



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.04 p.m. – 7.15 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Monday 1st June 2020**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3.04 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 Government Bills

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Monday, 1st June 2020.

We commence with the suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

**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

### CHIEF MINISTER

**Q287/2020**

**Rooke site –**

**London and Regional**

5 **Clerk:** We now proceed with questions to the Chief Minister, and we commence with Question 287. The questioner is the Hon. R M Clinton.

10 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that London and Regional are no longer the preferred bidders for the Rooke site; and, if so, on what date was their interest withdrawn or terminated?

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

15 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the Government has not been able to secure a deal with London and Regional on the basis of the previous expression of interest for the site. The Government continues to explore all options at present and therefore considers it prudent to issue a new invitation for expressions of interest in relation to the site in question.

20 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his answer. Can he indicate the date on which their interest was withdrawn or terminated?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, their interest has been neither withdrawn nor terminated.

25 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, at some point the Government must have made a determination that London and Regional were no longer in a position to express interest. Could he indicate at what point the Government came to that realisation, i.e. a date?

30 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am trying not to spoil the newfound tenor of the relationship. It is not that London and Regional have been unable to continue to express an interest. I was very particular with what I said: the Government has not been able to secure a deal with London and Regional on the basis of the previous expression of interest. An expression of interest is made. If it is chosen by the Government as the one that we believe we should take forward, we take it forward. We have not been able to conclude a deal. There is now another opportunity for parties to express an interest in respect of that site, perhaps even including London and Regional as a derivation of what it was that they proposed the first time. After the discussions we have had, they may put it in a different way.

35 So, it is not that they are no longer interested or we are no longer interested in them; it is that we have not been able to do a deal and we feel that the best way to now take this forward and ensure that we get the best deal for the taxpayer in respect of that site is to put it out again. I do not discard that London and Regional might express an interest and I do not discard that that might still be the most interesting of all the options available, by then financed by them in a way that they perhaps better understand the plot and the Government's views in respect of it, or by others who may propose something more interesting.

40 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I certainly hope we can continue in our spirit of conviviality, but I must insist. There must be a point in time at which the Government and London and Regional came to the realisation that it was not possible to achieve a deal. I would just be grateful if the Chief Minister could indicate a point in time.

45 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is easier to indicate a point in time in relation to that because that is what happened, rather than what he was asking before, which is not what happened and therefore I could not give a date. It is not that London and Regional decided that they could not reach a conclusion with the Government. The Government decided that we could not, on the basis being put to us, make that determination. The hon. Gentleman has asked me for a day and I cannot give him a day, but I would say it was during the summer of last year. I think it might have been during the summer or autumn of last year. So much of the last 12 weeks puts everything in fog, but the Deputy Chief Minister is the person with responsibility for issuing the expressions of interest. I think it might have been a couple of weeks before it appeared in the *Chronicle* that we made that decision and it was then published in the *Chronicle* and other newspapers as a result.

50 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, to labour the point. If I asked a very specific question along the lines as the Chief Minister has indicated, would he, or the Deputy Chief Minister, be able to give me an indication – at least a month and a year when this occurred?

55 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, yes, and I have. In other words, if the hon. Gentleman goes to the expression of interest which appeared – and the Deputy Chief Minister is trying to find it electronically, but there is a record of it – and goes back 14-21 days, which is how long it takes us to decide this is going to happen and therefore LPS, or whoever it is that does this, is instructed and it goes to somebody who sets up the page and publishes it, that is when it was.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

75 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I just ask on that, now my hon. colleague has finished his supplementaries, just for us to be clear: when London and Regional were given the preferred bidder status and then there was a realisation that you could not do a deal and therefore you have gone out to a new expression of interest, was it because there was something that came after they were the preferred bidder status, a new element that made the Government unable or unwilling to conclude an agreement?

80 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** And would the Chief Minister be willing to say what that is? Or is it something that is commercially sensitive to the new expression of interest process?

85 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Mr Speaker, it is commercially sensitive as to detail but I am quite happy to tell them what it is: premium.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q288-89/2020**  
**Public finances –**  
**Drawdown of borrowing**

90 **Clerk:** Question 288, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, before the hon. Gentleman speaks, the Deputy Chief Minister is telling me that what feels like last summer was actually sometime in March, so it would have been at the beginning of this year. That is what the past 12 to 13 weeks felt like!

95 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I am grateful to the Chief Minister for that clarification.

100 Mr Speaker, can the Government advise if it has transferred the following amounts totalling £63 million to the Consolidated Fund, namely: £46 million in the Savings Bank Reserve, £15 million in the General Sinking Fund, £1 million in the Government Insurance Fund and £1 million in the Notes Security Fund?

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

105 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I will answer with Question 289.

**Clerk:** Question 289, the Hon. R M Clinton.

110 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government explain how Eruca Investments Limited has come to have accumulated losses –

**Mr Speaker:** Question 289.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** That is Question 289.

115 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, on the numbering I have, Question 289 is 'what progress has been made on the £150 million?'

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government advise what progress has been made, and with whom, in respect of potential additional direct borrowing mentioned on 20th March  
120 2020, being 'a first tranche of £150 million'?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the Government has not used the Sinking Funds or the Savings Bank Reserve. It was preferable to secure the £150 million facility and leave those sums intact.

125 The revolving credit line facility letter in respect of the first tranche of potential additional direct borrowing which I referred to on 20th March has already been tabled at Parliament, at the start of proceedings last week. Although I acknowledge, Mr Speaker, that that was after the question had been filed.

130 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his answer.

In respect of the £150 million borrowing and the revolving credit line facility with Gibraltar International Bank, can he advise the House if there has been any drawdown on this facility as yet? The facility letter is dated 2nd April 2020 and I note it was executed by the Financial Secretary on 9th April 2020.

135

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, there has been drawdown. I would need specific notice of the question to tell him exactly how much drawdown there has been at any particular time. I think there has been in the region of £50 million drawn down at this stage, but I do not want to be held to that in case we have drawn down £45 million or £55 million, and that number will  
140 change but I am quite happy ... In fact, I expect to meet the hon. Gentleman in the context of the further discussions we are having about the recommendations to be made by CELAC and I am quite happy to inform them there, or indeed if he wants to table a specific question at the next session I can then advise him how much has been drawn down specifically.

I do have an element of information that I can give him, correct as to 26th May. On  
145 14th April, £50 million was drawn down, which was the figure I had in my head; and on 26th May, £40 million was drawn down. That is the latest figure I have.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for that information.

By my maths, I make that a total of £90 million in total drawn down. I see the Chief Minister  
150 is nodding in the affirmative.

Can I ask the Chief Minister why it is deemed preferable to borrow first, before utilising the reserves that are available to the Government – the £63 million, in other words? Why not transfer that money first, before exercising the ability to borrow?

155 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, simply because of the rates at which this £150 million is offered to the Government. The hon. Gentleman knows that we are now at a time of record interest rates, being at their lowest in terms of availability to the right sort of borrower, and on the amounts which are the reserve that he refers to in the first of the questions, which by my reckoning was to a date – I do not know if it was on his order paper – we are earning more in  
160 interest on the deposits of those amounts that we have in reserve than we are paying in respect of the amount that we are borrowing, and so therefore it makes sense to take this additional direct borrowing.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, is the Chief Minister in a position to tell the House how the  
165 £90 million drawn down has been used?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Not with any level of precision without having notice of the question.

**Mr Speaker:** That is an additional question, not a supplementary.

170

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, just one final supplementary. Just for the record, can the Chief Minister confirm that that money has been drawn down and effectively deposited into the Consolidated Fund?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** That is the mechanism which has been pursued.

#### Q290/2020

#### **Eruca Investments Limited – Accumulated losses and provision for other liabilities**

**Clerk:** Question 290, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government explain how Eruca Investments Limited has come to have accumulated losses, as at 31st March 2019, of £52.6 million; and also, what does the 'provision for other liabilities' of £52.5 million at the same date represent?

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**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, this is not a company that is owned, controlled or managed by the Government, and I am therefore not able to provide the detailed response requested or indeed any information in respect of that entity.

I am happy, however, if the hon. Gentleman wishes, and in the spirit of co-operation that we have established, to meet with him and the Leader of the Opposition, together with the Financial Secretary, if he wishes, to discuss the Eruca structure further if he thinks that may be useful. I recall that we already had an initial meeting about this when it was created some time ago.

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**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I think, in the same spirit as that original meeting, which was held last year on 22nd July 2019, certainly we would need some more explanation and clarification as to how the structures operate. Obviously there is something that either escaped our attention or was not explained entirely to us, but of course it would have to be under the same conditions as that first meeting on 22nd July 2019.

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is not often that when you invite someone to a meeting they purport to set conditions for it, but we are talking politics, so I would imagine that there would be conditions on the basis of both sides to have a further discussion about this.

200

What is not going to change is which companies in the structure we control and therefore we can give answers for, but I am happy for us to have that further meeting and to discuss how such further meeting might be fixed.

#### Q291-92/2020

#### **Maritime collision on 8th March 2020 – Actions to defend RGP officers involved and integrity of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters**

**Clerk:** Question 291, the Hon. D A Feetham.

205 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, what is being done to defend the police officers who have been the subject matter of a *denuncia* at the *Juzgado de Instruccion numero 4 de La Linea* in respect of a maritime collision that occurred in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters on 8th March 2020?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I will answer with Question 292.

**Clerk:** Question 292, the Hon. D A Feetham.

215 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, what is the Government doing to defend the integrity of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters in the light of the *denuncia* presented at the *Juzgado de Instruccion numero 4 de la Linea* in respect of a maritime collision that occurred in BGTW on 8th March 2020?

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

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the initial reporting of the incident to the Government from the Royal Gibraltar Police would appear to show that the collision referred to occurred outside  
225 of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, and the *denuncia* to which the hon. Member refers therefore poses no challenge to the integrity of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

This was a very serious incident, which resulted in the death of two Spanish nationals and the injury of another two individuals, one of whom is also a Spanish national and the fourth of Portuguese nationality. Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is dealing with the incident in all  
230 its aspects with the care and thoroughness that its seriousness requires.

The vessel in which the deceased and injured were travelling, while apparently not carrying narcotics at the time of the collision was a 14 m semi-rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB) of the type commonly employed in drugs trafficking activity, powered by four 300 hp outboard engines and fitted with radar equipment. This type of vessel is a prohibited import in Gibraltar.

235 A diplomatic '*note verbale*' has been lodged by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in respect of the Incident. The matter has been raised in questions in the Spanish parliament.

In all of the circumstances set out above, the incident raises many issues and concerns for the Government, with which we are currently dealing.

In the first instance, I want to say that, above all else, we are greatly concerned about the  
240 physical and mental welfare of the officers of the Royal Gibraltar Police in question that night and of the potential for multi-jurisdictional legal action against them. I have already confirmed to the Gibraltar Police Federation that the Government will agree to fund the legal advice and representation that the individual officers may require. The Government will also assist with any support required in respect of the mental or physical health of the officers in question. I have  
245 also communicated these sentiments to the Commissioner of Police. I want to specifically record here that the Government fully supports our frontline police officers, especially those who risk their lives at sea in keeping Gibraltar safe and keeping drug traffickers from using our waters to trans-ship narcotics.

Secondly, the House will be aware that the Government has also expressed our condolences publicly to the family of the deceased. I have also expressed these condolences through the Spanish government.

In the view of the Government, the best way to ensure that we deal with this case effectively and in a manner designed to protect the interests of justice and the rights of the deceased, the rights of the police officers in question and the integrity of BGTW, is to ensure that the  
255 Government takes steps to ensure that the full facts are established in an independent manner that stands up to international scrutiny. As an initial measure, the Government agreed to



260 provide the necessary funding for an independent report from the Metropolitan Police in London. I expect that this report should be completed very shortly, if it has not already been completed. Additionally, in order to ensure that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is properly able to address all aspects of this matter in the public interest of Gibraltar on the basis of a full and proper understanding of the facts, I have exercised the power set out in section 15 of the Police Act to require that the Royal Gibraltar Police provide to the Government a full, factual report in respect of this incident. That report was due by the close of business on Friday, 29th May and was received by me on that day.

265 I cannot emphasise enough how concerning the matters that arise in respect of this incident are. This matter is extraordinarily serious for all concerned. Two men have lost their lives. Police officers of the Royal Gibraltar Police are the potential subjects of a plethora of multi-jurisdictional legal proceedings. In dealing with it properly, there will be no substitute for appropriate accountability and transparency within the bounds of the *sub judice* rules such as they may be here and in other jurisdictions.

270 I have kept both His Excellency the Governor and the Chairman of the Gibraltar Police Authority informed of the exercise by me of the powers provided for in the said section 15 of the Police Act.

275 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, in the light of the very full answer the Chief Minister has given and also the sensitivity of the issue, I only have one supplementary and it is this: whether he is prepared to share with the Opposition, on a completely confidential basis, the report that he received on Friday of last week.

280 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I would need to take advice on that. The hon. Gentleman I think will understand that the Government does not want to do anything that could prejudice the officers involved or indeed that might prejudice the public interest in dealing with this matter, but I assure him that I will take advice on that during the course of the next day or so. Before the end of the week I shall ring him and tell him the advice I have received, and I shall endeavour, if I am unable to share the report as is, to share such part of the report as I am able to share with him.

**Q293-296/2020**

**BEAT COVID measures –**

**Applications received, accepted and rejected; nationality of employees of recipients;  
assistance for restaurant and café owners**

**Clerk:** Question 293, the Hon. D A Feetham.

290 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, how many firms in originally excluded sectors have (a) applied to the Government and (b) been accepted by the Government in order to furlough part of their workforce; and how many employees are affected?

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

295 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 294 to 296.

