hon. S E Linares:** If I remember correctly, it was last week.

380 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Last week, presumably because of the rate of COVID active cases and so on. Given that the rate of active COVID cases today is lower than it was last week, when would that decision be reviewed again?

385 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the Housing Works Agency is dictated to by Civil Contingencies. It is Civil Contingencies who decide when we move from non-emergency to emergency, so the Housing Works Agency is waiting for the phone call to say 'Stop the works,' as in normal, 'and go back to emergency works.' It is not the Housing Works Agency's decision.

390 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I understand that; I was not saying it was necessarily a Housing Works Agency decision. When would Civil Contingencies review these decisions on a case-by-case basis?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has not understood what we were saying. The Civil Contingencies Committee does not review on a case-by-case basis the houses to be worked on; it gives direction to the Housing Works Agency as to what types of works they can do. The Civil Contingencies department is – as he knows, I think – in permanent session at the moment. There will be further meetings of the relevant COVID committees next week and the following week after that.

But I should say to him and to the whole community that the way we are expecting to deal with COVID over the autumn and winter period is not that if you have numbers go down, suddenly everything goes back to near normality. Numbers are going down because we are changing the posture, we are adopting the controls, and we need numbers to stay down.

He gives me an opportunity to deal with the point that, not just in relation to the Housing Works Agency but generally, when the numbers go down, no one should expect that we will simply remove restrictions. We will want to keep the numbers down. That assessment is an assessment that will be done based on ... He will have heard Dr Bhatti say on a number of occasions the raging fire is around us and we have to be careful that we do not suddenly see a surge in Gibraltar.

So, there will be a lot of factors involved, and we should not for one moment be creating an expectation in people, either wittingly or unwittingly, that if numbers go down on two days running, the measures that we have taken, which we hope will have the effect of bringing numbers down, are going to be undone.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q482/2020**  
**Laguna Estate –**  
**Completion of refurbishment works**

**Clerk:** Question 482, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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

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

**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, further to my previous parliamentary answer, I am glad to say that we have practically completed the 34 blocks within Laguna Estate.

There are only two out of the 34 blocks that still have pending items, mainly electrical, which unfortunately, due to some tenants not co-operating, the GEA have been unable to complete. In addition, there is a third block which is practically and finally complete from the building element side of things, with only the lifts pending to be commissioned. These are programmed to be commissioned by the first week in November, i.e. next week.

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

Of those blocks that have been completed, I am told that there are quite a substantial number of snagging repairs to be carried out. Does the Minister have a hopeful completion date for that?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, from the day the blocks are given to the Government by the contractor, it is up to the Housing Works Agency to go round and do what he calls ‘snagging’, but it has already been done. It is now a constant of maintenance that needs to be done. There are

issues of other things, workmanship that might not have been done properly, and therefore the Housing Works Agency is, together with the contractor, making sure that all these are done.

440 I am glad that I have people on social media who alert me about many other things that have not been done correctly, and it is good for us to know because then we can go and fix it, and that is exactly what we are doing. But we are working very closely with the tenants' association within Laguna Estate to make sure. I have already been to Laguna Estate four times to do recces, to make sure that all the works are complete.

445 **Hon. E J Reyes:** My question was does the Minister have a date by when, hopefully, the defects identified through snagging will be carried out – that was what I asked in the supplementary, Mr Speaker.

450 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I am hoping by the end of the year the whole of the Laguna Estate will be complete. We are talking about then the commissioning of the lifts that I have mentioned and the electrical works that have to be done with the co-operation of certain tenants who do not want to co-operate, and that is a problem in itself. We are hoping that by the end of the year everything is complete.

455 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q483 and Q493/2020**  
**Housing rent arrears –**  
**Amount outstanding since June**

**Clerk:** Question 483, the Hon. E J Reyes.

460 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details to this House in respect of the total amount of housing rent arrears outstanding on a monthly basis for the months of June 2020 to the present date?

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

465 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 493.

**Clerk:** Question 493, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

470 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** At what level is the arrears on Government housing? How much is the total owed? What action is government taking to recover the debt? How many repayment agreements are in place? How many have defaulted?

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

475 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the figures for the months up to and including September are available online.

The figures for October 2020: as per my previous answer on the same subject, the total amount of housing rent arrears owing in the month we are currently in can only be calculated once the month is completed. Therefore, the October figure cannot be provided just yet.

480 With regard to the action being taken, the Housing Department has an arrears strategy, which includes the setting up of meetings and repayment plans. Since the commencement of this

strategy, the Housing Department has entered into 697 arrears agreements, of which 306 have now been completed and tenants have fully paid their outstanding rent.

485 There are currently 391 agreements in place, of which 203 are defaulting in payment. Of these 203 tenants ... the Department is actively engaging with the tenants in order to rectify their position.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister, in his answer to my Question 493, has said that the figures for the months of June to September are available online. Those figures were not available  
490 online at the time when I posed the question, therefore I think it would be only fair that I get an answer today.

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I must not agree with the hon. Member this time. I have Table H.8, which he wanted, which I actually saw today, but it was updated on 7th October.  
495 *(Interjection)* Yes, but the question was posed in September. I would not have the figures for September until the end of the month. If the hon. Gentleman had looked in the list, the September figure would not have been there – because he asked the question in September. Therefore, if he looked after September, the September figure, after September, is there. It was updated on 7th October.

500 What I am saying is it is there, and the one that is there now is even more updated, which is the September one. I cannot give him October because we are still in October.

**Mr Speaker:** Does the hon. Gentleman have that information?

505 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I can pass him the sheet, which is what is on the website. I got it out for him today because I knew the question was coming. I have no problem with giving it to him.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I can ask a supplementary: what debt recovery mechanisms is Government applying via the legal system in order to ensure some sort of enforcement for these arrears?  
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**Hon. S E Linares:** As the hon. Lady knows, we have different strategies which have been working and will continue to work. As I stated in the answer to my question, we have 203 tenants with whom we are actively engaging, which means that we try and convince them to pay their rent, and if they do not, there are mechanisms – as we all know, taking off the garages and privileges that they might have – so that we are forcing them to pay. We try to extend as much as we can those strategies until ... It depends on how much the arrears are. If we do not, the consequences are that if we take legal action and they are evicted, that brings a lot of  
520 consequences to us all, as in society, so we have to be very careful on how we deal with it. We will be dealing with it and I continuously will be dealing with it. We are thinking of other strategies that might come to the fore in order to obtain ...

We do believe that these arrears should be paid, and I think we all are in agreement that they should be paid, but it is how we do it and also the people who owe. We have to be very careful as  
525 to who the people are. There are people who might be able to afford it and do not want to pay, but there are many who probably could not afford it – they are social cases; they are in situations where I will not be the Minister evicting them.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I ask the hon. Member ...? I do not know if he has it in front of him, but one of the questions was how many repayment agreements were in place, and he gave a figure  
530 for the repayment agreements. Indeed, he even said how many had been concluded – I think 697 arrears agreements, and so on. I appreciate that the Government would not have entered into arrears agreements in relation to every sum on that list of the schedule that he has just passed,

which is approximately £4.7 million in terms of arrears, but how much do the arrears agreements represent in terms of the £4.7 million, and how much is pending discussion with other tenants?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I do not have the information to hand – if he wants, he can specifically ask me the question – but the knowledge that I have is that, of the £4 million that is owed, as I stated in the answer to my question, we have made 697 arrears agreements, of which 306 have now been completed. That means that they have paid up. That is half. But also you must take into consideration the £4.7 million could well be people who owe six months, five months or four months of rent, and we chase them up, but then they come and pay the four months of rent. So, it is money that is owed which is not necessarily long-term arrears. So, the current arrears is that: there are long-term arrears, which is the one that we chase up, but then there are others who owe two months, and that is included in the £4.7 million.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, is the hon. Member able to elucidate and give us information as to what other strategies his Department and his Ministry are considering in relation to those who are defaulting? He mentioned other strategies.

**Hon. S E Linares:** No, I am not willing to disclose that now, because I am sure that it would not be right for me to do so until we tackle it. We might not be even legally entitled to do it. I might want to do it in some ways that might not even be legal, so I am getting together with the officials to see how we can do it in a legal way. We are not going to go to people with a gun to the head to get the rents, if the hon. Member understands.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker –

**Mr Speaker:** *[inaudible]*

**Hon.** *[inaudible]*

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** It is my question – gender balance.

**Hon.** *[inaudible]*

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** No, that is fine, don't worry.