**Clerk:** Question 294, the Hon. D A Feetham.

300 **Hon. D A Feetham:** How many COVID BEAT measure applications have been received by the Government and how many have been rejected?

**Clerk:** Question 295, the Hon. D A Feetham.

305 **Hon. D A Feetham:** How many businesses and employees have had the benefit of BEAT COVID measures and, in relation to the employees, what is their nationality?

**Clerk:** Question 296, the Hon. D A Feetham.

310 **Hon. D A Feetham:** What COVID BEAT measures or assistance will be provided to restaurant and café owners and their employees after 1st June and 1st July 2020. In particular: (a) what COVID BEAT measures or assistance will be provided to those that open and those that do not open after 1st June 2020; (b) what COVID BEAT measures and assistance will be provided while restaurants and cafés open at enforced reduced capacity; and (c) what COVID BEAT measures and assistance will be provided to those who will be severely affected by international travel restrictions and significant downturn in tourism visits to Gibraltar after 1st June 2020?

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

320 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, at the time of answering the question, one firm has applied to Government under regulation 31 of the BEAT Regulations for Private Sector Funded BEAT for the Excluded Sector.

According to our BEAT database for the month of April 2020, the Government has received 6,664 applications, net of duplicates and erroneous entries made by applicants. Out of these 6,664 applications received, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has rejected 379 applications. From these 379, some are being reconsidered by way of appeal. This figure may reduce further once these appeals are determined, but the success rate of appeals to date has proven to be relatively low. Rejections are made by either the Employment Service or the Income Tax Office and are related to requirements under the Appropriation (Business Employee Assistance Terms COVID-19) Regulations 2020. These extend to include applications which relate to invalid sectors, unregistered employees, directors and self-employed persons not compliant with tax and Social Insurance obligations, and applicants exceeding the permitted other income threshold in accordance with these Regulations.

330 A total of 6,285 BEAT payments have been approved. This includes both employees and self-employed persons. Further analyses can be provided as follows: BEAT payments to employees total 5,854; BEAT payments to self-employed persons number 431. The 5,854 are representative of 873 employers. The nationality across the main categories of the 5,854 employees is as follows: British, including British Gibraltarian, 1,554 – that is to say 27%; Spanish, 3,301, or 56%; Portuguese, 249, or 4%; Moroccan, 119, or 2%; and others, 631, or 11%.

340 I now hand over a list showing a summary of the nationalities of the 5,854 employees.

Continued Answer to Question 296

Continued Answer to Question 295

Nationality	Number
Argentinian	5
Belarus	1
Bolivian	1
Brazilian	5
British (inc British Gibraltarian)	1,545
Bulgarian	23
Canadian	2
Croatian	7
Cuban	2
Cypriot	1
Czech	20
Danish	5
Dominican	1
Egyptian	1
Estonian	6
Finnish	1
French	18
German	9
Ghanaian	2
Greek	1
Hungarian	61
Indian	53
Indonesian	2
Irish	15
Israeli	6
Italian	48
Latvian	8
Lithuanian	19
Macedonian	1
Mauritian	5
Moroccan	119
Dutch	7
Nigerian	2
No Nationality Recorded	14
Norwegian	1
Pakistani	2
Panamanian	2
Filipino	3
Polish	53
Portuguese	249
Romanian	151
Russian	1
Slovakian	14
South African	2
Spanish	3,301
Sri Lankan	1
Swedish	5
Turkish	1
Ukrainian	3
American	3
Venezuelan	1

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the GSLP Liberal Government has agreed measures with the GSD Opposition that extend, in principle, until the end of June 2020. These include the measures which are aimed at assisting businesses and measures which are designed to assist employees. To that extent, the position in relation to the period up to the end of June is already provided for and agreed with the GSD. The following business measures have already been announced and continue to apply for the second quarter of 2020, that is to say the months April, May and June: a waiver of Government commercial rents for included sector businesses, which includes restaurants and cafés; a tax measure designed to achieve a 50% rent discount on commercial rents from private landlords for included sector businesses, which includes restaurants and cafés; a waiver of rates for all sectors save for supermarkets and pharmacies; a deferral of the payment of PAYE and Social Insurance obligations to the Government for all sectors; a waiver of all work permit and registration fees charged by the Department of Employment for all sectors; and an extension of 90 days without penalty for returns and documents on all Companies House fees and filings for all sectors. Additionally, the BEAT COVID measures, which are the measures which relate to the payment of the Minimum Wage, will continue for June.

I am able to announce that the relevant deadline date by which we will process June BEAT for payment to be made before 30th June will be 18th June. This will mean that anyone who receives a single application before 18th June and is successful in that application will receive their payment before 30th June. If anyone applies after 18th June, or makes multiple  
345 applications, we will pay them as soon as possible but this may be after 30th June.

We are consulting with CELAC, and thereafter will consider also the Leader of the Opposition and Hon. Mr Clinton, on whether there should be any modification in respect of the BEAT COVID measures for June. We already made amendments successfully in May to allow employees to work part of the month. These are measures that will continue to apply for the month of June  
350 and more modifications may also come.

Government has not yet announced the full extent of what measures or assistance will be available to business owners generally and/or their employees after 1st July. This forms the subject of continued consultation with CELAC and will also form the basis of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Clinton thereafter.

Government is developing the measures that will apply from 1st July onwards with particular care, as the situation thereafter will be a different one to the period of enforced closure. We met last Friday with CELAC for an extended session, and that was the second such session on consecutive Fridays. We are using these sessions to take constructive representations from different sectors forward, and from the interest groups that want us to consolidate our thinking  
360 going forward. We are making fantastic progress in identifying the most effective measures to support and encourage our businesses to stand on their own two feet again.

I must once again thank all members of CELAC and their respective organisations for their commitment, their time and their constructive engagement with the Government. Once we have all this feedback the intention is to meet with the Official Opposition, as we did for BEAT, to  
365 refine further the thinking and, if possible, make measures available from 1st July that enjoy cross-party support again.

Some of the measures that we are working on will be rolled out for the month of June, to coincide with the restricted opening of restaurants and cafés. These include a temporary relaxation of development and planning conditions that would allow businesses to expand  
370 outdoor seating areas outside their premises, including by also reviewing parking and traffic arrangements in such areas as Irish Town and Chatham Counterguard, and these are also initiatives that are being considered by private sector landlords in parallel, such as Ocean Village. We are also considering allowing longer opening hours, subject to Public Health advice, to assist businesses in maximising the number of covers that they can secure whilst conforming to the  
375 public health restrictions.

The important thing is to balance protecting employment and supporting businesses whilst also seeking to wean businesses and employees off BEAT and back to work. Some businesses will

need support but not intervention. Calibrating this balance will be difficult, but it is work that we are doing as we stand shoulder to shoulder with business and employee representative organisations.

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The Government will make a full announcement in respect of the final arrangements to be introduced as soon as we are able to.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, again I am very grateful to the hon. Member for a very detailed and considered response to the question.

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He is probably as aware as I am, or received representations to this effect certainly, that in relation to restaurants, for example, also café owners, it takes roughly 75% to 80% of turnover in order to actually break even for the business. Therefore, if they are operating on effectively 50% occupancy they are not going to be able to reach that 75% to 80% breakeven point in terms of turnover. Can he provide some assurance to those restaurateurs, café owners and also their employees, because of course their futures are inextricably linked, that the Government will look favourably at extending the BEAT COVID measures beyond the end of June of this year, bearing in mind that they are going to be hit very substantially by reduced occupancy and also by the decrease in tourism that is going to affect not only Gibraltar but obviously other places outside Gibraltar?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks when he rose to ask me that supplementary.

The Government is acutely aware of the concerns of those who represent the catering industry and those who represent other sectors of the tourism industry, and we are working, as I have said, in CELAC, to ensure that we put in place the best set of measures for the future of these industries not just to be assured but to be improved, and for employment in those sectors to be as robustly defended as possible. Whether or not that relates to a continuation of BEAT is a matter on which I am not going to commit myself at this stage, but I would remind the hon. Gentleman that the agreement between the Government and the Opposition in relation to BEAT is only until the end of June. I would remind the hon. Gentleman that I have said that we are designing a new mechanism for thereafter, and I would assure the hon. Gentleman that we are as alive to the concerns that he has raised directly from the industry as he appears to be. The whole aim of the Government's actions since this pandemic commenced was to put a shield around employees and to put a shield around our businesses. I think that working together we have achieved that until now and we have no doubt that we will be able to achieve our objective with the measures that we put in place going forward.

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The Government is not able to give information as to how full restaurants may or may not be, but I hear reports anecdotally that it is very difficult to get a reservation in Gibraltar after today in any of our restaurants, and as I have told the hon. Gentleman, one of the things that we are doing is extending the areas of terraces available to restaurants in all sectors where the Government controls the licences, so that the 50% occupancy rate may actually be over a larger area and therefore you may get closer to what the original occupancy rate was. Indeed, I have told him that private landlords who are in touch with the Government and working with us in CELAC are trying to do the same thing also.

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I sincerely hope that the measures that we are putting in place and that private landlords are putting in place, together with the entrepreneurial flair and industry of our Gibraltarian businessmen and women in this and every other sector, will mean that we will see them and their employees flourish, as they have to date.

425

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, yes, I understand that obviously the Government is going to be consulting the Opposition in relation to some of these measures going forward. Of course this is a public forum where people listening will also want some public answers and the Opposition asking the questions publicly too. One of the issues that certainly I am being asked in my

430 capacity as a Member of the Opposition is whether the Government intends – and I know that  
he is not going to be able to give me a categorical answer in relation to this, but at least perhaps  
he can give me an answer that indicates that this is in active consideration as well – an extension  
of the furlough scheme for this sector for at least part of the workforce, which would be good  
news for the restaurateurs and cafe owners that are facing these difficult times.

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, what was it he used to tell me when we had the Future Job  
Strategy and people were, he said, paid to stay at home? I think I still have the marks on my back  
of how he used to say that that was the road to ruin.

Can I assure him, and anyone listening who has not already heard what I have said before,  
440 that the Government is designing measures that will have the effect of protecting these  
industries, the catering establishments in Gibraltar and those in the tourism, retail and other  
sectors that require it, but that it may not be the BEAT measures. It may be a different type of  
scheme that covers different areas of concern but which is also designed to protect employment  
and would be in keeping with the position that I think the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has  
445 expressed, not to me privately but publicly, which is that the Opposition had agreed to the BEAT  
scheme until the end of June but not beyond that, and that was the position of the Government  
as well. That is why I am saying that before we are able to announce something here publicly in  
answers to questions which the Opposition is asking publicly, the Government is going to make  
an announcement here maybe, and not here, about what we are going to do, and we are going  
450 to do that publicly so that everyone is aware what it is that we propose.

In the interim, we are taking the advice of CELAC and I hope to also take the advice and views  
of the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Clinton, representing the Official Opposition, to then be  
in a position, if possible, as I have said, to make an announcement about a new stage of  
assistance which may also enjoy cross-party support. But I do not want to be bound, as a result  
455 of invitation to do so in this House today, to commit myself that that should be of a particular  
style for a particular sector in a particular way – although, if the hon. Gentleman wishes me to  
be even clearer, I can see the connections and I can see where it is all coming from.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Obviously his back ended up being less unscathed than I had hoped when  
460 I used to lash out at him in relation to the Future Job Strategy.

I just have one question, because I understand that of course these are matters that are in  
active consideration and he will be in possession of the same representations that certainly we  
have received on this side. I read an article in *Europa Sur*. It is an article in Spanish. It related to a  
meeting that occurred in Brussels – I think it was in Brussels – at which the Attorney General  
465 Michael Llamas and Daniel D'Amato of the Brussels office were present. It was in relation to  
Brexit. In that article there was a paragraph that took my eye and it said this – Mr Speaker, I am  
going to read it in Spanish because the article is in Spanish:

además han intercambiado puntos de vista sobre la obligación de mantener los derechos laborales de todo tipo  
de trabajadores fronterizos y han abordado la situación de reembolsos ...

– this is the point –

... reembolsos pendientes de las cantidades adelantadas por España para el pago de las prestaciones por  
desempleo.

That appears to indicate that there is some kind of arrangement for reimbursing the Spanish  
470 side for unemployment benefit that has been paid out by the Spanish state in relation to  
workers in Gibraltar. I see that the hon. Gentleman is shaking his head. I read the article and I  
just ask that the hon. Gentleman kindly clarify whether there is any substance to this or indeed  
whether they have got the wrong end of the stick in what they have said in this article.

475 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I know that he likes to be flash, but a lash is a lash, however rash, but in this case it will not produce cash, whoever's hopes we may dash.

480 Additionally, I should tell him that what he read in *Europa Sur* has absolutely nothing to do with BEAT or anything like that. What he read in *Europa Sur* is about the work that the specialised committee is doing in relation to unemployment benefit, which historically, since Spain joined the EU, where a frontier worker qualifies for it having been made redundant in Gibraltar, that frontier worker claims for in Spain and then Spain – or indeed any other member state if you have an individual who is of different nationality or moves to another state as a result of redundancy or unemployment – can claim in the home member state and there is an adjustment done, a set-off done, in respect of the place of work, and that is done one year in arrears. Part of the Withdrawal Agreement provides for the United Kingdom to have those adjustments vis-à-vis the other 27 member states. In relation to Gibraltar it has only ever been relevant in relation to Spain, and we continue to ensure that that calculation is done whilst the application of European rules provides for it.

490 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So, effectively what he is saying is this is historical and none of these payments actually relate to any of the employees that have been the subject matter of any kind of COVID BEAT measure or furlough.

495 This is why I was slightly concerned about this, because of course the majority of the employees that have had the benefit of these measures are Spanish employees and I thought, 'Well, where could there be a payment from Gibraltar to Spain in relation to these workers when they are effectively the beneficiaries of measures here in Gibraltar?' But what he is saying is that these are historic, probably 2019, perhaps even 2018, rather than this year.

500 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is very unusual that supplementaries should be the hon. Gentleman rewording that which I have said, but that is what I have said. BEAT is not a *prestacion de desempleo* – payment in relation to unemployment, which is what he read to us from his article – and therefore one is completely unrelated to the other.

505 But I have just given that answer. He gets up, he paraphrases me and he asks me to confirm it: I confirm it.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q297/2020

#### UK 14-day quarantine rule – Exemption for Gibraltar-resident British citizens

**Clerk:** Question 297, the Hon. K Azopardi.

510 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister update the House on his discussions with the UK government as to the proposed – well, no longer proposed – 14-day quarantine rule in respect of air travel into the United Kingdom and whether British citizens resident in Gibraltar will be exempt from such a rule?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, as hon. Members will know, I have written directly to the Prime Minister on this subject. I have also spoken, on two occasions now, directly to the Rt Hon. Wendy Morton MP, who is the Minister for Europe.

520 The Government has made very clear that we do not consider that there can be any scientific  
advice which would justify that it could be reasonable to impose a quarantine on arrivals from  
Gibraltar to the United Kingdom. The rate of transmission, or 'R' rate, is lower in Gibraltar than  
in the United Kingdom. For that reason, the Government has robustly and repeatedly made the  
point that arrivals from Gibraltar should not be subject to quarantine in the United Kingdom; the  
535 argument proposed as justification by the Government of the United Kingdom would, in fact,  
suggest that the opposite should be the case. We would, nonetheless, be very reluctant to  
impose quarantine on arrivals from London.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I note that the hon. Member has written to the Prime Minister  
and spoken to Ministers, but what does the UK say in relation to the points that the hon.  
530 Member is making? Is there an indication that there will be some flexibility going forward and  
some amendment perhaps of the current rules?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not think it is fair for me to relate to this House what  
the United Kingdom may say to us if they have not yet said it publicly, but it is fair for me to tell  
535 the House what I have said to the United Kingdom, although I think it is inescapable that the  
position in respect of this quarantine is now different to what it was. In other words, there are  
now no exceptions for French nationals, for example, which appeared to be the case, or arrivals  
from France, and the position in relation to Gibraltar is the same as in relation to arrivals from  
any other Overseas Territory, from the United States, from Spain, France or Denmark.

540 What was very difficult for the Government of Gibraltar to accept was that there should be a  
different position in relation to arrivals from outside the Common Travel Area which the United  
Kingdom already has in place in respect of different nationalities without there being an  
objective reason and without Gibraltar's position being taken into specific consideration, and  
indeed, you could argue, the position of the other Overseas Territories, some of which are  
545 islands and would therefore only have the potential of direct contact with the United Kingdom in  
some instances.

I expect that this process is going to now run its course. Hon. Members will have been  
following, as the Government has also, what has been publicly said about this. This is an issue  
which is very much an issue of debate and difference, even within the Conservative Party in the  
550 United Kingdom, and so we continue to work for Gibraltar to be exempted from the application  
of these rules either from the moment that they start or as soon as possible thereafter. I think  
that the reference now is either to air bridges or air corridors being set up in respect of places  
where the 'R' is lower than in the United Kingdom, and those are the issues that we are  
pursuing.

555 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I would imagine that the Chief Minister will agree with me that  
whatever technical justification there is, there is a wafer-thin justification in relation to Ireland  
and the Channel Islands, given that there have been COVID fatalities in those jurisdictions. That  
is not the case here.

560 Can the Chief Minister indicate to the House what kind of timeframe he would hope for so  
that there is some degree of maturity and reflection in the United Kingdom on these matters in  
respect of Gibraltar at least, given that one would hope that by September Gibraltar students  
will return to university, so that they are not subjected to a quarantine – or at least could there  
be an exception made for Gibraltar students returning to the United Kingdom?

565 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not agree that there would be a wafer-thin excuse or  
reason. I think it would be paper thin, transparent paper thin, the sort of paper that would  
dissolve at the first sign of rain. *(Interjection)* No, Mr Speaker, a wafer is thicker than paper, and  
usually tastier. Do not get me going on the poetry again!



570 The justification advanced, not to the Government of Gibraltar but generally to the world,  
about arrivals from Ireland and the Channel Islands is that those are already the domestic travel  
area. Ireland has the benefit of the Common Travel Area confirmed in the Good Friday  
575 Agreement, the importance of which nobody will dispute, and the others – I mean the Channel  
Islands and the Isle of Man – are like Orkney, domestic arrivals, almost like coming from Catalan  
Bay into Gibraltar, so I accept that that is a legal construct which already allows for passport-free  
travel, all of which is handled through different airports and entry points.

My own view is that this matter will be not even a bad dream by September – in other words  
that by then the quarantine will have disappeared completely. The points that the Government  
of Gibraltar have made are a little more extensive than the point that the Hon. the Leader of the  
580 Opposition has made – in other words, not just in relation to students, this great inconvenience  
in respect of students of course, but in particular potential danger for those who have to travel  
for health reasons and their escorts. They are initially exempted. The list of exemptions is a very  
long one. I do not mind saying, as I have said before, that I believe that this policy is not a policy  
which can pray in aid scientific justification and I do not see it lasting through the summer or  
585 indeed even well into the summer. I expect that by September we will have achieved  
exemptions for Gibraltar students at least, or that the policy will no longer apply.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I could interject and just ask for clarification – I  
think I heard the Chief Minister saying that if we did achieve this exemption he would be  
590 reluctant to not have the exemption on the other side. So, for UK nationals coming to Gibraltar  
there would be reciprocity in that they would not need to be quarantined in Gibraltar if they  
were coming from the UK, if we did get the status, and if that were the case would that not  
present certain health risks? Or has Government considered that? Obviously we have not had a  
crisis and fatalities but we know that the UK has had plenty of them, so how would that impact  
595 us if that was achieved?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the position of the Government is as follows. The argument  
proposed as justification by the government of the United Kingdom would in fact suggest that  
the opposite should be the case, namely that science should lead us to impose quarantine on  
600 arrivals from the United Kingdom, not that arrivals into the United Kingdom from Gibraltar  
should be the subject of quarantine. We are nonetheless, as I said already, very reluctant to  
impose quarantine on arrivals from London.

**Q298/2020**  
**BEAT COVID scheme –**  
**Assistance for the self-employed**

**Clerk:** Question 298. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

605 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Self-employed people applying for BEAT economic support can  
only receive help if their business is completely locked down. This is not the reality of most small  
self-employed outfits, who have seen their income reduced massively but have to maintain a  
degree of customer loyalty to survive. Should the BEAT regime not contemplate this reality?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the BEAT scheme is intended to assist  
businesses whilst they are unable to operate due to the restrictions we implemented in  
response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

615 A self-employed person either carries on their business or they do not; there is no middle ground. The decision to recommence their business, once the restrictions that would have otherwise prevented them from doing so have been relaxed, is a decision for them to make.

We introduced a new 'partly active' status for employees for BEAT applications for the month of May. We did so in order to start weaning businesses off BEAT and to encourage employers to recommence operations in sync with our gradual unlocking. This new status has allowed employers to rotate staff on a 50% basis and still retain the benefit of BEAT by sharing the payroll burden with Government. It is a feature that has been well received across the board.

620 We did contemplate extending this status to self-employed people but decided against it. As a self-employed person ultimately determines when they return to work once they are able to do so, they would only be able to claim on a 'fully inactive' basis. If their application is successful, they would then receive 100% of the Self-Employed BEAT COVID-19 Payment.

625 Unlike employees, a self-employed person is not provided with work by an employer, nor are they tasked by an employer not to attend a workplace; they determine when they return to work.

## BUSINESS, TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

### Q269/2020

#### Cycling on the public highway – Parents accompanied by children

630 **Clerk:** We now move to questions to the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport. We commence with Question 269 and the questioner is the Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm what age it recommends parents and guardians to accompany their children on the public highway whilst cycling?

635 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, Government fully trusts the judgement of sensible and responsible parents to look after their children and judge when it is sensible to accompany them on the public highway or if at all allow them on the public highway whilst cycling. Obviously this is precisely why the Government wishes to deliver safe segregated cycle lanes.

640 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, insofar as the age is concerned, of course the Minister will be aware that in the United Kingdom there is no age limit and although the decision is placed with parents and guardians in respect of those children it is still recommended that, insofar as the public highway and busy roads, those children should avoid highways of that nature.

650 Insofar as any scheme that may well be put forward in the future, is the Government currently considering further education programmes insofar as cycling? We all know that there are cycling proficiency programmes available, and the Police do, of course, an excellent job in providing that, but given the numbers of people who will now take to our roads on bikes – including, of course, the Chief Minister himself publicly showing photographs of himself cycling around our great Rock – will the Minister confirm whether any further programmes will be rolled out to increase awareness of health and safety while cycling?

655 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I am currently looking at some programmes of that sort.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful for the answer. Could he expand on those types of programmes?

660 **Hon. V Daryanani:** I have been busy dealing with other things at the moment, as I am sure you will be aware, but we will be in a position very soon, perhaps in the next few weeks, to give you more information on that. In detail.

**Q270/2020**

**Cycling on the public highway –  
Legislation re compulsory use of helmets**

**Clerk:** Question 270, the Hon. E J Phillips.

665 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state that it will introduce legislation for the compulsory use of helmets by cyclists on the public highway?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

670 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, not at this point, but it is something we will consider and consult on going forward.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, the reason why I raise this question is because of course in other countries, and particularly those that are closely aligned to ours, such as the United Kingdom, there is no legal requirement for the use of helmets. I know that there is great public debate as to the efficacy of helmets, but it is of course recommended that children should wear helmets and recent experience has taught me that, insofar as children are concerned, it is highly recommendable that all children should be wearing helmets while cycling.

675  
680 Does the Minister agree with me that the Government should at least promote the use of helmets whilst children are cycling?

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, different countries have different laws so far as children are concerned. For example, in France 12-year-olds need to... [Inaudible] so there are quite different ideas and I think that we will definitely look at promoting the use of helmets for children.

**Q271/2020**

**Two-stroke motorcycles –  
Banning use**

685 **Clerk:** Question 271, the Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it will now ban the use of two-stroke motorcycles on our roads?

690 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Government is open to looking at all possibilities that can lead to the most polluting class of vehicles being removed from our roads. A number of options are being considered.

695 The Government considers that the Opposition is being rash in proposing we should ban the use of two-stroke motorcycles – which means making illegal the operation of those already owned by members of our community – without at least a consultation, but I trust he will therefore support that we are immediately banning their use, other than by residents of the area, on Line Wall Road on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays.

700

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, it is difficult to understand how the Minister can say we are being rash about the banning of the most polluting type of vehicle on our roads when the Minister has today in fact closed Line Wall Road, whilst we still continue to see huge numbers of motorcycles polluting our streets, *(Banging on desks)* when, in fact, he also encourages Green Gibraltar and promoting that for the welfare of our children and our grandchildren.

705

He has to take seriously the banning of the most polluting types of vehicles on our roads. Many thousands of two-stroke engines in our community pollute our roads and therefore it appears from the answer to this question that there is no joined-up approach to reducing pollution in our community and there is no joint approach insofar as the use of these motorcycles on our roads. Do you agree with that?

710

**Hon. V Daryanani:** No, Mr Speaker, I do not agree with that.

First of all, what the Member opposite has to decide is which one is it: if we do things quickly, without consulting, we get criticised; if we want to consult, we get criticised. What the Member opposite needs to decide is it is not about what suits him to score cheap political points about the environment. If he really cared about the environment he would be backing this Government on closing Line Wall Road.

715

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Hear, hear. *(Banging on desks)*

720

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, the Minister has encouraged this community to be bold about these decisions about closing roads, but to be bold about the main pollutants in our community, which are these two-stroke engines, at least consider bringing legislation or investigate the efficacy of legislation to ban them. But then again he endeavours to persuade this House and members of our community that he is doing the right thing by closing Line Wall Road at this stage without properly considering the impact that this closure will have on the rest of the community.

725

Many of us in this House will clearly agree that our community should be made greener, should be made safer, should be less polluting, but this bold move, as he describes it, to close Line Wall Road is just moving the pollution elsewhere, and clearly the revolt by the members of our community this morning on the closure of Line Wall Road and the difficulties that were incurred shows that the Government has not planned or prepared this policy at all. *(Interjection)*

730

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, Line Wall Road belongs to the Government; the motorbikes belong to the people who own them and we cannot deprive them of using their property. That is for starters.

735

I have said very clearly that we are considering all options. We are going to consult on this, so I do not know what else he can expect.

740

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, Line Wall Road, on which there is a question on the order paper, does not belong to the Government; it belongs to the people of Gibraltar. **(Several Members:** Hear, hear.) *(Banging on desks)* That is a matter on which I am sure there will be plenty of debate, and there is indeed a question later that my hon. colleague is putting.

745 Certainly on this side of the House we are grateful for the indication that the hon. Member has made that there will be consultation on these polluting vehicles – and that, does the Minister agree, is consistent with an environmental policy?

750 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well Mr Speaker, everything that belongs to the people is managed by the Government. The ownership of the people is expressed as the ownership of the Government, as he knows, because at the end of the day the Government has to execute leases for public property, all of which, not just Line Wall Road, in the view of *this* Government, belongs to the people and must be managed in the best interests of the people – not just Line Wall Road but, for example, the area where we now have the magnificent Commonwealth Park, which hon. Members used to be against. All of these areas are of the people and we manage them for the people, but the bikes belong to the people individually who have them registered in their name.