From the research I have quickly done, the arrears have gone up in a year, between September 2019 and September 2020, from £4.709 million to £4.792 million. Is this something that the Government can justify, in terms of it increasing instead of decreasing as time goes by?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, because that is precisely what I was explaining about people owning three or four months' worth. Because we have taken the counters off, and some people used to come and pay at the counter ... There is no counter now, so we have done it by appointment and this is why we are recouping the moneys slower, probably, but more efficiently, by asking them, 'Can you come in at such and such a time to pay rent?' rather than have the counter open and them coming at whatever time they want. It is actually a better strategy, because we are seeing that people are even coming to pay some in advance, as opposed to being in arrears, which is music to all our ears.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, just one simple question, which has been helpfully expanded on by the hon. Lady when she talked about the figures two years ago. It will be recalled that this House had an extensive exchange on this question of housing arrears back in 2016, when it was

said by the former Housing Minister that arrears had peaked at £6 million – much to the annoyance of many in our community, in fact, and there was a lot of public debate about housing arrears. But in June 2017 it was said by the former Minister for Housing that there were 450 arrears agreements in place, which led to a 17% overall reduction in housing arrears to a total of a sum just under £5 million. That was in 2017. What appears to be the case here is that the arrears level is stagnating at that £4.7 million figure and we are no further forward than we were in June 2017.

I appreciate what the Minister says about families being unable to pay their rent and that arrangements need to be put in place, but quite clearly not working, if there were 450 arrears agreements back in 2017 and a similar figure now, the system for recovering those debts to the Government is simply not working, and the question that has been posed to the House is what is the Government doing about that. Subject to the concern that he has raised, that ‘I will not be the Minister who evicts people’, what is the Government going to do about recovering those arrears in a less hostile way, as the Minister just said, given the fact that we seem to be stagnating and gravitating around that £4.7 million figure?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Government and in respect of the public finances of Gibraltar, I think this is not a year in which we can make assessments about stagnation or otherwise. In other words, the events of the past eight months are such that judging the performance of arrears, or indeed anything else, against the backdrop of the past eight months I think is not to compare apples with apples.

We have a situation where the administration has almost ground to a halt because of the pandemic, let alone the fact that a lot of people who are our tenants have not been at work, or, if they have been at work, have not been earning what they would have been earning. So, I would say to the hon. Gentleman I think he needs to look at these numbers in the context of this year and not make a judgement against other years as if normal service had been resumed throughout this year. And so a judgement on whether or not arrears are increasing as he is suggesting I do not think can fairly be made for another 24 months.

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Roy Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have been following the discussion with interest. Could I ask the Minister: the numbers that have been presented ...? I believe he has made the point in terms of current debts versus historic debts, but can I ask him: does he actually have what we would, in accountancy speak, call an age-to-debt analysis of, for example, the £4.7 million, so that he would know how much is, for example, a year old, how much is six months old – or not? And, if not, would he be willing to obtain that information should we ask a direct question in respect of an arrears number in a particular month?

I think it would be helpful for the House to know, of this £4.7 million, how much has been outstanding for more than a year, so we get a sense of the stickiness of the number.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I think we have shared that figure as it was at the time that the Hon. Member Mr Phillips referred to the wider debate that we had in respect of arrears. I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I think it would be a useful number to have in the public domain, so either by way of their asking a question at the next House which asks us for that aged analysis, or otherwise, I think it is a figure to be kept in the public domain so that people can look at how the numbers are being churned.

I think there is a lot of old debt there that, because it takes time to write off, we have not yet been able to write off. It takes time to write off because, as he will know, writing off requires the sign-off of the Financial Secretary, in keeping with certain accounting rules, which is then obviously going to be looked at by the Principal Auditor to ensure that all the right filters have



been gone through, and an element of that debt is therefore what we might call unrecoverable debt. I think we were in the process of doing all those things when other issues got in the way.

640 Can I just, Mr Speaker, before I sit down, congratulate the hon. Lady on having asked a question that has led all – I think – Members of the Opposition to follow with supplementaries?

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q484/2020**

**Senior citizens' residential blocks –  
Revised warden facilities**

**Clerk:** Question 484, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government furnish this House with details of its revised warden facilities being provided to all Housing Department residential blocks for the elderly?

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

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**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, in order to provide both cost savings and a better overall service, GJBS is providing warden duties for the four existing senior citizens' residential blocks, namely Bishop Canilla House, Charles Bruzon House, Sea Master Lodge and Albert Risso House, the latter of which was not serviced by GJBS but rather a security company. As a result of this change, the existing wardens, under the auspices of GJBS, providing a service to Bishop Canilla House, Sea Master Lodge and Charles Bruzon House, will be providing the same service to Albert Risso House.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** And could I have the details of the service?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the details are as has been there since Bishop Canilla House opened, which I think was when the hon. Member was a Minister, which is having two wardens from, if I remember correctly, 10 o'clock to eight o'clock in the evening from Monday to Friday. So, whatever was in Bishop Canilla, and has been in all the other pensioner flats, is now the case in the four.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I accept that the Minister is trying to be honest in his answer, but – for the sake of the parliamentary record – he says, 'I believe it was in place.' There is no record in this Parliament of what the arrangements are. Could I ask the Minister – if he does not have it with him now, I do not mind waiting patiently for a couple of days – could we have, please, something written, so it is not just hearsay what the facilities are, but we actually have a record that could be referred to at a future date? With your leave, Mr Speaker, can we negotiate on that?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, there is no need. I can tell the hon. Member that we have nine wardens, of which there are two in each and every single one of the pensioner flats, and one is a floating warden. The floating one replaces anybody who is on sick leave, and also, in the downtime, when everyone is in place, that warden goes round doing maintenance work. That is the regime that has been there over time. The only thing is that Albert Risso House was not included in this, and now is.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** That is most helpful, Mr Speaker. Can we clarify the actual times? The Minister said before that he thought those were the times. Perhaps he has more specific details of the actual times when these wardens should be in situ.

685 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, it is from eight o'clock to seven o'clock ... no, eight to eight during the winter period, and eight to 10 p.m. in the summer period, from Monday to Friday.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** The Minister has said that is from Monday to Friday. Are there any provisions at all for the weekend?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** Security is in place, which has been negotiated with the tenants' associations, or the people in the pensioner flats themselves.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** And security is in place during exactly the same times, or do the times change on a Saturday and a Sunday?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** The same times.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q485/2020

#### Homes tendered for sale in 2018 – Details of those not yet sold

700 **Clerk:** Question 485, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of how many homes, inclusive of room composition, remain unsold from those that went out to tender in 2018, namely 104 at Europa Walks Estate, 30 at Trafalgar Heights, 10 at Naval Hospital Hill, five at Lake Ramp – that is in Buena Vista – and 12 at Prevost House and Phillimore House, together with confirmation that these homes are to be resided in by their respective owners and are not permitted to be sublet through hire, etc?

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

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**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the remaining ex-MoD properties that have not yet completed their purchase are as follows: Naval Hospital Hill, one four-bedroom House; Lake Ramp, two three-bedroom houses; Trafalgar Heights, nine three-bedroom flats; Europa Walks Estate, eight two-bedroom houses, five three-bedroom houses, and four four-bedroom houses; Prevost House and Phillimore House, 12 three-bedroom flats. These properties are sold for owner occupation. The terms of the under-leases do not allow sub-letting.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** I believe, Mr Speaker, that those that remain are because those who were at first successful through the tender, for a variety of reasons may not have been able to complete and they have been going down the list and offering them to the next one on the list, and so on. Is the Minister aware if the list of those who reserved has now been exhausted and perhaps [*inaudible*], or is he still going through the list of possible successful tenderers – I take it as long as they meet the minimum reserved price the Government has set?

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725 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I would like to emphasise at this point that it is not me or my  
Department that does it or my department that does it – it is LPS that is doing the sales, through  
GRP – so I do not have that information with me. The policy has always been that, yes, people  
apply; if the number-one person or family cannot complete, then they go to the next one, and so  
on. The way I see it is that they are going to carry on with the process because there are still  
730 properties to be sold. There are still people on the list, so they should continue offering different  
people different houses as and when they are rejected by one and then picked up by another.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I fully understand what the Minister is saying. My question, which I may  
not have explained clearly, is can the Minister ...? If he does not have it now, can he obtain the  
735 information ... that those lists have not been exhausted, so they are still going through the lists,  
because otherwise they would have to reissue for tender, or whatever? An update in that respect,  
either now or in the next few days, would be extremely helpful to all of us.

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the position with the flats that are not  
740 occupied but have been allocated is exactly what the hon. Member has said. That is to say they  
go to the original tenderer, the highest bidder. That person is given time to complete. If they are  
not able to complete, for whatever reason, then they move on to the next one and carry on down  
the list – and they are still going down the list.

The situation at Prevost and Phillimore is slightly different, because those are still, I believe,  
745 occupied by the MoD. Although they have been earmarked to the highest bidders already, that  
process has not commenced there.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Chief Minister. That has certainly given me  
clarity now that there is a distinction between Phillimore House and the others, and I think the  
750 Deputy Chief Minister, in the best way he possibly can, has confirmed that they are still going  
down the list.

Can I just ask the Deputy Chief Minister: is he aware that, due to the unfortunate delays in  
some of these sales being completed, I understand he is not quite allowing a certain percentage  
from the whole area? Let's take, for example, the Europa Walks Estate. The management  
755 company cannot actually carry out certain works because, until they have x number of the houses  
sold and, therefore, x number of shareholders, they cannot put it into effect. Can the Deputy Chief  
Minister confirm that he is aware of the difficulty they are experiencing, and – because I know he  
is a man who tends to keep a lot of his work – can he please help to expedite this as soon as  
possible, because there are residents in Europa Walks who have been there for quite some time  
760 and cannot progress with certain essential works that need to be carried out?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, yes, I am aware of the situation – that is to say that  
the management company has not yet taken over responsibility – but I am also assured, on the  
other side, that Land Property Services are very keen to hand over that responsibility to the  
765 management company. I know they are working hard to be able to achieve that in the quickest  
possible time.