755 And so there is a great difference, as the hon. Gentleman knows and appreciates, between making a corporate decision on behalf of Gibraltar for the benefit of the people, and quite another to make a decision that affects an individual's right to use their property – which may nonetheless have to come, but it will have to come with more warning than a decision, which might be agreeable and agreed to by most people, indeed by some people who might be expressing a different corporate view, but is a decision which is in the interests of the community.

760 I agree that we should ban two-stroke engines as soon as possible and I agree that we should do it because that assists us with sustainability and dealing with the climate change emergency, but where there are issues of private property the considerations have to be different and the process has to be different. That is the point that the Hon. Minister is making and it is one that I am sure that both the Leader of the Opposition and the questioner, who is a lawyer, appreciate.

770 The issue, Mr Speake is what you cannot do is run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. You cannot say on one day that four weeks' notice of closing Line Wall Road is too rash, and then say tomorrow ban the use of two-stroke motorbikes. That is the process through which hon. Members need to go. They have to understand what it is that they are saying in the questions that they put. The question, to be fair to the hon. Gentleman, does not say 'tomorrow'. It is more immediate even than that – it says 'now': can the Government state whether it will *now* ban the use of two-stroke motorcycles on our roads? And we have said yes, but not now. We have to consult. We have to give people the opportunity to deal with these issues which may be their modes of transport etc. That is the issue.

775 It seems to me as if we might actually potentially be in agreement, not just in relation to motorbikes but perhaps even in relation to some other, more criticised measures that are going to, in my view, be very popular very soon.

780 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I know the Chief Minister today is trying to show his linguistic ability with his poetry and so on, but surely the Chief Minister must agree with me that he is being slightly facetious when the hon. Member asking a question about 'now' ... A good friend of mine once told me that 'soon' is a period of 10 years in the Vatican. The hon. Member is not suggesting that 'now' means in a minute's time if the hon. Member were to rise to his feet suddenly someone from the law draughtsmen office would pluck out a Gazette and gazette it within 30 seconds. What he was asking for was an expression of intent of the Government that could cater for all he has already indicated, which is consultation about proprietary rights and so on, so if the Government has a statement of intent of banning these motorcycles, it can do so in accordance with the possible public consultation exercise as an objective of intent that may or may not happen within a period of time. That is what the hon. Member was asking and I think the Hon. Chief Minister knows perfectly well, despite his dissecting of every single word on the order paper.

795 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do believe that the hon. Gentleman has therefore welcomed what we have said, because that which he said – in fact, that which he has translated as the meaning of what the Hon. Mr Phillips meant – is exactly what the Hon. Minister said, so I think that conviviality is breaking out again but it is not appreciable at first blush, although I must say that there is a serious difference between us.

800 What obviously in the Vatican is the meaning of 'soon', which is in decades, is completely different in a GSLP Liberal Government. When we say 'now', we mean now. And God knows what we mean when we say 'shortly', but certainly when we say 'now' we mean now. 'Now' means in the moment, and 'in the moment' means to require the Minister to give a positive answer to the question as drafted, without seeking to dissect anything but just simply assuming that a member of the legal profession uses words in the context of either their ordinary meaning  
805 in the language or their legal meaning. 'Now', other than in Latin and in Rome in the way that the hon. Gentleman has suggested, is only capable of one interpretation, which we are not prepared to give it in the context of giving a positive answer, but in the context of what he said was meant, we have already, I think, agreed.

810 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I can just interject here, I just wanted to ask Government, given that they are so environmentally friendly these days – I am very happy to see – if they are so concerned about the environment, why didn't they put this plan in their manifesto, as did we? (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Hear, hear.) And why did they also implement a policy during COVID to waive duty on vehicles and have now extended it for another month,  
815 only encouraging more pollutants on our road at the same time that they close another road? Is that the care for the environment, Mr Speaker?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker, that is the care for the environment: the care for the environment that led us, like the hon. Members opposite of the party with which she first stood,  
820 the GSD, not to have that measure in our manifesto this time, as they did not last time, as she did not when she stood with them the first time – and indeed for one simple reason, because of the 140 pages we ran out of space. We ran out of space for parks, we ran out of space for the refurbishment of the Northern Defences, we ran out of space for the multiplicity of actions in favour of the protection of the environment which the Hon. the Minister for the Environment –  
825 Mr Environment – brought to this House as a Minister when he first arrived and to our party and to our commitments, including the forward-looking approach to ensuring that our vehicle fleet is as new and as modern as possible, so that old Land Rover Discoveries are replaced with new Land Rover Discoveries that are less polluting as soon as possible, so that every vehicle on our road is as modern as possible and therefore the least polluting in their class, all of which  
830 demonstrates why we were seven months ago, and will be again in 35 months, the best choice for Gibraltar and our little part of the planet.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question, please.

**Q272/2020**

**Retrofit exhausts –**

**Legislation to ban importation and sale**

835 **Clerk:** Question 272, the Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state that it will introduce legislation banning the importation and sale of retrofit exhausts in Gibraltar?

I note that the question does not say 'now'. If it is 'shortly', then I would like to refer to the 'shortly' the Government has made reference to on many occasions.

840

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Government has been considering banning retrofit exhausts for some time in an effective way. We expect to be able to announce progress in coming months.

845

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q273/2020**  
**Parking charges and permits –**  
**Foreign nationals**

**Clerk:** Question 273, the Hon. E J Phillips.

850

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the recent practice of foreign vehicles displaying copies of terms of engagement issued by employers to foreign nationals, to avoid payment of parking charges or to occupy spaces designated for those with permits under the existing zone scheme, has been sanctioned by the Government or any of its agencies?

855

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** No, Mr Speaker. I think it is frankly ridiculous for anyone to believe such a practice would avail them of any advantage when it comes to parking, or indeed for anyone to believe that the Government would sanction such a move. Frankly, I am even a little surprised that the hon. Gentleman might even think it necessary to ask such a question.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, the reason why I ask this question is because – (*Interjection*) Well, the Chief Minister has said I saw it on Facebook. Let's not get into the debate on what the Chief Minister does with Facebook and how he reacts to every single policy decision of the Government, (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Hear, hear.) (Banging on desks) (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*) but insofar as this matter is concerned I have received numerous photographs from concerned members of our community who see foreign vehicles, and indeed other types of vehicles, motorbikes, displaying terms of engagement in order to avoid paying for parking. There is, according to these photographs, clearly no enforcement being done insofar as these offending vehicles are concerned, so in some respect someone must have sanctioned this.

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Today I saw a press release and in fact in the *Chronicle* today the Minister did confirm that we will now return to a period of enforcement in relation to people not paying their dues in relation to parking. Is this what the Minister was referring to? This is a practice going on and I do not understand why he believes that he is surprised by the nature of this question when many people in our committee know that people are using employment contracts to avoid paying for parking. That is simply not fair.

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Will the Minister now confirm that he will investigate this practice and ensure that those who are parking illegally, without paying for parking, should be fined by the appropriate authorities?

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885 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, first of all I just want to clarify that the Government has not sanctioned anything of this sort. Let's make that clear. The only thing that the Government allowed was the use of the new pay and display opposite St Bernard's Hospital when COVID started, to allow for the use of frontline workers, for people who work in the GHA. That is the only thing that the Government has sanctioned.

890 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, on that we can agree. Clearly, where we will require our frontline workers to park during this crisis it is important that they are provided with parking facilities when they are coming in and out of Gibraltar, but this is about something else. There is a prevalence and there is a practice going on. The Minister must have seen these photographs or been shown them by other people, concerned members of our community, but will he condemn those types of practices going on, in the House?

895 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, like I said, nobody from this Government has sanctioned that kind of practice going on. He keeps on insisting, but there is none of that, and anyway, as you know, we are making sure that, if there has been anything that has happened of that sort, it will not happen as from today.

900 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q274/2020**  
**Parking charges –**  
**Application of increase to car parks**

**Clerk:** Question 274, the Hon. E J Phillips.

905 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the 46%-plus increase in parking charges will also apply to all car parks, including those situated at Devil Tower Road, Laguna, Calpe, Arenegos and the site at the old Queensway Club?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

910 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the monthly rental increases have not been applied in the car parks referred to in the hon. Member's question.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, will they be applied in the future to these car parks?

915 **Hon. V Daryanani:** It is something we are considering at the moment.

920 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, if you are rolling out a policy of increasing parking charges within certain areas, by which I assume he means the Midtown car park, why is it that we are staging or at least delaying, or not, or considering the implementation of parking charges in these areas at this moment in time, and where?

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Some of these car parks need repairs, so that is one of the reasons why we are taking it to [inaudible]



925 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Therefore, once these repairs are made and those relevant car parks are improved, it is the Government's intention to increase parking charges to the level of 46%-plus? Is that right?

**Hon. V Daryanani:** I will announce the Government's intentions when I am ready to do so.

930 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am not too sure that is a very helpful answer to the question. Am I correct in thinking the Government is also considering a different range of parking fee for those areas?

935 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Everything is under consideration at the moment, so I cannot give you a firm answer to that.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Clerk:** Question 275, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, could the Minister confirm the rationale for the increase?

945 **Hon. V Daryanani:** The hon. Member is talking about the increase to the ones that –? *(Interjection)* Well, really that has nothing to do with the question that you have asked. But anyway, when you are running a garage there are many issues in garages of this sort. There are repairs, there is maintenance, there is an increase in costs. We have not increased costs in these garages I think since 2016, so it is four years, and that is primarily one of the reasons why we have increased these charges.

950 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q275-78/2020

#### Road closures –

#### Traffic modelling; technical advice received; impact on Queensway; amendment re restrictions

**Clerk:** Question 275, the Hon. E J Phillips.

955 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether or not it obtained or conducted traffic modelling for the recently announced road closures?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

960 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 276 to 278.

**Clerk:** Question 276, the Hon. E J Phillips.

965 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state whether or not it was advised or received recommendations on a technical basis, informally or formally in writing, or otherwise, not to proceed with the recently announced road closures at Europort Avenue, Line Wall Road and Chatham Counterguard?

**Clerk:** Question 277, the Hon. E J Phillips.

970 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government publish any information as to the impact the Line Wall Road closure will have on Queensway?

**Clerk:** Question 278, the Hon. E J Phillips.

975 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government confirm why it changed its view from a total closure of Line Wall Road to a restriction of vehicular traffic from Saturday to Monday?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

980 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member will appreciate, extensive surveys and traffic counts were undertaken when Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar embarked on delivering, with its officials and UK consultants, on the Sustainable Traffic and Transport Parking Plan. Furthermore, and as we have already said publicly, the Government will be trialling these closures and will actively work on further surveys, traffic counts and studies as part of the live consultation so as to assess the workings and functionality of the scheme. Many other cities  
985 worldwide have taken to implement road closures with little to no prior traffic flow monitoring during the COVID pandemic. Here, we do so instead with extensive modelling which we have already published in the STTPP. As with any scheme, and as the hon. Member should care to appreciate, there is no better and effective way to monitor or survey the effectiveness of such a scheme or road closures than to actually roll them out and, in parallel, continue to monitor.

990 The Government has additionally taken advice from its officials based on historical practices and conditions that have existed pre the COVID emergency. Taking account of prevalent conditions and the fact that other measures are being introduced in parallel to these closures, such as the elimination of free parking in the Town area and that we are still uncertain as to the impact of BREXIT on Frontier flows, a live trialling that is monitored and assessed under these  
995 conditions is seen as the best way to consolidate the works of the STTPP and move forward whilst keeping all options on the table. The Government will not hesitate in reviewing measures if the impact, after careful consideration and assessment, is deemed to be negative. We do not believe it will be. The Government, though, is very confident this will prove to be a success and will eventually be embraced by all, as have other more radical pedestrianisation initiatives  
1000 introduced by the Opposition in the past served to show.

The impact on Queensway will no doubt be positive and will need to take account of the impact of other measures being introduced in parallel. These include the removal of free parking in the Town area and the new attitude people may take as we emerge out of lockdown. As such, live trialling in a phased, gradual manner is also seen as the best way to monitor and assess the  
1005 impact on Queensway as all these new variables come into play. This is a new normal we are moving into and cannot be pegged against the past, nor should it be influenced by long-ingrained practices that were regarded as the norm pre the COVID emergency.

The Government has not changed its view on Line Wall Road. Others may have; we have not. The Government sees value in introducing a gradual and phased change that will allow everyone  
1010 to better appreciate the benefits of these closures. Changing hearts and minds is not a sprint but a marathon, and Gibraltar will be a better place at the end of this. We are moving to a closure of Line Wall Road as we announced, and we are doing so gradually.

1015 My final words are that we should all take the sacrifices made during the COVID emergency and embrace them as a catalyst for change and to accelerate our progress towards a green and child-friendly Gibraltar: less pollution, less traffic, less selfishness and a better Gibraltar for all.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I do not know where the Hon. Minister was this morning when most of us were horrified by the chaos that ensued by the closure this morning, but in any event ...

1020 The Minister talks about the value of a gradual closure, but the closure itself was announced as a total closure of Line Wall Road at the time. What happened thereafter was that there was much disquiet within our community as to the total closure of Line Wall Road and the Minister rode back on that and declared a Saturday to Monday restriction of traffic. So, it moved from a closure of Line Wall Road to one of a traffic restriction.

1025 Can the Government confirm – and that was the nature of Question 278 – what changed their view as to a total closure, to a restricted Saturday to Monday policy?

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the Government did not change its mind; it is just a question of process.

1030 The hon. Member says that there has been ‘uproar’, or whatever word he used, but I saw a survey this morning where 50% are actually happy with the closure of Line Wall Road – 50% are not and 50% are, so it is very divided. More importantly, people have not seen our final plans for Line Wall Road, and when they do see our final plans for Line Wall Road they will realise that this is the best thing for our future and for our children.

1035 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am not too sure which public survey he is talking about or whether it was conducted by an official source. (**Hon. V Daryanani:** Your Say.) Well, perhaps if the Minister could share the link with me – I am quite happy to look at it myself.