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I would just like to clarify from the previous question, because I  
have realised that I had a supplementary sheet behind the question. It was to do with the timing  
770 of the wardens, and I can be more exact because I would not like to mislead the House.

It says that there will be two wardens in each block. Only one warden will be on duty at any  
given time, except for half an hour per day from 1.30 p.m. to 2 p.m. The offices will be manned  
from 7.30 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day from Monday to Friday, and from 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. every  
Saturday and Sunday, so it includes also Saturday and Sunday. Wardens would be there half an  
775 hour ... and they will be opening the estate at 8 a.m., so they are there by 7.30 and opening by

eight. I think that more or less clarifies. I wanted to make sure that the House gets the correct ... because the hon. Member might find out that I am misleading the House, and I am not.

**Q486/2020**  
**Co-ownership housing schemes –**  
**Illegal sub-letting**

**Clerk:** Question 486, the Hon. E J Reyes.

780 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of what actions it is taking against home owners within co-ownership housing schemes, who are illegally sub-letting their homes?

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

785 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, I am glad to say that our Government will not allow any Government-owned company, agency and/or authority to indulge in breaching the terms of any head lease. The contrary was the case during the time the hon. Member was a Minister of the GSD administration, where the Gibraltar Health Authority was allowed to rent accommodation in Harbour Views, amongst other estates.

790 Any breaches of the underlease of any estate should be tackled by the management company of the respective housing estate as the holders of the head lease. Property owners of these estates are automatically members of the management company, and therefore it should be incumbent on them to report this to the management company to take the relevant action against those breaching the underlease. However, as and when Government is made aware of any such  
795 properties being sublet in contravention of the terms of the underlease, Government will liaise with the relevant management company with a view to any such breach being addressed accordingly.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, my understanding is that the contravention, of sub-letting the  
800 house, goes against the rules set from the outset by Government, as the developer or co-developers. Why the shift in the responsibility for monitoring and policing that ... should now rest with the management company? I do not fully understand why legally it should now become the responsibility of the management company, even though the underlease may have been passed to them.

805 Am I correct in thinking that, despite whatever terms and conditions through which Government sold those homes in co-ownership schemes, if the management company were to turn round and say, 'We are now, through agreement with the shareholders, going to allow these houses to be rented out on the open market,' or whatever, that would be valid – or not?

810 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker. How can that be valid if every purchaser has an underlease? There is a head lease, which is owned by the management company. Once the houses are done, the head lease passes to the management company, but as I said in the last sentence, if such properties are made aware to the Government, we will make representations to the management company and say, 'What are we going to do about it?' But legally it is not a responsibility of  
815 Government; it is the responsibility of the management company to follow that up, because the sub-lease is being broken and the management companies should not allow the sub-lease to be broken. It is their responsibility and therefore ... But if things come to light to the Government, we will make representations to the management company to say, 'There are people renting places there, and they should not: what are you going to do about it?'

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister has confirmed that the responsibility lies with the management company. However, when you have areas like, for example, the Europa Walks – where the Chief Minister and I exchanged before and we are both equally keen that the management company get this up and going – in the absence today of a management company owned by the shareholders, I am being told ... I have not carried out a proper search because I do not have the legal authority to enter the premises, but I am being told that there are already those who are sub-letting out. What happens in this case? Where there is no management company, who will be responsible for trying to sort out whether illegal subletting is occurring or not?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has answered his own question. Because there is not a management company, the Government is still in control.

Unfortunately, I will say to him, it is not enough for us to hear from him, as he will accept, that this *may* be happening. He needs to give us a little more than that, so that we can determine whether it *is* happening and whether we can therefore act immediately to restrain those who are acting in that way, because that would be contrary to not just the spirit of the basis on which we sold those homes, but the price that we set for them.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman we would have sold those homes for up to two and a half to three times more than we sold them, if they had been available on what you might call the complete open market with the ability of acquiring them to rent them or to redevelop them. And so, what the taxpayer is not going to do is sit idly by while somebody pretends to purchase for owner occupation and then abuses the mechanism that has permitted them to buy for that price, and indeed, in that way, lets down the whole of the community.

If there is any evidence that this is happening, the hon. Gentleman needs to give us an indication of which property it is happening with, so that we can act immediately – and we will act immediately to even rescind the sale. We take it that seriously. We will rescind the sale. We will not stand idly by and see people abuse the opportunity that they have been given to become homeowners, at an advantageous rate, in a way that is just entirely unfair on all the others.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am very grateful to the Chief Minister for that clarification.

What I hope to do now, Mr Speaker, following that, is ... Those who are giving me that information, if I go to them further and am able to at least obtain an address more specifically, who would the Minister recommend I forward that information to for pursuing?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Me, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I look forward to doing that, and let's curtail this practice, which we both agree should not be happening.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** *If* it is happening, Mr Speaker, because we all know what people tell us, and then, when we check it out, it is not quite what they had wanted it to appear to be.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister is right. We have been here long enough to know what happens between here and reality.

#### Q487/2020

#### Gibraltar Football Association – Memorandum of Understanding

**Clerk:** Question 487, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, further to the answers provided through previous questions, namely Question 149/2019 plus Questions 123 and 305/2020, can the Minister for Sport finally 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.

**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, unfortunately COVID-19 has delayed many items, with the memorandum of understanding between the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority and the Gibraltar Football Association being one of these items.

The MoU has still not been signed, as the remaining points that are being investigated are yet to be finalised. Amongst these, the GFA have also continuously changed the start date of construction of the new stadium. The MoU also needed to be tighter when considering timeframes, i.e. the time between Lathbury being ready and the stadium construction. Discussions have also taken place in respect of other items, like the responsibility for stewarding and being caught up with events during the UEFA return to play issues.

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

I know the Minister is probably dying for this COVID thing to be over, to be able to get some of these things done.

The Minister has, in part, answered. I was a bit concerned that perhaps, because the GFA say that the works on the stadium are imminent and about to start ... Can the Minister confirm to us that we certainly hope to have the MoUs fully signed, sealed and completed before any of these works commence? It is, I think, a proper way of putting perhaps some pressure on the Gibraltar Football Association to have things done properly and above board.

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the issue here is also, as I mentioned in my answer to the question, Lathbury. Everything is going to be done properly and finished. The hon. Member should not assume that the works are not going to be completed and be done properly.

The issue here is, as the hon. Member knows, we have not finished Lathbury yet. We are still using the Victoria Stadium. The GFA, yes, should start with their works, but that is not up to us, and COVID is not helping because they can play football, but then they cannot play football. There are protocols; they have to follow protocols. Who follows the protocols? How do we manage what is now their stadium? Who manages it? All these are the issues around the MoU, so it is virtually impossible to have an MoU together whilst we have COVID-19.

What we are doing with the GFA is work very closely with them, and I must admit that there is a lot of co-operation between the GSLA and the GFA, not only on this issue, which is part and parcel of the MoU, but other issues which will be in the MoU, which is COVID-19 now. How do we manage it? Who manages it? Who does the protocol? Who sits where? These are the issues that all the time arise whilst we have COVID-19. Therefore, having a signed document which then has to change due to our circumstances I do not think is wise at this moment anyway.

#### **Q488-89/2020**

#### **New sports facilities –**

#### **Completion dates for remedial and completion works; repair to rugby pitch**

**Clerk:** Question 488, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answers given to previous questions, namely Questions 1 and 308/2020, can the Minister for Sport update this House with details of which facilities still require remedial or completion works at all the newly built sports facilities, together with details of revised expected completion dates?

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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, I will answer this question together with Question 489.

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**Clerk:** Question 489, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer provided to Question 125/2020, can the Minister for Sport confirm that the dip at the southern end of the rugby pitch at Europa sports ground has now been satisfactorily repaired?

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

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, as previously stated, the sports facilities are already in use at the Europa sports complex, notwithstanding COVID-19 restrictions and the current occupation of the facility by the GHA Nightingale Hospital as well as the Contact Tracing Centre.

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Items remaining to be completed at Europa are as follows. Small areas of the artificial turf remain to be completed and another small area is being repaired, as well as the cricket match wicket, which is defective and will be replaced. The specialist contractor was interrupted by the COVID-19 shutdown and is having problems arranging for a crew to return to Gibraltar. The renewable energy system is being tested and commissioned. Ball-stop netting has been ordered and is to be installed by specialist contractors. The large multi-purpose sports hall, which was converted into a Nightingale field hospital, will be restored when no longer required by Civil Contingencies. Remaining external items, including the bin store and University wall, are progressing and are expected to be completed before the end of the year.

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Since recommencement of the construction works at the Lathbury site post-COVID-19 shutdown, works have continued, albeit hampered by emergency measures, as well as the lack of availability of external contractors in Gibraltar. Outstanding works are as follows. Repair and completion of the athletics track is dependent upon the return of the specialist contractor. Similar to the Europa works, the contractor was interrupted by the lockdown and is having problems arranging for a crew to return to Gibraltar. Fitting out and finishing of the pool hall and ancillary buildings, including changing rooms and offices, continues. The specialists fitting out the swimming pool have now returned to Gibraltar and are progressing with their installations. External works, including roads, public parking, landscaping, pavilions, storage and café buildings, are all also progressing. Please note it is difficult to commit to times for completion of these works due to the uncertainty of availability of external contractors in Gibraltar, which continues to be a concern.

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In respect of the repairs to the dip at the southern end of the rugby pitch at Europa sports ground, work was about to start in March this year when the COVID-19 emergency was declared. Indeed, the specialist contractor's labour, equipment and materials were already on site and ready to start when they were forced to leave Gibraltar. Due to continuing difficulties with travel since the relaxation of lockdown, it has not been possible for the specialist contractor's labour to return to Gibraltar. Although no travel dates have been agreed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the contractors have plans to return in November.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister has obviously given us the reasons. It is unfortunate, I think we can all agree, that COVID-19 has set back certain works to such an extent, and I understand that we are trying to get this up as soon as possible.

970 Mr Speaker, may I ask you, with your leave – because it is the end of October now and if I were to wait a full six months then we are talking about almost the summer period – would you perhaps be flexible enough to allow me, in three or four months’ time, to pose a question to ask the Minister if we have a further update, so that we can take stock of what the COVID situation is then?

975 **Mr Speaker:** The matter is sufficiently important for you to be allowed to submit a further question in three or four months.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am most grateful, Mr Speaker.

980 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** If I can be of assistance to the hon. Gentleman, we would happily take that question, but in any event, as long as he formulates it slightly differently, he will be able to. If he asks whether there is an update to the position set out in answer to Question 489/2020, that question could not have been asked before the answer to Question 499/2020 had been given.

985 **Clerk:** Question 490, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

**Mr Speaker:** There is a supplementary to come from the Hon. Damon Bossino.

990 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, on Question 489, the Hon. the Minister says that the specialist contractors are expected here at the end of November, or maybe in November. Can he tell the House when he expects that those repairs will actually be completed, everything else being equal?

995 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, as far as I am concerned, they are supposed to be coming ... or trying to make their travels, because again it is all to do with COVID and how they get here. They say that they want to be here by 9th November. I am being specific here because we only had meetings a couple of days ago. Again, the hon. Member can tie me to that date, but it is not me, it is COVID that decides whether they come on the ninth or not.

1000 They do have a programme of work. They want to come around the ninth to complete the works because, as I stated, most of the machinery and the materials are here. They are the specialists and they can come and do the works, but we need specialists from Germany, from Croatia and from France. These are people who are specialists in what they are doing, and therefore we are hoping that they can get the team together to come around 9th November and complete the works. This is what they are telling us. I would not want to be held ... If they cannot  
1005 come, then the works cannot be finished, and that is where we are at the moment.

So, I am quite optimistic that hopefully by at least the end of the year, if not the end of January ... because there is another caveat here – contractors do not work during Christmas, and therefore it might get to a point where all the teams come here and they finish and they have to go home for Christmas. *(Interjection)* And it is also weather dependent, because the track is  
1010 dependent on whether the weather is humid, dry, wet ... raining, sunny. It all depends on this, mainly the track, not so much the artificial turf. The artificial turf is different, they can lay it out, but the track is very specific and therefore we do have a programme with works. I am keeping my fingers crossed that they can come and they can complete.



1015 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, if he could be helpful to me – as I said, everything else being equal, subject to the weather, COVID and all the rest of it, can I glean from his reply that the expectation is that this will be ready by December 2020/January 2021?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, that is the desired date. I would have liked it to have been way back, but that is the desired date.

1020 Again, even if we had it ready tomorrow, there are still issues with the Victoria Stadium and the moving and all that sort of thing. I just desire that it will be complete. I am the one who is most keen to see the whole thing finished.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q490/2020**  
**Housing –**  
**Comprehensive review**

1025 **Clerk:** Question 490, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** When will Government carry out, or is Government currently carrying out, a full, comprehensive review of housing need, to be able to inform a revised development plan and create a long-term housing strategy for our whole community?

1030 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport.

**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the Government is continuously carrying out this review. Some of the long-term plans have been the construction of affordable homes as well as the construction of the purpose-built flats for the elderly.

1035 It is expected that once the allocation of the new wave of affordable homes and elderly flats is completed, we will have a clear view of the remaining core, which will allow us to tackle this with clear knowledge of what is required, looking forward.

1040 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his answer.

It seems, when he says it, it is a continuous review; it is not some kind of purpose-built report that we can sort of keep into the future to shape the ever-changing housing needs of our community. Will there be some kind of solid report that the Minister will be able to share with the community, to give us an idea of what its vision is for the future? He speaks a lot about housing for buyers, but not so much for the actual rental market and how that is going to shape in the future.

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, this is a debate that we had in June last year. This debate has gone through the whole issue of how we, as Government, view our housing policies.

1050 I repeat what is in my answer: once we have completed how many people are buying affordable homes, that will determine a lot on the availability of rental accommodation, because there are different categories that we give priority to. First, people who release rental accommodation. There will be a core of people, who are pensioners, who live now in rented accommodation, and, quite frankly, some of them live in quite big houses – 4RKBs and 5RKBs – and once we offer them a pensioner flat, they will release those. Then we can tackle the housing lists. Be that as it may, once we do that exercise, we will be in a position to see what the needs are from then on.

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So what I am saying is that we need to wait. We do not have to wait for the houses to be complete. We will have to wait to see how many people buy, and see the composition of what they want and what we sell, to do with the housing list. There might be some people who live with their parents and want to buy, and therefore, if they buy and they have also been on the list wanting a house or rented accommodation, they will be suspended, to wait for their houses.

It is all these combinations which will determine how we look at the housing in a couple of years' time.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, does this mean that once these estates are sold or taken up, the Minister will commit to a new, concrete review, with the new parameters as they will be? Will that be a commitment that he will give us?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, every single day, I am committed. I am saying I am continuously reviewing. The hon. Lady says 'commitment' – of course we are committed. My commitment is not to see a single person on the housing list, if I can. That is my commitment. Our commitment is to try and not have anybody on a housing list waiting for a house, but we have to be realistic. It changes all the time, because people's circumstances change. People divorce, people marry, children are born. It is a very live issue. Circumstances in housing change from day to day, every time somebody applies – then, the next day they say, 'Excuse me, I have just divorced my wife and now I want another house.' All this is a very live issue and what I am saying is that we will be able to assess, at least at the time when it comes to selling all the affordable homes, to say let's take stock – excuse the pun – of where we are with the housing, and then we will decide future policies.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Just one question arising out of the hon. Lady's question and the answer by the Hon. Member. It is quite clear that the housing needs of our community are very complex. There is huge demand for affordable housing, demand for owner-occupier and for rental. We have heard today that, insofar as the ex-MoD properties are concerned, there is a difficulty in selling them, because they were announced two and a half years ago and they have not been snapped up, as the Government, I assume, would have liked insofar as moving people into them.

But on the overall Government strategy question that was asked by the hon. Lady, is it the Government's overall strategy to try to move as many people as possible into co-ownership in our community, given what he is trying to do insofar as rental stock is move elderly people occupying those properties? I just would like to have a bit more information about the Government's overall housing strategy insofar as creating more opportunities for people to buy, and whether the strategy is to move people into co-ownership.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I think it is important that I refer hon. Members to the fact that just over a year ago we had a debate about this in front of the whole electorate, and we set out our strategy in that respect. Our strategy is clearly that those who can afford to buy should buy. I think the position is as clear as can be that we believe we should be making available property for rent for those who are unable to buy, as long as we are also able to provide property at affordable prices which people can buy – and we are not going to change that position.

I think the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman, in my view, a moment ago were in quite violent agreement about the fact that an assessment about the housing needs of our community can only really be done when we have got through the sales – not necessarily the handing over, as the hon. Gentleman said – of all the affordable housing that we are putting on the market now.

I would simply want to say to the hon. Gentleman that I do not agree with him that we have had a difficulty selling the MoD properties and that they have not been snapped up. The hon. Gentleman might be entitled to take that view if we had not had so many more applicants for the MoD properties than we had properties. We did have a lot more applicants than we had properties. Unfortunately, some of those who wished to snap up those properties have not been able to do so; or, indeed, it might appear to be that, but in some instances what is happening is

1110 that people who were going to buy an MoD property have decided that instead they want to buy one of the new properties – because they are prepared to wait for a little longer, they have decided to do that instead.

1115 So there is an element of allowing people to make the best choice for their family, which means that the Government is then not selling as quickly as we had expected to. We do not need to sell quickly; we want to sell right, and we want to sell to the right family composition in the right way, so that we work through the housing list better and we ensure that we are providing for Gibraltarian families, going forward, in the best possible way.