1040 Insofar as the Minister’s plans are concerned, is he able to share those widely with us and the public in general? It may actually reassure members of the public that the Government are planning this properly.

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Of course, Mr Speaker, we will share those plans with the public and with the Opposition. The Chief Minister announced last week that we are in the middle of these plans and we will be announcing them within the next few weeks.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I did ask in my question whether the Government had received any advice or recommendations on a technical basis, and I do not believe he answered that question at all. What I am trying to get from the Minister is whether he received any contrary advice to the road closures.

**Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, we have carried out a comprehensive consultation exercise with the STTPP, so that is the advice that we have taken on board when we have done this.

1055 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, we all understand that the STTPP is –

**Hon. V Daryanani:** One of the other points that we have made and we have been quite clear with is that having closed roads now we will continue carrying out the consultation exercise, which will be live. We will see what happens.

1060 Let me say I have been in Line Wall Road on three occasions, actually for three hours – an hour on, an hour off – this morning, and I have seen how there are practically no cars going through Line Wall Road; it is better, it is cleaner – (*Interjection*) yes, of course it is closed – so I do not know what you mean by ‘chaos’. There is absolutely no chaos. What there has been is chaos in the past when the road has been open.

1065 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I think the Minister has answered his own question. What I did ask him though was whether he had received any information we have had. The Minister kindly invited me to a meeting, where he introduced me to many of the experts who are giving him technical advice on the closure of the roads, and what I would ask him is if any of those technical experts who were advising him advised him against the closure of the road in this way. That is what I am asking him, nothing to do with the STTPP. Those individuals who are advising the Government,

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advising the Minister on the road closures ... whether anyone indeed recommended the Minister not to proceed with the closure.

1075 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Nobody has advised me not to do it, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I perhaps would invite him to go to Queensway this morning – which was chock-a-block, as far as I understand from many sources, moving traffic in another direction. What measures will he be putting in place to reduce the overall traffic moving along that artery? *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister and laughter)* The Chief Minister thinks he is going to close Queensway as well, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. V Daryanani:** I have been through Queensway. I have not seen what the hon. Member is describing, so I do not know which Queensway the Member opposite has been on.

**Q279/2020**  
**Cirque du Soleil –**  
**Planned visit to Gibraltar**

1085 **Clerk:** Question 279, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism state whether the Government intends to proceed with its plans to bring the Cirque du Soleil to Gibraltar?

1090 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Yes, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Minister is being really short in his replies today, I must say! *(Interjection)* Yes, true, sometimes that is good.

Can the Minister state when he expects this event to come to Gibraltar? I think on the last occasion when I asked this, in December, the answer was ‘we have a date in mind but we will announce it when we are ready to announce it’. Can he give us some indication as to when he ...? Is that still the position?

1100 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the world is in the middle of a pandemic. Businesses like Cirque du Soleil have no idea when they will start operating again. The Government hopes to continue conversations with Cirque when they are ready and when they have a better idea of their intentions. I am told that gatherings of this sort – we are talking about 800 to 1,000 people – will be very difficult in the short term, so we will have to wait.

I am pleased to see that the Member opposite is very keen on Cirque du Soleil coming to Gibraltar, as he is always asking me this question. No doubt he will ask me again and hopefully I will be in a position to give him an appropriate update at the time.

1110 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has given the answer from the perspective of the Cirque du Soleil – or the Cirque, as I think he abbreviated it to; I do not know if that is a common abbreviation but no doubt the Chief Minister will tell us, given his linguistic arrays today – but can I ask, from the Government’s perspective, has the Government’s thinking on bringing the Cirque du Soleil to Gibraltar not been affected by the COVID pandemic, and whether it is appropriate to do so in the short term, in the medium term, or at all, given the state of the tourism market now and in the foreseeable future?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, *merci* for his further allusions to my linguistic ability, although I have no doubt he is not doing it out of an intent to flatter me. (*Interjection*) I see, so it is not even ability. I see that he considers my flourishes to be something else.

1120 Mr Speaker, I think that the Minister's answer is designed in exactly the same way as his question is designed, to show that this is not a show that can go on now in the timescale that we envisaged. Cirque – which is the well-known abbreviation of their name around the world – will likely not be opening new shows unless the place where they are going to open them can provide for social distancing in the short term. There may be shows that are already committed to; here, we were still in the negotiations, so we are in time to ensure that the arrival of Cirque  
1125 on our shores delivers both the stimulus that we need in respect of our tourist industry but does so safely and in keeping with public health advice, which is what we are going to try and ensure we do.

1130 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q280/2020**  
**Tourism strategy –**  
**Update**

**Clerk:** Question 280, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism provide an update to this House of the Government's tourism strategy?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, my first strategy document in light of the COVID-19 crisis was put together internally in April and has evolved since.

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Business in this sector has effectively halted since lock-down. The UK staying visitor economy has ground to a halt, excepting essential workers. Market conditions have changed significantly and global consumer confidence has collapsed.

Destinations and the travel industry continue to monitor the crisis to be ready to plan for improved market conditions. The World Tourism and Travel Council predicts that recovery will be slow unless global jurisdictions work together, bringing parity to the protection measures they put in place, and yet currently every jurisdiction works autonomously.

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To compete in the busy, challenging and competitive global marketplace we will need to reinvigorate confidence in Gibraltar as a safe place, raise destination awareness and be ready to react to an anticipated high level of demand of late bookings with short lead times for UK travellers keen to get away when they are told they may do so safely.

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Gibraltar's swift reaction to the crisis has kept its population safe and Government economic packages have kept us stable. We will develop that as part of our strategy. Our strong business infrastructure across various sectors will enable Gibraltar to rebuild its economy quickly if clear social distancing measures are implemented and reported.

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European jurisdictions remain essentially closed to international visitors, for now. The global travel industry is regrouping to prepare a workable format for a staggered return of visitors into jurisdictions guided by government-led safe social distancing criteria. It is too early to confirm when overseas travel will resume; however, research polls indicate that UK booking demand for 2021 is increasing. As destinations look to stimulate recovery by encouraging consumers to move locally, regionally, nationally and then internationally, Gibraltar's British brand credentials

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will work well to feed a 'safe home from home' narrative, which may encourage UK visitors to return at the earliest stage.

1165 Delay may work to our advantage. This is not just a need to restart the sector but an opportunity to build it back better. As we move through recovery, questions will need to be asked about longer-term planning and what the visitor face of Gibraltar should look like, and what is more valuable: volume of traffic or higher yield? The future face of Gibraltar's tourism product must in all events be sustainable. We may need to look to technologies to help us achieve this.

1170 Gibraltar's relationships within the travel industry are strong and consumer awareness was at an all-time high level pre-crisis. However, we must expect competition to be fierce and spending power by consumers may be reduced due to long-term effects of a hard recession. In addition, Gibraltar's core audience type was typically aged over 55, and this segment of the community remains the most at risk from COVID-19 and therefore may be the least willing to move from  
1175 jurisdiction to jurisdiction until long-term solutions such as a vaccine are in place.

We face other issues too in the sale chain; not all distribution operators in the UK may survive the crisis and will cherry pick their most lucrative destinations.

1180 Challenges remain, such as how airlift has dramatically reduced and remains unquantifiable in terms of return services after the crisis. Recovery strategies and restart dates by the airlines servicing us have faltered due to lack of clarity from jurisdictions over the length of time quarantine measures for arrivals remain in place. Social distancing measures on board aircraft make operations financially unviable, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) ongoing guidance, which advises UK residents to avoid all but essential overseas travel, sends the message 'stay at home'. I should further explain that while the FCO guidance remains in place,  
1185 any travel taken will be done without cover of insurance.

The cruise industry remains halted and is unlikely to restart for several months while it reassesses its marketplace and operational procedures.

The daily flow of visitors across the Frontier, excepting essential workers and residents, remains limited.

1190 So, what actions must be taken? The Gibraltar Tourist Board has continued to keep all lines of communication open with all its trade partners, overseas and Gibraltar based, with frequent updating. The Tourist Board remains operational remotely, continuing to regularly communicate with UK homeworking travel agents and the travel agency network through its online travel training portal [www.gibraltartraining.com](http://www.gibraltartraining.com) and the host provider OTT, through which the  
1195 Gibraltar Tourist Board is able to release updates about Gibraltar's current position.

The Gibraltar Tourist Board takes part constantly in industry forums for weekly crisis updates on how the UK and wider industry are reacting, including those I mentioned in my press release recently, such as the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports, of which we are board members; the Association of National Tourist Offices and Representatives, which Gibraltar chairs; the Association of British Travel Agents and Operators; the Association of Independent  
1200 Tour Operators; and the Association of European Tour operators.

We have participated in webinars through MedCruise with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in a session moderated by the Chief Executive of the GTB in his capacity as a board member of MedCruise, and in a webinar organised by the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment  
1205 Council entitled 'Commonwealth Tourism During the COVID-19 Lockdown: Immediate Responses and Future Opportunities'.

We have already engaged with operators as to assessing loss of business, 1st March to 31st December 2020; quantifying how much business has transferred to 2021; establishing what capacity has been lost, airlift/accommodation; establishing which events/exhibitions the GTB was due to attend in 2020 will still run and which will shift to 2021; and re-engaging lines of  
1210 communication with our consumer database.

When developing an immediate and short-term strategy it is important to recognise that we are currently in crisis management mode and all strategies are subject to change due to the

1215 environment that we are in. It is also fair to say that the strategy at this point will be divided into three: air arrivals from the UK, visitors across the Frontier from Spain, and cruise visits. I will discuss these strategies separately.

1220 On the UK market recovery, it is also important to recognise that our short-term recovery strategy across all markets is centred on providing cohesive guidance for all sectors of the tourism community to implement social distancing requirements as recommended by the health authorities. Only then will we be in a sound position to start welcoming back visitor footfall. We are also ensuring that Public Health guidelines are adopted by all sectors of the tourism mix in Gibraltar, adhering to a consistent level of standard in hygiene and health protocols in the workplace.

1225 In the short term we have guaranteed continued airlift through BA. We continue to be in contact with our airlines about a potential return to the marketplace. Currently, easyJet will not be resuming its air operations until July at the earliest and we are not yet in a position to comment on where Gibraltar services will fall in its network operation once services resume. BA is currently operating four return flights per week from Heathrow.

1230 We continue to speak with existing tour operator partners in the UK to establish a timeline of when our UK customers will be ready to visit Gibraltar. This area still remains grey; however, there is a healthy stimulus of bookings emerging for 2021. We have also outlined with the local industry, in virtual meetings that I have hosted, how potentially trade suppliers could work together to promote a unique and competitive Gibraltar package for 2021 that would include accommodation, attractions and dining out. These discussions are in the early stages. We are working with consumer data to look at potential trends that are emerging in the marketplace which may impact on the way we promote the destination. This could be new demographics of society or those with niche markets, such as birdlife, wildlife, flora and history.

1235 As part of our efforts with the UK travel sector we are running online educational webinars such as one held last week with members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators. The presentation was given by Nicky Guerrero, Chief Executive of the GTB, along with the GTB's team in London, describing key aspects of Gibraltar's product offering for visitors. Also participating in this initial seminar were Prof. Clive Finlayson and Dr Geraldine Finlayson of the Gibraltar National Museum, and Monkey Talk's Brian Gomila. This activity will continue and will include other industry partners.

1240 On 8th June, the GTB will attend its first virtual exhibition hosted by the Association of National Tourist Offices and Representatives. Twenty-five destinations have signed up, with invitations sent out to over 3,000 travel agents and tour operators who will be invited to the event, which takes place over an afternoon and where participants can speak to exhibitors in online chatrooms and see presentations.

1250 We will shortly launch a virtual destination platform to showcase Gibraltar's attractions in a 360° format and a docuseries where Gibraltar experts are able to talk about the services they promote, such as, for example, the macaques and at the Garrison Library.

1255 These virtual assets are easily marketed through online tools and social media and will be used to drive viewers to sign up for regular newsletters, which in time will be able to promote specific offers to Gibraltar. This activity will kick start a new advertising drive in the UK which will include online advertising, advertorials, online native videos, radio, television, advertising on the sides of buses and a taxi campaign.

1260 While the destination looks to re-establish its international events programme, small-scale events would be launched live on social media. We will have to wait and see how matters progress, but it may be that this year's Literary Festival will be a virtual event. These types of events offer great potential to increase social media reach and thereby increasing our consumer following for updated travel offers.

1265 The GTB was, at the start of this year, committed to attend a number of exhibitions in the UK across different sectors. Some of these are transferred to 2021 and some will continue in an online format. Those remaining in place for this year currently include the Meetings Show, which

is hoping to still go ahead at Olympia, London, in October. The World Travel Market, scheduled to be held in November, is still to advise if the show will continue in an online format. The BirdFair will not take place this year, but GTB hopes to offer online footage of migration to its community of followers in this field.

1270 On the Spanish market, while air services re-establish themselves in the immediate future we will need to look to visitors across the border to stimulate the hospitality sector in Gibraltar to give footfall to our Main Street traders, our restaurateurs and indeed our hotels. To this end, we are in the process of putting together a marketing campaign in Spain to position Gibraltar for the nearby regional market.

1275 The cruise market continues to be at a standstill and there is little indication of when calls will resume and whether the nature of the calls will be different in terms of passenger numbers and handling. As I have said, through MedCruise we continue to monitor the situation and will be ready to receive calls once they resume. We have, however, in the meantime been very successful in attracting cruise ships to use Gibraltar as a service point during the crisis and for crew repatriation movements.

1280 In summary, recovery is largely dictated at this stage by a combination of Government controls across Europe, which have direct impact on the restart of air, rail and sea operations. This is valuable time to get our services ready to promote and push out to our audiences. Our sector has halted but our activities and efforts have not. We will continue to work with all our industry partners to get Gibraltar moving again as quickly as is safe and physically possible.

1285 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, too long – much too long! No, I don't like that, but something in between.

Mr Speaker, just a few supplementaries. I do thank the Minister, seriously, for that very lengthy reply and something which obviously one will need to study in greater detail, but I will just ask specific questions.

1290 He talks about the Frontier. Obviously that is a very important aspect of his strategy and Frontier flow is crucial in that regard. There was an article in the *Chronicle* recently which talked about that issue. It was under the title 'Spain wants common EU rules and cross-border movement as pandemic lockdowns ease'. This was on 28th May. There is a particular paragraph which reads:

The Gibraltar Government has previously stated that it is discussing border flow with the Spanish Government, but there has been no announcement as yet as to what arrangements will be put in place.

Can he, or perhaps the Chief Minister, give an indication as to where we are in relation to that issue?

1300 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I think I answered that question during the course of a press conference this morning, not here.

1305 The position in relation to flow across the Frontier is one related more to the relative freedom of movement that exists today in Spain. Spain has moved on from the initial state of alarm declared but is still under a state of alarm. People in the Spanish nation cannot move between provinces at this stage. Full unlock between provinces is expected, I think, on 21st June in Spain, according to the latest news this morning, and so there are still restrictions on some movement in Spain. We expect that we will see the freedom to be able to go into Spain released very soon indeed, but it is not possible to give an exact date at the moment.

1310 The flow in return to Gibraltar is, at the moment, not subject to any restriction because we have never restricted the Frontier. We have had rules in place as to movement in Gibraltar and the Frontier was one of the choke points where that movement could be verified to be in keeping with the rules that we had in place. So, in the same way as there might be law enforcement officials of, either the RGP, the GDP or Customs – all of whom did an excellent job –



1315 at different roundabouts in Gibraltar, the Frontier was obviously one of those places where you  
could check that people were coming into Gibraltar to do one of the things that was permitted  
by Gibraltar law.

I hope that helps the hon. Gentleman to understand what it is that the position is.

1320 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, in relation to EasyJet, again the airline industry is crucially  
important. It has been the subject of news in the UK press in relation to the 14-day quarantine. I  
think the Chief Minister made allusions to it in terms of the fact that it has been raised as an  
issue amongst Tory MPs, but it has also been raised as an issue and representations are being  
made to the UK government by the airline industry.

1325 But specifically in relation to easyJet, I think he mentioned that he is hopeful that easyJet will  
start flying to Gibraltar in July. How confident is he that that is going to happen? And what can  
he say to the fact that again there was a press report recently which referred to the  
announcement by easyJet of its opening up to a whole list of destinations? I have got the press  
article here. Granted they are all UK cities and they will be starting from 15th June. It talked  
1330 about Gatwick, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and  
Belfast, yet nothing in relation to Gibraltar. So what does he have to say in relation to that and  
how confident is he that easyJet will start flying to Gibraltar in July?

1335 **Hon. V Daryanani:** They will be flying to the domestic market ... before the UK government  
announced the quarantine measures. That is the reason why they announced that they would  
only start operations within the domestic market, because they were not sure what was going to  
happen with the quarantine measures. After the quarantine measures were announced, they  
announced that they would be making 30% of their staff redundant – that is approximately  
4,000 people they were making redundant – and, after that, we have not heard anything from  
1340 them because easyJet have not got a clue what they are going to do at the moment. They do not  
know when they can start, because of the quarantine measures. They do not know what routes  
they can start. They are reducing their fleet. They are not taking delivery of all the new aircraft  
that were supposed to come in next year. So, really, at this moment we have not got confidence  
of when they are going to start because I think they themselves do not know when they are  
going to start.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** But why, in that context – I am grateful for the reply – did the Minister say  
that he was expecting the route to Gibraltar to start in July? Unless I have got him wrong ... If I  
have got him wrong, I would be grateful for the clarification, but I did think that he said that he  
was confident that the flights would start to Gibraltar, from easyJet, in July.

1350

1355 **Hon. V Daryanani:** EasyJet had said that they were looking at starting certain routes out of  
the UK, but I think their international routes have now been put on hold because they are not  
sure, due to the quarantine measures. Until that is clear, they will not be in a position to see  
whether they will be starting in July or whether they will be starting in August, because they are  
not starting any international routes whatsoever.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Should the Minister therefore retract his statement in relation to the  
possible July start date for easyJet flights to Gibraltar, at least for the sake of the record?

1360 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, only, Mr Speaker, if the practice now is going to be that the  
Minister needs to retract things that he says in good faith on the basis of the facts as they are at  
the time; something happens in the interim which is unexpected, it changes the position – and  
everyone is alive to that – and the hon. Gentleman expects us to then go back, check what we  
have said and retract everything.

1365 The position on the quarantine, I think it is fair to say, surprised everyone. It surprised President Emmanuel Macron so much that he picked up the phone and had a row with the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

1370 So, those things which we said might happen before the quarantine was announced, of the United Kingdom, we can no longer take the view will happen in the timescale that we believed. I do not understand why it is that the hon. Gentleman thinks he needs to press in order to try and win a retraction on something as key as this. We are talking about air routes into Gibraltar. We all want them to be established as soon as possible. We are working with all our industry partners to achieve that. Would that we might be able to achieve it in July – and, if we do, is the Minister required to come here and re-retract his statement? What is the hon. Gentleman trying to achieve? I think that actually we all want the same thing. We all want to see the resumption of as much air into Gibraltar as soon as possible, in the interests of our business community and in the interests of our tourism sector.

1380 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Only, Mr Speaker, because one would have thought that every Member here, when they are giving replies, should answer accurately. That is it. I do not want to put the Minister in a difficult position, and if he thinks that the reply he gave to me in answer to my question is inaccurate, because of the things he has then gone on to say in relation to the big question mark that there is as to whether easyJet will be flying into Gibraltar, then I just give him the opportunity to readdress the issue.

1385 I may have heard him wrongly, but he is not clarifying the issue for me. I think the Speaker says I may have heard him wrongly – well, then, that is the answer.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, when does the hon. Gentleman say that we said this?

1390 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Today, in the answer.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Today, in the answer? (**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes.) Not in the previous meeting?

1395 **Hon. D J Bossino:** No.

Mr Speaker, just for the sake of *Hansard*, it is in response to the question that I put today; in his answers today.

1400 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman did not say the thing that the Hon. Mr Bossino says he said. The hon. Gentleman said, in the context of his first answer, 'We continue to be in contact with our airline carriers about a potential return to the marketplace. Currently, easyJet will not be resuming its air operations until July at the earliest and we are not yet in a position to comment on whether Gibraltar services will fall in its network operation once services resume.'

1405 That is exactly the position. Why is he inviting us to retract from that? We did not say the thing that he said we said.

**Mr Speaker:** I think the hon. Member, with respect to the hon. Member, he did misunderstand. I think you will agree with that – don't you?

1410 **Hon. D J Bossino:** That is right.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

1415 **Hon. Chief Minister:** So, will he retract what he said we said, Mr Speaker? (*Laughter*)

**Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way.

1420 Insofar as one of the responses the Chief Minister gave in relation to the land Frontier  
freedom of movement, I just wanted to gather from him the nature of the discussions that the  
Chief Minister may be having with Spain. Whilst I appreciate, of course, the state of alarm in  
Spain and that the Chief Minister is not here to advise people on Spanish law and fluidity and  
moving around Spain and now people being allowed to provincially move within Spain, what  
1425 discussions is the Chief Minister having with the Spanish government as to, post 21st June,  
people crossing the border from Gibraltar? I am sure he has heard, as I have heard ... in relation  
to British citizens not being allowed to be permitted tourists into Spain, but I would just be  
interested to hear from him what discussions he is currently having, or the Government is  
having, in relation to the travel from Gibraltar into Spain post 21st June.

1430 We have enjoyed this kind of relationship where our frontier workers are allowed to cross  
the border. Of course, Andorra has also enjoyed that type of relationship, given workers on both  
sides of the border. I just wanted to understand whether those discussions will be fruitful insofar  
as people travelling across the border. That is all.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the discussions are ongoing and we hope they will be  
fruitful.

**Q281/2020**  
**Hotel industry –**  
**Government assistance**

1435 **Clerk:** Question 281, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism state what plans the Government has to assist  
the hotel industry in the medium to long term?

1440 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the hotel  
industry, through the Government's BEAT COVID-19 scheme, is already receiving assistance.  
However, I am currently looking at ways in which we can assist further in the medium to long  
1445 term as business recovers.

I have been in constant contact with the hotels during the COVID emergency, providing them  
reassurance and seeking their feedback on how they felt they could be assisted by Her Majesty's  
Government of Gibraltar. We are considering these issues in CELAC and I believe that the Chief  
Minister will be consulting with the Leader of the Opposition on new measures to support and  
1450 stimulate this and other sectors.

**Q282/2020**  
**Reopening of restaurants –**  
**Indications to Government re reservations**

**Clerk:** Question 282, the Hon. K Azopardi.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, how many restaurant owners have told the Government that  
they are full for reservations from 1st June 2020?

1455 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

**Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, my officers have not received any such representations from restaurant owners. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many would be doing a good trade upon reopening.

1460

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I am surprised to hear the Minister say that his officers have not received representations to that effect by restaurant owners. I am really surprised because in the press conference held by the Government on 17th May, during his performance in that press conference he said, 'I am told and I was actually delighted to hear that the restaurants are full of reservations as from 1st June.' So, I am asking him, given that he said that, on what basis he said that.

1465

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Because I told him, Mr Speaker. I have friends who are in the industry who told me that they cannot stop because they are getting so many reservations, but that is not the Government having been told by restaurant owners that they are full for reservations. It is anecdotal evidence. 'Restaurants' means every restaurant in town, and keeping a register of that ... Would that we might interfere with the restaurant owners' civil liberties by keeping a list of how many of them have called us to tell us that they are full. It is simply anecdotal evidence, where the Hon. Minister was reflecting the views I had expressed to him of those who were in touch with me, not on the basis that they were in touch with the Government.

1470

1475

I think that is actually the correct position anecdotally and I do not know why it is that the hon. Gentleman is so concerned, but if I can help him with a reservation in any area that he might be particularly keen to ... If I can assist, he knows that he can count on me.

1480

**Hon. K Azopardi:** From poet to concierge.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** A man for all seasons!

1485

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Indeed you are, and I have said that publicly before.

Mr Speaker, the Minister did not say 'I am told' and 'I was delighted to actually hear that the restaurants owned by friends of the Chief Minister...' He did not say that. He said 'the restaurants', meaning generically the restaurants in Gibraltar gave that representation to the people of Gibraltar who were listening to that press conference.

1490

Can I suggest to the hon. Member, and perhaps he will agree with me, that next time he makes a statement as bold as that he gets the facts right or at least expresses precisely the background on which he is making that statement?

1495

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Mr Speaker, he can, if he likes, but the hon. Member is not here to take his political advice, which I am sure he tenders in good faith in exactly the same way as he says he calls me a man for all seasons, which I am sure he does in good faith and as a matter of praise and nothing else.

But can I give him some advice for nothing also, Mr Speaker? Can he ensure that his party sings from the same hymn sheet as him and that when people ask questions they do not ask us questions on things that he and I have already discussed?

1500

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, it is refreshing to hear the hon. Member opposite ask us questions and I hope in many years to come that will be the practice.

1505 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it was not a question. I told him when I started that I was giving him political advice. It was not a question. I said 'I am giving him political advice' and I expressed it rhetorically.

I think what happens many years from now is not a matter for him, or me; it is a matter for the people of Gibraltar, the same ones who own Line Wall Road.

1510

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE GSB

### Q285-86/2020

#### Public debt –

#### Update re figures; purpose of joint venture with Beijing Liujian Construction Group

**Clerk:** We now move to Question 285. These are questions to the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications and the GSB.

We commence with Question 285 and the questioner is the Hon. R M Clinton.

1515

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government please provide the total Gross Debt, Aggregate Debt after application of the sinking fund to Gross Debt, Cash Reserves and Net Debt figures for Public Debt for the following dates: 1st January 2020, 1st February 2020, 1st March 2020 and 1st April 2020?

1520

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications and the GSB.

**Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications and the GSB (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question with Question 286.

1525

**Clerk:** Question 286, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government advise the purpose of the 50/50 joint venture, i.e. GBIC Limited, entered into by the Gibraltar Development Corporation with Beijing Liujian Construction Group via their respective subsidiaries?

1530

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications and the GSB.

1535

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the Public Debt, General Sinking Fund and Aggregate Debt is as previously stated when the questions were last put in the House.

The Cash and the Net Debt for the months in question are as follows: 1st January, Cash £45.4 million, Net Debt £390.2 million; February, £43 million, £392.6 million; March, £48.3 million, £387.3 million; and April £24.3 million, £411.3 million.

1540

The purpose of the joint venture company in question is to carry out construction work.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I beg your indulgence while I absorb the information the Minister has just advised us of.

1545

Looking at the statistical information on net debt, first of all, may I ask: the Sinking Fund, he says, as on previous occasions, has remained the same. There is, in the Chief Minister's answer ... When he presented the Emergency Budget in March he mentioned there was £15 million in the

1550 General Sinking Fund, whereas previously I have that down as £12.1 million. Can the Minister advise whether the £15 million was in March – as in would be reported the data for 1st April – or when that number would have changed, as the Emergency Budget was held in March?

1555 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Normally, Mr Speaker, as the Member will know from previous years, the balance on the Sinking Fund has increased at the end of March because it has been dependent on the outcome of a year's transactions, but as we have extended the financial year to something longer than 12 months the year now ends in September. So, the calculations that would have been reflected on 1st April will now happen on 1st October, assuming there is no further extension, or would be on 1st April next year if there was a further extension. That is the way it has been done in every financial year. Until the close of the year, the sum that is added to the Sinking Fund is not decided.