1120 This is a complex, non-binary issue, where you are not just dealing with a vendor or a developer who is putting properties on the market and needs to sell them quickly to pay off his development finance. Luckily, the Government is working a different way, trying to ensure that we provide for the needs of the community in a way that is the most effective to ensure that as much housing is available to as many people as possible in a way they can either afford or they can rent, if they need to rent.

1125 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful for the Chief Minister's intervention in relation to that question. What confuses me is that if people are putting in offers to purchase MoD tendered property, and then they take a view further down the line that, 'Actually, I might hang on for Bob Peliza,' for example, it strikes me that what we are trying to achieve here is to allow people to buy at the right price and to accommodate family composition, as the Chief Minister said, but really, if  
1130 someone could afford to buy an MoD tender, for them to then reassess their position because it might be cheaper to maintain a house that may well go to a couple who might not be able to get the tender in the first place ... I am just wondering how that works through in the minds of the Government when they are assessing the real need of families who would otherwise have been able to buy a tendered property.

1135 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I think he is making sweeping assumptions. For example, there are ex-MoD flats available where the amount that you might have expected to receive at tender and the value of 100% of a Government property, not 50% on the affordable side, is more or less the same. So there are those issues, and there are other issues about people not being able to obtain a mortgage or not being able to sell their properties, or having other life-changing events.  
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The hon. Gentleman has seen the numbers that we have given of the properties that have not completed. He has not asked for the other number, which is the number that have completed, and that is many hundreds. I would say it is fewer than 10% that have not completed. Prevost and  
1145 Phillimore have not completed because they were being held over by the MoD as Britannia House while they were building a new Britannia House at the Airport. I think if the hon. Gentleman sees it through that filter, sees the numbers in that way and makes a reassessment of what he has said, he will understand that actually things are moving as we expected them to move.

#### Q474/2020

#### Housing waiting lists – Supplementary question

1150 **Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman wishes to table a supplementary, I think.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing that, because you allowed me before to come back with supplementaries on my previous question, which was Question 474, which the Minister answered with a schedule and you kindly allowed me to ask him later.

1155 In the Minister's answer, he says that further information in relation to dates can be obtained  
on the Government's statistics page, housing, Table H.1, because my question requested that he  
provide the date when the applicants first joined the waiting list. I have a copy of Table H.1 as  
updated on 7th October. There is the number of applicants breakdown, which is what I was asking,  
but it does not give me any indication of the dates when they first joined the list. I am wondering  
1160 whether the Minister has that information today, or whether he can provide it later, across the  
floor of the House, so it is attached to his answer. If I just left this schedule in the answer, one  
would presume that the information is there, when it is not, and we want the record to be  
complete.

**Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker, I do not have the information the hon. Member is asking for,  
1165 but I can go back and obtain it for him, if that is possible.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I appreciate that.  
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1170 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q491/2020**  
**Government rental homes –**  
**Properties tenanted but unoccupied**

**Clerk:** Question 491, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** What number of Government properties are tenanted but  
unoccupied? (1) How many of these are in the process of repossession? (2) How many are in the  
1175 early stages of investigation? (3) How many calls have come into the Government's dedicated  
hotline since 1st January 2020, and how many are now under repossession proceedings?

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

1180 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the Housing  
Department is aware of four flats that are tenanted and currently unoccupied. All four of these  
are in an advanced stage of investigation and are in the process of repossession. There are none  
in the early stages of investigation.

1185 The Housing Department's hotline has received a total of 21 phone calls relating to tenanted  
unoccupied flats since 1st January 2020. None of these are under repossession proceedings, as  
these have either been unfounded reports or appropriate action had already been taken by the  
Department.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his answer.  
1190 What is the average length of time it takes for a report, from when it gets submitted to the  
Housing Department by either a member of the public or a housing officer suspecting a property  
is not in regular use as per the requirements of the tenancy agreement, to an investigation or  
deeper review being conducted or instigated?

1195 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, there have been 21 phone calls, and as soon as we get the phone  
call the investigation starts. For example, if somebody on the hotline gives us the address, we go  
immediately to see the address they are talking about. It is in our interests to have any empty flat  
given to a tenant to lower my housing list. It is unfortunate that we only get 21 calls. I wish we got

more, so that people can then highlight empty flats that are unoccupied and see whether they are genuinely empty flats.

There might be empty flats that we are turning over. There are flats that are given to us and we have to repair them and then give them to the next tenant, again depending on the condition of the flat, depending on how much time it takes. But if there are empty flats because people are living abroad or misusing them, or whatever, it is in our interest ... That is why we have the hotline. As I said, it is unfortunate that we only get 21 calls; I wish we got more.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank him once again for his answer.

Also, once the eviction has taken place, can we have some kind of average number of days or months between the eviction and when the property can actually be returned to the Government's housing stock in order to float it out to the next person on the list, some kind of idea of the time – months, weeks, days?

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, it is virtually impossible to do that. We do not know the condition of the flat. Once we repossess a flat, an assessment is done on what is needed to be done inside. Therefore, how can anybody say, 'I get this flat and within a week I can give it away'? Maybe the flat has a lot of issues – dampness, or it might have been shut up for a couple of months or a year. *(Interjection)* Yes. There is no average. Every single house has a different time that it takes to churn, so we cannot average how long it would take from repossession of the house to giving it to somebody else.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Just one hopefully simple question and answer to that question. Insofar as part (3) of Question 491, the Minister said there were 21 calls, of which some were unfounded, and, in relation to the others, appropriate action was taken. Am I right to say that, of the number where appropriate action was taken, they were well-founded complaints made by people on the telephone and therefore appropriate action was taken? And how many of those were well-founded complaints?

**Hon. S E Linares:** I do not have the exact number. There were 21 calls, and the repossession proceedings ... As these were either unfounded ... They were empty for a reason – that is the unfounded ones – and with the others, the Department goes there and says, 'This is one that we are churning, that we are working to turn over,' and it could be that the contractors are coming in two days' time to start the works for the next tenant to come in. So it is very difficult to know exactly. It is the turnover, and it depends ... Everything is individual. You cannot assess it.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q492/2020**  
**Housing stock –**  
**Pre-war properties**

**Clerk:** Question 492, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Given that the pre-war property rent cap is directly responsible for poor-quality housing and numerous empty properties across Gibraltar, while hundreds of people are in housing need awaiting affordable accommodation to rent, when will Government complete its review of this situation and facilitate the return of these pre-war rentals to the private rental housing stock?

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

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**Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the Housing Act 2007 is currently being reviewed and we are making good progress. The matter of controlled rent falls under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2007.

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We are working very closely with relevant stakeholders such as private landlords, the Landlords Association, Action for Housing as well as the Rent Assessor. All going to plan, I envisage that this review will be completed by the end of March 2021. There has been a delay, due, again, to COVID-19.

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**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, is the Minister able to highlight any of the review findings so far, by any chance? Is there anything notable that we can understand, so far? He talks about a good relationship and he is collaborating with landlords at the moment – are any arrangements being put in place in order to generate a better variety of decent-quality rental at the moment, as things unfold in terms of this review?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, the way I am proceeding is I am asking all the tenants' associations, Action for Housing, the landlords, whoever ... They are submitting suggestions as to what they think we should do in Part 2. That does not mean that the Government is going to actually implement what they are saying, but I am in the process now ... As I said, we worked really hard on Part 1, which mainly deals with all the public housing. We went through, clause by clause, looking at the Housing Act 2007. I was going to start Part 2 when the issue of COVID lockdown, and all that, happened. Unfortunately, also it is very difficult for us to obtain legal help, because of COVID-19; many lawyers are working on Brexit and COVID-19. Therefore, we have stopped it for a while, but I am in the consultation process. Only a week and a half ago, I met the Landlords Association, and I have been meeting other landlords independently. My office is always open to suggestions from landlords and Action for Housing, whom I met last week as well and they are giving me suggestions on how they see ... There are two sides to this coin and it is difficult to see ... All I am doing is getting representation from all of them, in order to then go through, clause by clause, Part 2, to see how we can improve the situation.

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**Mr Speaker:** One final question.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Yes. I note that the former Minister for Housing announced that they were conducting a review, back in June 2018, of the Housing Act 2007. Is the Minister quite honestly saying that he has only managed to review – or at least at this stage, from 2018 to now – Part 1 of the Housing Act, and he is now moving quickly to Part 2?

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**Hon. S E Linares:** No, Mr Speaker, I started the review from scratch. The previous Minister did a lot of work on the Housing Act. I inherited the work that had been done, and then we went through it again because some officers left and she was no longer the Minister. I got the whole Act, and I thought I would start with her views and all the views of the lawyers she had engaged to do the review, in order to start again. That is why I think, in a way, we worked very hard to do it. I was Minister from October, and by December/January we had already done Part 1, so there is no delay at all. We worked really hard to get Part 1 done. Part 2 is the one that has been delayed due to COVID, and I cannot do much about that. So, I am telling the hon. Member that I am very happy that we have done Part 1 pretty swiftly and now we are going to move to Part 2.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

**Q494/2020**

**Notices of Termination of Employment and Terms of Engagement –  
Numbers filed since December 2019**

**Clerk:** Question 494, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1295 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of Notices of Termination of Employment filed with the relevant authority for every month since December 2019 to present?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security.