1560 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I have to come back to this question because it is an important point, as this number was actually referred to as being part of the Government's reserves in the Emergency Budget, and the number that was given to us was £15 million. Is the Minister telling us that there is not £15 million in the Sinking Fund as yet, but in fact it is £12.1 million?

1570 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** No, Mr Speaker, what I am telling him is that there has been no change in the Sinking Fund from the time I gave the last answer. I have not gone back and checked what the figures were because what I have asked the Treasury to produce for me is the changes that have taken place, and these are the changes that have taken place. There has been no other change. I will check the accuracy of the figures and give it to him today, if I can, or I will let him have it tomorrow.

1575 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I would be grateful if he would because certainly the last number that I have is £12.1 million on the Sinking Fund. I have it all summarised on a spreadsheet, which I am happy to give him a copy of because of course that is a £3 million discrepancy to the last number and it is important because it is a number that was referenced during the Emergency Debate. I would be grateful if he did come back to the House, or to me, on that.

1580 I note that the position on 1st April shows ... and he can correct me if I am wrong, but I think the number he just mentioned was £411 million – is that correct? – which would be the highest net debt figure, as far as I am aware, on record.

1585 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Well, I think the record has already been broken since that date, and it is likely to keep on being broken. We will be setting new records from now on for a very long time, I think, Mr Speaker, on the debt.

1590 It is quite clear, because it is based on the £447.7 million, which has not changed in the last financial year as it was, and therefore obviously from month to month. If we have more cash the net debt goes down, and if we have less cash the net debt goes up. There is no mystery about it.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the Ministers' answer, and obviously, as he has just confirmed, the gross debt has remained the same. So the Government, can he just confirm, has certainly not issued any further debentures in the period that I have been asking for?

1595 While I am on my feet, if I can just ask him in terms of the Beijing Lijian Construction Group? He says it is for construction. Could he advise what construction is being envisaged? Certainly from the very little information I have found on the internet this particular type of construction company does not do residential-type construction, so I would be interested to hear from the

1600 Minister what type of construction is envisaged. And also, again while I am on my feet, if he could advise whether this particular entity is owned by the Chinese state, or not.

1605 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Well, there is not much in China that is not owned by the Chinese state, Mr Speaker – it is a communist country – but the ultimate owner is the municipality of Beijing. But of course you do not have to be a communist state. When I used to live in Birmingham the Municipal Bank was owned by Birmingham municipality, and we own the Savings Bank and the Gibraltar International Bank and we are not a communist state either, so there is nothing peculiar about it.

1610 It is a construction company. The ultimate group in China is the one that has just finished building the new Beijing airport, which has a throughput of 100 million people. It is also responsible for the maintenance of the Forbidden City and is responsible for all the public buildings in the municipality of Beijing. It has an international company in the group. That international company is operating in the United States and is operating in the United Kingdom, and it is the United Kingdom company that has a direct link with us. In the United Kingdom it has been responsible for building something like 500 student accommodation apartments and it is carrying out a £500 million development, which is the Manchester Airport City that was launched when David Cameron was Prime Minister. President Xi came over to launch the project with David Cameron. So, this is a very powerful international global company and it will be concentrating, through their joint venture with us, on the development of the modular construction system, which is a commitment that we have in our manifesto.

1620 The hon. Member may be interested to know that a recent study by one of the highly regarded companies of consultants in the UK, McKinsey & Company, established in 1926, has done an exercise on the transformation of the construction industry that is currently taking place. They calculate that in the next 10 years the market for modular construction will be something of the order of £100 billion in Europe and that the use of construction using modular methods will save the developers something of the order of £22 billion.

1625 We expect to be introducing, in the not-too-distant future, the modular system to deliver one of the first projects, which will be the new senior citizens' residential home in Bishop Caruana Road, at the corner of the plot of the Rooke site which has now been made available for this development. That is what we expect to be happening. It will all be prefabricated and the buildings will come ready to go on site. I expect that that should enable us to produce British standard buildings at a lower cost and at a faster pace than is possible with traditional building methods, and make us less reliant on having to import cross-border workers after we leave the European Union, when we do not know to what extent the fluidity will be there, which could affect the capacity of our construction industry to deliver products.

1635 That is what was intended when we put it in our manifesto. The original idea was to create the production facility ourselves, as part of a joint venture. The virus has made it impossible for me to travel to the places I would have gone, so we are relying on the parent company producing the buildings in China and transporting them here.

1640 I think that gives him the full picture, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, yes, a very interesting, comprehensive answer.

1645 If the Minister can perhaps assist me, this has vague overtones, or reminds me of the components factory. Is that the sort of construction when he talks about 'modular'? The local components factory was used to produce, if I remember correctly, Water Gardens, and those components fitted in like Lego bricks, yes? Is that the sort of construction methodology we are talking about when we talk about 'modular' construction, or has it moved on since then? Are we talking about entire units being fabricated in a slightly different way, or different types of materials? Again, I vaguely recall the components factory needed a fairly big footprint in order to manufacture the various components that went into the building – if he could just confirm that that is the kind of thinking.

1650

And what is the scale of the financial commitment in this joint venture? The last accounts filed show a loss of £704,000 up to December 2018, which I imagine is way out of date, but what is the financial commitment on the side of the Government and the Chinese joint venture partner?

1655

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** In terms of what it will do, I have to say that the system that we introduced in 1989 in Gibraltar, the components factory that was created here, was using Scandinavian technology, which was in fact something that had been developed in Denmark in order to rebuild the devastation caused by the Second World War and they had devised it as a way of very quickly putting buildings up subsequently. But the methodology has expanded a great deal. In fact, the future lies in buildings that will be using artificial intelligence to decide exactly what the customer wants, and the factory will produce it.

1660

Of course, one of the big advantages of factory building of this nature is that you do not have the interruptions that depend on the weather, and the actual erection on site takes a very short time. The company that we are talking to, for example, has delivered, last year, a project for 1,200 students, for Newcastle University, for £75 million I think, in the UK. So, these are people who are already working in the United Kingdom and bringing the stuff from China.

1665

The report that I mentioned by McKinsey has identified that the methodology that is seen as the future of this industry is supposed to be more eco-friendly. It uses materials that can be recycled. It is cost effective. The savings that are expected in the industry are something of the order of 20%, compared to a traditional building. It has a lower construction time, which I have already mentioned. It is, in fact, more environmentally friendly. For example, there will be far less concrete and far less money involved in putting in foundations, and the use of concrete is something that carries a high price in terms of environmental effects.

1670

The difference between the methodology of the previous one and this one is that in the factory everything is done. That is to say the kitchen is built in, the bathrooms and the toilets are built in, the insulation is built in and the double glazing is built in, so that every single element in the building is done and therefore you just build a structure. Wherever you are going to do it, it requires less money in foundations because it is taking less weight.

1675

Clearly, from our perspective this will be a new thing in Gibraltar, but it is not something that is not being done and tried and tested elsewhere. The people we are doing this with are fully committed to the joint venture with the Government and therefore we have not put a limit on what investment is required; but, for example, the particular building in question, which will be the first one, is a building that will be privately owned when it is finished. The company will be building that and then we will be recovering it and we will be reinvesting the money. From there we will see what other work we do, but clearly the result of that first building is going to determine the success or otherwise of the product in the Gibraltar market. It also produces a potential for us to be able to do something that we have not done before, which is to use Gibraltar as a base in order to introduce this product into other markets near us.

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**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I beg your indulgence. It is quite an important topic to develop, given its obvious impact on our economy and the future.

Can I ask the Minister: at the moment, if I have understood him correctly, because of the COVID emergency the various elements of the old people's home will be effectively manufactured in China and shipped to Gibraltar for assembly. That being the case, where was it envisaged that the factory, if I can use that word, would have been located in Gibraltar, given obvious limitations as to size? I remember the old components factory had quite a large footprint – if he could give us some kind of an idea.

1695

Also, could he just clarify the location of the plot of this old people's home? He says Bishop Caruana Road corner on the plot of the Rooke site, but I not sure which corner he is referring to.

1700



1705 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the locality where we were planning to put the factory ourselves is not something that I am willing to make public. At the moment, we have not been able to proceed with that. If we proceed and we decide that it can be done, then when we have closed the deal I will make it public. I have mentioned, I think, to the hon. Member that in Gibraltar we have to be careful when we say what we plan to do and when we plan to do it, because there are people who are interested in stopping us doing it. But it has not been possible. There were plans that would have required me to travel to the place, and that I was not able to do because of the limitations on movement, and therefore this will continue to be the source if we still find that there are difficulties of movement in and out of Gibraltar.

1710 The plot is near Bishop Canilla House, on the opposite side. The footprint is a thousand square metres.

1715 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I appreciate this may not arise directly out of my original question. If the Minister is not able or willing to answer the question, I am happy to post another question. He mentioned that this particular development would be privately owned. Can he advise the House as to who this private owner would be? And has the site been sold?

1720 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** They should. I don't think it's for me to... I mean, we have investors who are willing to invest as a business in a residential home in Gibraltar. We have a methodology that will help to deliver the product at a price and on a timescale that has not been available currently. This is an important element of our being able to deliver some of the stuff that I have spelled out in the National Economic Plan, in the timescale of the National Economic Plan and notwithstanding the impediment created by COVID and the disruption that there has been.

1725 We are making an effort to make this happen because if this happens it means that independent of anything else we are doing to recover what was there before, we shall be doing new things which will help us lessen the impact of a world recession on our own economy, and this is why I am still maintaining the target of 15% in four years notwithstanding everything that is going on.

1730

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I just have one last further supplementary. I can probably carry on talking to the hon. Member for many more hours on this, but just one last supplementary and then my colleagues may have their own questions.

1735 Can the Minister advise or not – again, I am happy to put in questions in future, but is it the Government's intention then that this old people's home effectively is going to be run by a private concern? Is it going to be built by them and then rented to the Government, or is it that it is going to be built and then the elderly citizens will pay rent to them as a private concern? I am not sure what the intention is.

1740 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the question is about the joint venture and not about what is going to happen when the thing is finished. I do not think that it arises. I have just volunteered more information than he was asking, but of course if every time I volunteer more I encourage him to ask more, certainly we could be here a very long time.

1745 The reality is that it is not the Government that is doing it, it is the joint venture that is doing it and the joint venture has got an arrangement with an external investor that was to invest in this.

1750 We have a situation at the moment, I think, where notwithstanding the crisis there are many opportunities for bringing investment to Gibraltar in things that are deemed to be immune to what is happening. One thing that is immune to all the problems that have been created in the global economy is that we are not going to stop getting old, so that is a market that is guaranteed will be there irrespective of whatever else may happen, which we cannot predict. We know that the requirement for residential accommodation and the requirement for pensioner flats is going to be something that will be here and will be happening throughout

1755 Europe, so that is a niche market. If one specialises in doing that, if one has got a product that is  
of the highest standard with all the quality – for example, we are using UK firms to make sure  
that the quality would be acceptable in the United Kingdom and in the EU – and we have then a  
product that we develop here and which enables us to produce a privately owned, privately run  
1760 home for our people that is competitive with what it is costing now and may be competitive as  
an exportable model, then this is something that is worth exploring and we will see just how  
much potential it has. But in the first instance it will meet needs that we have. If we were to do  
it in terms of the traditional building methods and the traditional running methods of those  
organisations in the public sector, I think we would need to borrow many more millions of  
pounds than we want to. So, I think this is a way in which we can meet the needs of the  
1765 community at a more cost-effective cost and create a product that has the potential of being  
replicated and exported.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I ask the Minister, just on that question and the purpose of  
the 50-50 joint venture, is there a joint venture agreement between GDC and the Beijing  
construction group? Is there an agreement in writing recording the purpose etc. of the joint  
1770 venture?

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** A joint venture agreement that set up the joint venture company, which  
is between the Gibraltar General Construction Company and the ... It used to be the Liujian  
company in the group. Liujian is the sixth company in the group, but we switched to the  
1775 international company, which we thought was better for our needs and the parent company in  
Beijing agreed to the switch. So, we started with one company in the group but we switched to a  
different one about a year ago, which I think meets our needs better.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Is it the Government's intention to make public that joint venture  
1780 agreement? And does the joint venture agreement either specify or ...? Can the Minister assist  
the House in giving us a bit more idea of the projects that are in the pipeline, apart from the  
residential home that the Hon. Minister has spoken about?

**Mr Speaker:** There is no need to answer that question. They are additional questions, not  
1785 supplementaries.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, with respect, I think they arise directly from the question. The  
question was can the Government advise the purpose of the joint venture, so it is within the  
remit, if I may say so, of the supplementaries to explore the purpose of the joint venture, and  
1790 that is what I am trying to explore, the purpose of it.

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** The hon. Member must understand that this is a business and the fact  
that we own 50% of that business through a construction company is no different from when  
Gibtelecom was 50% owned by us and 50% by Slovenia. I am not going to tell you what the  
1795 business plans are of the joint venture or what work they will get or what tenders they are going  
to put, because they should not be put at a disadvantage simply because I happen to be here to  
answer the questions.

This is a business. We are investing in a business. We treat it at arm's length and it will  
compete for the work, and I hope it will be very successful and make a lot of money because  
1800 then 50% of that money will benefit the taxpayers of Gibraltar.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, just arising out of the last answer that he is given, he has said  
it is a business, it is at arm's length; he has said that he hopes that it is going to be very  
profitable. He has drawn the analogy with Gibtelecom. Indeed, with Gibtelecom originally there  
1805 were competition issues, people trying to break into the market. Here, there are no people

trying to break into the market. It is this business breaking into an existing market with existing operators doing construction business.