1300 **Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 495.

**Clerk:** Question 495, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1305 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of Notices of Terms of Engagement filed with the relevant authority for every month since December 2019 to present?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security.

1310 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, the total number of Notices of Termination and Terms of Engagement forms filed with the relevant authority for every month since December 2019 to present is as follows.

Notices of Termination: January 1,175, February 1,021, March 882, April 361, May 486, June 466, July 697, August 1,514, September 1,224.

1315 Terms of Engagement: January 932, February 798, March 800, April 265, May 342, June 878, July 738, August 533, September 845.

Monthly statistics for Notices of Termination and Terms of Engagement filed with the Department of Employment are available online on the Government website. It should be noted that these figures relate to documentation filed within this period, of which many may not pertain to the calendar months in which they were filed.

1320 These figures are not a measure of employment growth or decrease. Between January and September of this year a total of 7,420 new contracts of engagement were registered with the Department of Employment, reflecting a total of 862 more jobs created than contracts terminated during the same period. This, therefore, demonstrates that in the first nine months of 2020 the number of jobs created was 12% higher than the number of jobs lost. Gibraltar and its economy continues to see the number of people in employment grow, despite these difficult times.

1330 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, the Minister has helpfully gone beyond the remit of the question, to make the point, of course, that there were over 7,000 more contracts registered at the relevant authority. Does he have the figure for the Notices of Terms of Engagement during that same period, the first nine months of the year? He has said 7,420 – he has handed that figure to me now – but I wonder whether he has, conversely, the figure for terminations.

1335 **Hon. P J Balban:** No, Mr Speaker, I cannot see that figure here.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, from the answer I see, which is the one that has been provided, I think the hon. Gentleman simply needs to take 862 away from 7,420.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

DIGITAL, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Q496/2020

Water supply –  
Energy cost of production

1340 **Clerk:** Question 496, the Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state the energy cost – kW used – to produce a year's supply of water for Gibraltar?

1345 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities.

**Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member will be delighted to learn that today we use less energy for the production of water than ever before, and we fully expect this trend to continue. Similarly, the cost of such fuel is also reducing year on year.

In 2015 we consumed a total of 10,393,553 kW at a cost of £1,340,768. In 2019 we consumed a total of 8,554,607 kW at a cost of £1,103,554. This has led to a decrease in energy consumption of some 28%. I am sure the hon. Member will welcome this.

I now also provide him with the details for each of the years 2015-19 inclusive.

1355 I have to say, Mr Speaker, as I pass the information, that although it is my privilege to stand and give you this good news today, it is obviously due to the work of my predecessor, the Hon. Prof. John Cortes, and the Chief Minister, who introduced this new plant, giving the Authority the ability to make the cost and energy savings I have just described.

**Answer to Q496/2020**

| Year (Jan-Dec)                     | 2015       | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Energy Consumption (kWh)     | 10,393,553 | 9,656,151 | 9,440,216 | 8,662,385 | 8,554,607 |
| Total Energy Cost (£)              | 1,340,768  | 1,245,643 | 1,217,788 | 1,117,448 | 1,103,544 |
|                                    |            |           |           |           |           |
| Total Production (m <sup>3</sup> ) | 1,515,360  | 1,524,730 | 1,605,236 | 1,698,587 | 1,732,177 |
|                                    |            |           |           |           |           |
| kWh/m <sup>3</sup>                 | 6.86       | 6.33      | 5.88      | 5.10      | 4.94      |
| £/m <sup>3</sup>                   | 0.88       | 0.82      | 0.76      | 0.66      | 0.64      |

|   |      |
|---|------|
| kWh/m <sup>3</sup> Change from 2015 to 2019 | -28% |
|---|------|

Q497/2020

Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes –  
Government intentions following OECD review

**Clerk:** Question 497, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1360

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Financial Services state what measures the Government intends to introduce following the review conducted by the OECD Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes?

1365 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities.



**Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, first of all, I would like to take this opportunity to restate how delighted I am with the rating 'largely compliant' that was achieved following this latest in-depth review. This is the third review carried out by the OECD, and each time we have retained the same rating.

1370 I cannot stress enough how much work goes into the preparation of these reviews, which are hugely detailed and require constant interaction with the evaluators as they probe our systems for effectiveness. I would therefore once again like to thank the Finance Centre Director, James Tipping, and the Commissioner of Income tax, John Lester, and their colleagues for all of their efforts in this process.

1375 As regards future measures that may be introduced, the hon. Member will be aware that OECD reviews include recommendations for action. These recommendations are contained both in-box and in-text and represent globally agreed standards. As we have done with previous reviews, therefore, the Government is currently reviewing the recommendations contained within the latest review with the intention of actioning them. This is critical to our success at the next  
1380 evaluation.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, this is precisely what I would like the Minister, if he can, to be more specific about. Is he able to provide us with more particulars as to what it is the Government is looking at in order to respond to the recommendations made by the peer review and hopefully reach a 'compliant' assessment? (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*)  
1385

**Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, to be in a team with, as the Hon. the Chief Minister has just alluded to, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and many other countries rated as largely compliant ... It is a club that I think we are happy and aspire to continue to be a part of.

1390 The report is a 123-page document which delves into enormous detail, both in-box and in-text, as I mentioned in my answer, with suggested recommendations which we should be considering, and that is exactly what we are doing. The introduction of these changes and the recommendations that we will take up actually do not happen quite as quickly as I think the hon. Member is inferring. They take a considerable period of time, in tandem with the work of the  
1395 regulator, ourselves, and indeed the private sector, whom we consult with, as we will these recommendations, many of which will actually involve legislative change.

So this is a long-term process. We are not ready to go into detail now and tell the hon. Member which are the ones we will and which are the ones we will not. This is an ongoing process in order to ensure that in three or four years' time we are fully up to speed and ready for the next  
1400 recommendation. None of the recommendations envisage immediate action, and therefore that is what we propose to do, as I mentioned in the answer to the original question.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I am grateful for the Minister's helpful reply and understand that he cannot give me a particular timeline in relation to specifics, and he cannot even provide me with specifics as it is something that is an ongoing process. But in relation to that specific reply, as he will know, in paragraph 8 of the executive summary it states:  
1405

A follow-up report on the steps undertaken by Gibraltar to address the recommendations made in this report should be provided to the peer review group no later than 30th June 2021 and thereafter in accordance with the procedure set out under the 2016 methodology.

Is he not bound by that particular timeline? Perhaps I have misunderstood.

**Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, we comply with all the timelines that the OECD sets us. The initial  
1410 response by June is actually a reaction to what we view their recommendations as stating and our intention. At that stage we give intentions, nothing more than intentions, in terms of what we will be doing during the next period, and that is what we will do. Of course we will comply with the OECD report in its entirety. I am not quite sure what the hon. Member was asking.

1415 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, would the hon. Member be willing to share that report, setting out the intentions that the Government is intending on embarking upon in response to the OECD peer review report?

1420 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I am happy to consider that, and I will be happy to speak to the hon. Member once I have taken advice from the team, particularly now the Commissioner of Income Tax will be moving the OECD recommendations forward.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q498/2020**

**Review of Development and Planning Commission –  
Conclusions and recommendations**

**Clerk:** Question 498, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1425 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Planning state whether the review of the workings of the DPC has been conducted; and, if so, what its conclusions and recommendations are?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities.

1430 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, we have commenced with a review of the Planning and Building Control Departments and will proceed thereafter to the DPC. At this stage there are no conclusions or recommendations.

1435 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the hon. Member able to provide me with a timeline as to when he thinks he will be able to have those recommendations and conclusions available to him?

1440 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I am not sure what recommendations the hon. Member is hoping for, but of course the review will be completed during the lifetime of this Parliament and I fully expect his conclusions and recommendations to be implemented by that time.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q499/2020**

**Online Government services –  
Improving customer experience**

**Clerk:** Question 499, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

1445 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Is the Minister for online and digital services willing to commit to focusing on improving the customer experience when dealing with online Government-related matters by providing quick and easy links to feedback forms on each page of the website and by committing to a tailored reply within 24 hours?

1450 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities.

**Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, yes, sir. The Government will be providing a customer service facility which will be embedded within the gov.gi portal.

1455 The support facility will allow users to raise issues online with Departments directly. The support facility will encompass all modern forms of working, including text, mobile, phone, email, live chat and social media. During normal working hours, we expect interaction to happen during the course of the day. Any interaction outside working hours will be dealt with the following working day or as soon as possible thereafter.

1460 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for his answer.  
I may have missed it, but did he give us a date by when this will be active up and running?

1465 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, that was not in the question, but obviously the facilities will be coming online with the first major new service – the Employment Department – and two other Departments coming along very shortly afterwards, within the next month. In terms of the support services that you referred to, those will come with them, but in respect of all the other services, ‘during the lifetime of this Parliament’ I believe is the safest answer to give.

1470 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, a supplementary, which obviously the Minister may tell me ... I do not know if it is allowed or related, but I am going to ask anyway and he can tell me.  
Regarding the status of the Digital Enterprise Resource Planning Platform, which was hailed in its time as a quantum leap for Government at successive Budget speeches, we know that it has been outsourced and it cost up to £6 million last year. Is there any way that we can have an update on this service to the taxpayer?

1475 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Minister does not have to answer that question.

1480 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, as I have just mentioned, within the next month I expect the first of those services, the Employment Service, to be launched to the public. Thereafter, I would expect Tax and the GHA to be the two Departments that will follow quickly on as we continue to work through all the other Departments.

At the same time as I say that, the hon. Member may be interested to learn that during this COVID period, over 7,000 uses have been made of what we call the basic e-services, with fees paid in excess of £150,000 during that period. So there is no question that people want to use these services, and as we continue to roll these out there will be more and more take-up amongst the community, and so I am pleased to see that.

1485

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Roy Clinton.

1490 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

If I could pick up on a theme the hon. Lady in her question talked about, focusing on improving the customer experience when dealing with online Government-related matters, and if could bring to the Minister’s attention to the e-Government service for the renewal of GHA cards, which I had the – (**A Member:** Pleasure.) well, I had experience of using in September ... The process is simple enough, but once you press the button you do not even get an acknowledgement of receipt. You do not get a number. You do not get any kind of information saying, ‘This is the expectation ...’ you will get something within eight weeks, an email – the process. There is absolutely nothing that happens once you press the button.

1495

I called the Department and they said there is an eight-week backlog, but I think it would be helpful if the Minister would look into at least having some kind of customer service experience whereby the customer at least gets an acknowledgement of receipt of the information, is given a unique identity number and a number to call to chase and follow up to see where the process is.

1500

It may then eliminate the probably hundreds of phone calls the GHA are getting unnecessarily, if people's expectations were at least managed at that point in time.

1505

**Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I agree entirely and take that in the spirit that it is intended. That has been implemented and there now should be automated emails acknowledging applications made, together with a reference number to enable the follow up. So, I am grateful for that.

1510

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can I just add one supplementary, please?

**Mr Speaker:** It has to be directly as a result of an answer given by the Minister.

1515

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** It was just leading on from the interchange with Mr Clinton. Basically, we know that people are meant to now renew their international driving licences, and there has been a technical notice issued. There is a lot of concern about the fact that they are all in a confined space in the post office because of COVID-19, so I just wanted to ask the Minister – leading on – if he can find a way of ensuring that there is a priority system, so that maybe even another location can be allocated for this renewal. As time goes by before the end of December, more and more people are going to conglomerate in the post office and therefore it poses a health concern, so I wanted to put it to him, given that he is reallocating these services.

1520

Thank you.

**Hon. A J Isola:** I am not sure whether that is a question or a request, but thank you.

1525

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q500/2020**  
**Development Plan –**  
**Reasons for delay in implementation**

**Clerk:** Question 500, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

1530

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Can the Minister kindly explain the delay in the implementation of the new Development Plan?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities.

1535

**Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, the ambition of a new and current Development Plan was never going to be a quick and easy process. These things, at the best of times, take time, and with a General Election and COVID this has become even more complicated.

1540

Bids for the preparation of the new Development Plan closed on 25th September 2019 with some 12 Bids having been received. The bids have been considered by the Tender Board in the usual manner and I am told a short list of some five of these bids is presently at the next stage of consideration. I expect that the Tender Board will conclude its deliberations and engage the successful applicant before the end of this year.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER**

**Q501/2020**

**Gibraltar House, London –**

**Effect of COVID on operations, management and finances**

1545 **Clerk:** Question 501, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Government state what effect the COVID pandemic has had on the operations, management and finances of Gibraltar House in London?

1550 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1555 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, Gibraltar House in London reopened last month with a phased return of staff through the month of August. It previously operated with staff working from home and was visited by management from time to time. There has been more work done remotely, virtually and by telephone with Members of Parliament and others. The savings made while the office was closed have been balanced by the costs incurred to prepare for its opening.

1560 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, there is an article which appeared in the *Gibraltar Chronicle*, which said at the end:

The Government said they will keep the situation in London and Brussels under review and act accordingly going forward.

1565 I just wanted to press the Minister in relation to that more specifically. Is the Government intending to take a perhaps wider review of the operations of the London office – it arises from the question; I only ask in relation to the London office – which is beyond the things which are directly relevant to addressing the COVID restrictions?

1570 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the comments to which the hon. Member referred were comments made in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and how things have changed in both London and Brussels, how we are keeping under review the development of the pandemic and how that would impact on our operations in both of these capitals.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Would the answer be that there is no intention to conduct a wider review, in terms of costs and staffing and things of that nature, beyond those that are directly relevant to dealing with the COVID pandemic, Mr Speaker?

1575 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, there is no intention at the moment. There are a number of fluid things, as the hon. Member knows – one of them is Brexit, the other one is COVID – so we need to wait and see.

**Q502/2020**

**Both World South –**

**Details of proposed development**

**Clerk:** Question 502, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1580 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Lands provide details of the proposed development described as being constructed at Both Worlds South by ABCO (International) Ltd?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1585 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the information requested is public information which has already been published online on the website of the Development and Planning Commission. The Government is not the direct landlord, as the lease is held by ABCO (International) Ltd, but I can confirm from a lands perspective that the proposed development is within the demise of their lease.

**Q503/2020**  
**Northern Defences –**  
**Expressions of interest**

**Clerk:** Question 503, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1590 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Lands state what the Government's thinking is behind subjecting the Northern Defences to an expression of interest?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1595 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the purpose of advertising an expressions of interest in the Northern Defences is to establish whether there is any private interest for managing, operating and investing in the site.

1600 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, can the Deputy Chief Minister advise whether that was the intention from the word go?

1605 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, yes. This is the second time an expressions of interest has been issued for the site. There was one in 2014, the hon. Member may recall. At that time we negotiated with different entities and were unable to arrive at a conclusion. Therefore, a second expressions of interest was issued this time which clarified perhaps a number of points that had been in doubt in relation to the first one. The Government has already received three expressions of interest from commercial entities and will now be considering how to take those forward.

1610 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think the hon. Member said 'issues which raised some doubt', or words to that effect. If I am correct in that analysis, can he provide the House with details of what those issues were?

1615 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** It is really one main issue, Mr Speaker. The Government was not prepared to transfer ownership of the site to a private entity. So, while we were happy to do some kind of management agreement, we did not want to transfer the ownership. That has now been clarified in the advert for the second expressions of interest.

1620 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Just by way of clarification – again, I think he has provided the answer – did he say that he has had three expressions of interest? Is that correct?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker, there are three.

1625 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And can he advise us when he expects the Government will be making a decision in relation to those?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** I have to say that, given all the other issues the Government is dealing with, this is not going to happen immediately, so it is going to take some time. However, this is not going to stop the work which is still ongoing on site, in terms of clearing and restoring the site. That continues irrespective of the time the Government will take to consider these three expressions of interest.

**Mr Speaker:** I will allow one final question.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Insofar as that question and answer session relating to this particular question on the Northern Defences, is the Government considering lumping this in with the agreement – as far as I understand the position – for the maintenance of Parson's Lodge, the Gatehouse at Moorish Castle, the Stay at Home Cave and other sites in Gibraltar? I understand there is one provider who deals with all of those. Is the Government considering using the same company, group of companies, or entity, to administer and maintain the Northern Defences?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, this is not something the Government is considering at all. I am not sure who the three entities are, on my feet here, but it may be that there is one that is also responsible for those areas. I cannot even confirm that, at this stage. Once I have more detailed information and I am able to look at the three submissions in some more detail, I will be able to answer the hon. Member's question.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, with your indulgence – I know you said one, but I have one on my mind, if I may?

The hon. Member said that the expressions of interest are in relation to seeing if there is any interest in respect of investment. Clearly, this is an important heritage site, and while I think the expressions of interest mentioned touristic development, can the Government assure us that whatever is allowed in terms of investment, he will respect the heritage significance of the area and there will not be building on the Northern Defences as part of this investment? Is it within the parameters of what the Government have set out clearly to the parties that have expressed interest?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, yes. That is not only set out to the parties, it is set out in the actual advert itself. It makes it clear that the monuments are listed under the Heritage Act and that therefore all proposals must integrate the sensitive use of the monuments, tunnels and the natural environment, and then the conception and creation of a first-class tourist attraction and the full or partial retention of open land for use of the community as an amenity or for leisure activities. Those are the three things we want to blend in, and certainly heritage is a very important consideration in all this.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** I was trying to tease from the hon. Member something a bit further. I understand that the expressions of interest invites parties to integrate sensitively the heritage assets that exist, but there may be open land. When we were talking about touristic development, they are not going to site, presumably, with Government permission, some kind of hotel next to these heritage assets, and I just wanted an assurance from the hon. Member that the Government, in terms of setting parameters, is clear that, in terms of investment and management, what is happening is management of the site for the purposes of heritage and tourism generation, but there will not be some kind of development adjacent to heritage assets that really undermines the significance of the site.

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am pleased to confirm there is absolutely no intention on the part of the Government to allow, as landlord, the construction of a hotel or any other such entity on the site of the Northern Defences. In fact, there is a hotel being built where

the old Bank of Scotland was, which is quite near the Northern Defences but obviously it is not on the site.

1680

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q504/2020**

**Vehicles crossing border into Gibraltar –  
Numbers in June to August 2020 and June to August 2019**

**Clerk:** Question 504, the Hon. K Azopardi.

1685

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, how many vehicles crossed the border into Gibraltar in June 2019 and June 2020, in July 2019 and July 2020, and in August 2019 and August 2020?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1690

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the number of vehicles that crossed the border into Gibraltar in the months requested as follows: June 2019, 277,755; June 2020, 148,797; July 2019, 311,303; July 2020, 239,002; August 2019, 349,660; August 2020, 235,500.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q505/2020**

**Vehicles crossing border into Spain –  
Numbers in June to August 2020 and June to August 2019**

**Clerk:** Question 505, the Hon. K Azopardi.

1695

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, How many vehicles crossed the border into Spain from Gibraltar in June 2019 and June 2020, in July 2019 and July 2020, and in August 2019 and August 2020?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1700

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the number of vehicles that crossed the border into Spain from Gibraltar in the months requested are as follows: June 2019, 229,925; June 2020, 90,753; July 2019, 251,935; July 2020, 135,033; August 2019, 246,398; August 2020, 132,766.

1705

The hon. Member should note that these figures are collected automatically through the ANPR/CCTV system, and I am told that they are supplied with the proviso that they are less accurate than the manually taken entry figures.

1710

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Thank you. That is helpful, but in terms of an accuracy – or lack of accuracy – margin, can the hon. Member help us in terms how inaccurate these figures are?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I asked exactly the same question. Just to give him an example, the discrepancy on vehicle exit, because they are taken automatically by machines, could relate to partial plates being taken due to motorcycles, bicycles or pedestrians getting in the



1715 way, or indeed law enforcement blocking the camera that takes the picture. It is that kind of situation.

By and large, I would say the figures are accurate and reliable, but they are not as accurate as counting them one by one manually. That is the point, I think, that was being made to me and the answer I was given when I made further inquiries.

**Q506-07/2020**

**Pedestrians crossing the border in each direction –  
Numbers in June to August 2020 and June to August 2019**

1720 **Clerk:** Question 506, the Hon. K Azopardi.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, how many pedestrians crossed the border into Gibraltar in June 2019 and June 2020, July 2019 and July 2020, and August 2019 and August 2020?

1725 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, I will answer the question with Question 507.

1730 **Clerk:** Question 507, the Hon. K Azopardi.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, how many pedestrians crossed the border into Spain from Gibraltar in June 2019 and June 2020, in July 2019 and July 2020, and in August 2019 and August 2020?

1735 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the number of pedestrians who crossed the border into Gibraltar from Spain in the months requested are as follows: June 2019, 257,941; June 2020, 88,786; July 2019, 305,676; July 2020, 143,805; August 2019, 335,194; August 2020, 144,297.

The number of pedestrians who crossed the border into Spain from Gibraltar in the period requested are as follows: in June 2019, 177,612; in July 2019, 303,135 and in August 2019, 305,927.

1745 These figures are collected through CCTV cameras which are installed at the border, given that the DCA do not themselves control exit points.

I am told that the figures requested for 2020 cannot be supplied because the Spanish side of the border changed the point of exit of pedestrians into Spain at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has meant that persons exiting Gibraltar on foot are no longer within shot of the camera that takes the pictures.

1750 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I wonder when the Government became aware that these statistics cannot be taken because of the matter that he has just mentioned, firstly. And secondly, will the Government take steps to ensure that these valuable statistics can be taken, especially at a time like this, when we want to compare what happened before and who is coming in and how many people are coming in?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I would add that this particular issue affects only pedestrians exiting. Normally the Government keeps very close tabs on people coming in, whether they are coming on foot or whether there are vehicles coming in. This refers to people going out.

1760 On investigating the situation, I have already asked for it to be rectified. My understanding is the camera will be moved so it can take account of pedestrians exiting Gibraltar going forward.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Can we assume, therefore, if we were, in future months, to ask a statistical question of this nature, the Government would be in a position to have this information say from 1765 November or December? Or will the Government require time to rectify the situation logistically?

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, when I inquired, I was told that it is not as simple as redirecting the camera. Apparently, there are some cables that need to be moved so the camera can be repositioned to take shots of the new exit points. I expect that to happen quickly, and I will 1770 certainly follow it up to make sure that it happens, so that we will be able to supply the information to the hon. Member and, indeed, for the Government's own records.

**Questions 504-05/2020**  
**Supplementary question**

**Mr Speaker:** Just one final question.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer, but if I can just go 1775 back to the stats he gave for Questions 504 and 505.

If I run quickly through the ones to Question 504, just to make sure I have the right numbers for June 2020, July and August, and I will just talk about round thousands: 148,000, 239,000 and 235,000; and then for Question 505, again for June, July and August 2020, 91,000, 135,000 and 132,000. Are those number correct, as I took them down?

1780 The reason I ask, Mr Speaker, is if I total up those three months I come to a number of 623,000 vehicle movements between June and August, and going into Spain, for the same period, 358,000, which would suggest that somehow 264,000 vehicles remained in Gib. I would ask the Minister perhaps to check the accuracy of these numbers, because it does logically seem to indicate something is not quite right.

1785 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, that is a number relating to vehicle movements, not vehicles –

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Could be the same vehicle.

1790 **Hon. Chief Minister:** – or indeed the same vehicle could be moving more than once. It is about vehicle movements, not individual vehicles. *(Interjection)* Yes, unless, for example, one of us drives in and stays here and then we do not drive out – *(Interjection)* But it is movements.

1795 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I appreciate the Chief Minister's point about movements, not vehicles, but if the movement is a vehicle coming in and then it does not go out, it stays in Gibraltar. If it goes in and out, then there is a self-cancelling movement. What I am saying is there should ... As he says, on balance there may be people who come in and do not go out, but I would not expect a discrepancy that big.

1800 **Hon. Chief Minister:** There would be, for example, from one day to another, 15,000 or 20,000, potentially. We are quite happy to look at it, Mr Speaker, but these are not numbers that one expects to tally.

1805 **Hon. R M Clinton:** No, and I accept the Chief Minister's point that this is not an accounting exercise, but I would expect that within the bounds of what is reasonable you would expect perhaps a discrepancy of maybe, as he said, 10,000 vehicles from month to month, but I would not expect a cumulative 264,000. I will accept the suggestion that it will be looked into. That is fine. I am just making an observation.

1810 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker, but the cumulative aspect I think is impossible to bring into the equation. The aspect that would be relevant, for example, would be to compare 277,000 with 229,000, 148,000 with 90,000, and 251,000 with 311,000; not the cumulative aspect.

1815 It is worth looking at in the context of the numbers we gave, the accuracy we said there could be, the fact that vehicles might be coming in one direction then at the end of the month ... a vehicle may go home the next day, all that and Gibraltarians moving at weekends, holiday periods, people going only out in one direction in one month and coming back in another. I think there are so many imponderables here that you would expect there to be differences.

**Q496/2020**  
**Water supply –**  
**Supplementary question**

1820 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Phillips wants to ask a supplementary on the schedule to Question 496.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

1825 Before I accept the invitation by the Minister to warmly congratulate the Government on the £1.8 million saving from 2015-19, can I ask whether or not the Government has thought about whether this saving of money in relation to the total energy cost to produce one year's water is going to be passed on to consumers? I just thought I might ask whether the Government has a view on whether the saving they are making on this is passed on to the consumer directly.

1830 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member should know that the cost we are referring to is the reduction in cost in energy, in other words electricity, which the hon. Member should know is very heavily subsidised by the taxpayer already.

Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we should reduce the cost further? It would be alarming if that was the suggestion coming from the Members sitting opposite.

1835 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am not used to answering questions from the Minister – but obviously we would like to do that in due course, in the next couple of years; I will answer his questions then. I would just like to understand the figures, because there is a saving insofar as [*inaudible*] He is asking what my view is, but I think that is the wrong way round.

1840 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I can tell him that my view, as Minister for Public Finances, is that we are subsidising the production of water and the supply of water, the production of electricity and the supply of electricity, and that subsidy will continue but it will not be increased. If the hon. Gentleman is saying we should be reducing the cost of water and electricity, I think it flies in the face of some of the things they have said in the past.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Just to clarify, Mr Speaker, I am asking what the Government's position is on it, not stating our position.

1850 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I have got used to them not having a position.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, if I can now move that the House should adjourn to Thursday, 19th November at 3.30 in the afternoon.

1855 The reason for the long adjournment is that, as hon. Members will know, we expect an even greater acceleration of the activity in relation to our discussions about our future relationship with the European Union as 31st December draws nearer.

**Mr Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 19th November at 3.30 p.m.

1860 I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 19th November at 3.30 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Thursday, 19th November at 3.30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.*