1810 Has he thought about the impact that this may actually have on local construction companies? If you have a company that is backed by effectively the Chinese government – because he was keen to make the point that everything is owned by the Chinese government; it is going to be making components, presumably from Gibraltar, although that was not very clear – that could give a very significant competitive advantage to this company in relation to locals. Has he thought about that?

1815 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, regrettably, what the hon. Member seems to be worried about happened a long time ago. Most of the Gibraltar companies were wiped out by other companies that came from Spain, from the UK or from Portugal and eliminated the locals. The situation is that we have got a different product and what that product will do is produce things that are needed by our community at a more competitive price than is possible using historical  
1820 labour-intensive methods.

We have a manifesto commitment to do this and to use less labour in Gibraltar, and therefore to increase output per person, by having economic growth, but not by bringing in more workers where part of the growth that is created appears as if it was available to us when in fact it is not available to us, as I have explained, and the misleading consequences that that  
1825 has when people think that there is money here that is available for them and it is not available for them because all the output of the 55% of the workforce counts as the GDP that people think they have got 100% of, when they have not.

The position is that this is designed to create economic growth to ensure that we are able to deal with part of the problem of the recession and to create necessary infrastructure that will  
1830 meet the needs of our elderly people, of whom there are increasingly more every year. I think if the hon. Member is saying it may well be that if we were doing it with local companies at a higher cost, it is quite probably the case that if we were to do it with local companies at a higher cost we would not have the money to do it. We are talking about having to borrow £150 million and my hon. Friend the Chief Minister is working very hard trying to get a sum of money of the  
1835 order of £500 million, which Members opposite have approved.

If the hon. Member is saying that their philosophy would be that if we have to use more of the money that we are borrowing in order to make sure that a company that employs 100% non-local labour is still able to do it here and bring everything from its country of origin and not  
1840 buy anything at all here – which is what happens now – then I beg to differ. That is not the policy that I think is in Gibraltar's interest. I think the policy in Gibraltar's interest is that we become very competitive and that we are able to do something here which we can then sell to others. That is not something that any other construction company is trying to do. What they are doing is coming here from outside and selling what they have got in their country to us. I want to reverse that direction.

1845

**Mr Speaker:** One final supplementary.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

1850 With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I do not think that it is quite as simple as the hon. Gentleman has explained in his answers. (*Interjection*) No, his analysis is not as simple.

You do have local construction companies. You have got people like ProFit and you have got people like Sharrock Shand operating here for many years, and essentially the hon. Gentleman in all his answers has said 'I think that over four years the Government could keep to its initial  
1855 projections for economic growth', and a large part of that, presumably at the heart of it is going to be this venture that the Government is now proposing.

The way that that would work, if you actually put those two points together, is that effectively Government contracts are going to be going out to this particular company, of which

of course the Government is a shareholder. That is going to have an inevitable impact on everybody else in the market.

1860 We are here to ask the questions. I have not said whether it is right or wrong; I just want to understand whether the Government has actually thought about the impact that it may have on local construction companies and perhaps if there is any way in which one can fit his vision with keeping those existing operators, some of whom are Gibraltarians, active in a market that has always been very dominated by Government work.

1865 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the Government does not think that any such issue arises. The Government already owns not 50% but 100% of a construction company, GJBS, which originated in the late 1980s and was successful throughout the period of the first GSLP administration, the GSD administration and continues to be successful. This is a 50% ownership of the Government – not 100%, a 50% ownership of the Government – and in an entity that has succeeded in respect of private sector work, just as GJBS has in the past. Both GJBS and the partner of the Government in this entity have not been subject to any rulings on state aid by the European Union, so the Government is confident that none of the issues of the hon. Gentleman arise, that competition is not distorted in any way and that therefore there are no issues of concern at all.

1875 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I just ask a supplementary on the other question, if I may – the one on the figures? The hon. Member I think said, if I took a note accurately, that the cash reserve on 1st March was £48.3 million and on 1st April was £24.3 million – in effect half, 50% down. Can the hon. Member assist us in explaining why that is? Is that related in some way to the pandemic expenditure, or is it related to something else; and, if so, what?

1885 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the position with the cash, as I explained before, is that ... You are asking for a figure on a particular day. When companies pay their taxes, we have months – as no doubt they will see when they get the figures that they have been promised – when the income from company tax is £2 million or £3 million and there will be months when the income from income tax is £40 million. There are months when big bills come in from finishing construction projects and there are months when they do not. The figure is the figure on 1st April. If you asked me what was the figure on 2nd April or at the end of March, it would be a different figure. What is being provided is just a snapshot of a particular day. The reality is that it tends to go up and down depending on whether in a particular month we have received a lot of bills and paid them or we have sent out a lot of invoices and been paid, like any other business.

1890 I just get this figure from the Treasury and I give it to him, but I would not be able to give him a breakdown of how this is made up because this is not something that I have. It does not mean anything. The reality of it is that normally, when the year finishes in March, a lot of things happen in the last month when people are under a great deal of pressure perhaps to collect payments and so forth. The fact that we changed the date may have removed some of that pressure and may have had some impact on this, but that is the only thing that I can think of to have some explanation for the figure. When people know the financial year is about to end, then everybody has got to square their Departments and everybody tries to make sure that if they have got money pending they make an effort to get the money in. Maybe there has been less of an effort this year because in fact the financial year was not closing and will not close until September.

1905 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, in the knowledge of the fact that you have been in that chair now for almost three hours and hon. Members and Members of the Government have

1910 been dealing with issues now for almost three hours without a break, can I propose that the House should enjoy a short recess of 25 minutes or so and return at 6.30?

**Mr Speaker:** The House will now recess for 25 minutes.

*The House recessed at 5.55 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6.30 p.m.*

**Q263/2020**  
**State pension age –**  
**Inequality**

1915 **Clerk:** We resume with questions to the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port. We commence with Question 263 and the questioner is the Hon. D A Feetham.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, does the Government agree that the inequality in ages between men and women as to when they can claim their state pension is not justified?

1920

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

1925 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the difference in the age at which men and women can claim a statutory pension is as provided in the legislation and as has been the case since the legislation was introduced in 1954. Whether this difference is or has ever been justified is a value judgement.

1930 The Government's view is that it is as justified or not justified now as it was during the 15 years of the GSD administration, or for that matter any other administration since it was introduced. The Government has made clear in earlier statements already that its policy is to address the issue after Gibraltar leaves the EU at the end of the transition. We have, indeed, provided for this in three successive, successful general election manifestos.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Member seems to be a late convert to the issue, despite not having been recorded as having raised this issue in the years he held office as a Government Minister.

1935

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, in that roving answer that he has given referring to the 16 years of GSD Government I was wondering when he was going to get to the fact that it has been a manifesto commitment in the last three elections, because one would have thought that really they were very non-committal about this and that it was all our fault yet again.

1940 On the basis that the Hon. the Chief Minister has said that for the GSLP now means now, in this context what does 'now' mean? When does the Government intend to address this inequality?

1945 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member talks about the answer that I have given, and I have said that precisely in the answer that I have given. I will repeat what I have said: the Government has made clear in earlier statements already that its policy is to address the issue after Gibraltar leaves the EU at the end of the transition.

1950 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, Mr Speaker, but it has been Government policy going back to 2011. It is now 2020 and still nothing has been done about it. Therefore, may I ask the hon. Gentleman in those circumstances – a more than justified question from me – to be more specific about that? And how soon after we leave does the Government intend to address this blatant inequality?

1955 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member says, what has happened in the past has happened in the past and what happens now is what happens now. The position now is that this matter will be addressed when Gibraltar leaves at the end of the transition. There are negotiations taking place. There are discussions taking place within the Government as to how this needs to be done, and this needs to be shaped having regard to what the shape of Gibraltar generally and this kind of issue is after the end of the transition at the end of this year, or perhaps later if there is an extension to the transition.

1960 If the hon. Member wants a date I cannot give him a date, but it will certainly happen after Gibraltar leaves the EU at the end of the transition.

1965 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman talks about shapes. Perhaps he can be a bit more specific with the shape of Government policy in relation to this. Does the Government intend to increase the age of women to make it equivalent to men, or does the Government intend to bring men down to the age for women?

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, what we normally say in these cases is the hon. Member will know when an announcement is made.

1970 In relation to what we have said in the manifesto, we have said that this is intrinsically linked to Brexit and the date of withdrawal from the EU. We now know the date of withdrawal but we know there is a transition – or rather the date of withdrawal has passed already, we are now in transition and we do not know how long that transition will last. At the very least it will last until the end of this year. And then we go on to say in the manifesto:

In order to achieve the best equality policies we will consult with all stakeholder groups.

1975 So, once the Government does that relevant consultation with all stakeholder groups it will take a decision and it will announce the decision when it is ready to do so.

1980 **Hon. D A Feetham:** But again I must press him. Given that this is a consultation exercise that has been in the making for the last 10 years – because it was a manifesto commitment in 2011 and we are now at 2020 – surely the Government must have an idea in its own mind as to whether it intends to increase for women to equalise at the position of men or bring men down to the position of women. The Government must have a tentative view at least in relation to that.

1985 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, that is exactly the same question that the hon. Member has asked previously in the supplementary. If the hon. Member wants to get up 20 times and ask the same supplementary, I am happy to get up again 20 times and give him the same answer: we will address this matter when Gibraltar leaves the EU at the end of the transition period, and in doing so and in addressing this matter we will consult with all relevant stakeholder groups.

1990

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q264/2020**

**Flight arrivals –**

**Breakdown of numbers; expected continuation of arrangement with British Airways**

1995 **Clerk:** Question 264, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Aviation state how many flights have arrived in Gibraltar, broken down for the months of March, April and May this year to date, stating how many of those were private jets?

2000

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

**Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 265/2020.

2005

**Clerk:** Question 265, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Aviation state for how long he expects the current arrangements with British Airways to continue?

2010

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the schedule that I now hand to him.

**Answer to Q265/2020**

2015

The flight arrivals for the months of March, April and May are as follows:

MONTH	SCHEDULED	PRIVATE
MARCH	86	25
APRIL	16	8
MAY (20/5/20)	12	14

The current arrangements with British Airways are presently planned to continue until 4 August.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, this question may be unfair for the Minister and maybe I should have asked it on the order paper, but does he have a comparative figure for the same period last year? Particularly in relation to the private jets, the numbers seem quite high at first glance. The reason why I ask that is simply anecdotal evidence that I have seen and people have reported to me the amount of activity that they have witnessed in relation to flight arrivals and departures with that particular carrier.

2020

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I was in fact looking for the answer, which I should have here ... The hon. Member will have seen the number of, in particular, private jets going down in April and May, and that is to be expected. If the hon. Member wants to know the number of private jets, I can give him the figures for general aviation, which includes private jets and light aircraft and not the scheduled. In April 2019 it was 30, and in May 2019 it was 47.

2025

**Hon. D J Bossino:** In relation to the answer which he has given in connection with the British Airways question, is he able to provide across the floor of the House the expected cost of that to 4th August when the arrangements finish?

2030

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, we have already answered that that is information which we are not at liberty to disclose. We have discussed it with the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Clinton and I am happy to discuss it with him, behind the Speaker's Chair, but on the basis that it has to remain confidential because it is commercially sensitive to the airline – not to the Government, but they require that that amount should be kept in confidence. It was cleared for state aid purposes but it still is commercially confidential.

2035

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, thank you, I will accept that answer.

2040 Is the Minister able to elucidate to the House as to why 4th August – why the arrangements are finishing on that date, not earlier and not later?

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, from memory it was originally for two months and then extended for a further two months. The Minister for Business will confirm that that is the case.  
2045 That is precisely what happened. I believe we made the arrangement for two months and then it has been extended for a further two months, yes.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Can the Minister perhaps assist? Given the answer of his hon. colleague a few minutes ago, before the recess, that the idea that easyJet might fly to Gibraltar... they have  
2050 not taken a decision – perhaps not until July at the earliest, I think was the answer that he gave. In the context of that, would the Government look to renew this arrangement with British Airways for a further period of months?

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, clearly the Government would like to see flights between the  
2055 UK and Gibraltar continue. One possibility is easyJet, but that we will not know possibly until July. We will certainly keep our options open and see what the state of play is nearer the date before a final decision is taken.

**Q266/2020**

**Vessel arrivals in the port –  
Numbers and reasons for call**

**Clerk:** Question 266, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2060 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for the Port state how many vessels have called in the port for the months of March, April and May, with details of the reason for each call?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

2065 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is contained in the schedule which I now hand to him.



**Answer to Q266/2020**

The number of vessels which have called into the port for the months of March, April and May are as follows:-

REASON FOR CALL (PRIMARY PURPOSE)	MARCH	APRIL	MAY (AS AT 20.5.20)
Bunkers	409	440	284
Cruise	1	0	0
Cargo	5	8	3
Repairs	1	0	1
Other*	172	157	105
OPLs	112	76	23

\* Other

Other : comprises : cargo sampling, change of schedule, charts, crew changes, adverse weather, arrested vessels, bunker surveys, change of name, class survey, compass adjusting, debunkers, gas free certification, ferry calls, laid up, lub oil delivery and receipt, medical assistance, MOD movements, owners change, pratique notes, recovery of lost anchor, sea trials, slops discharge, STS operations, towing, underwater cleaning - inspection and survey, waste discharge and delivery, yacht loading and unloading and visits, containers loading and unloading, fenders delivery/discharge, detention, eastern anchorage awaiting berth/STS, flag change, garbage discharge, gyro repairs, hold inspection, land survivors, provisions, PSC inspection, radio repairs, rocks unloading/loading, shelter, spares, station, stores, surveyor/technician transfer, tender service, under tow, underwater inspection/survey, vehicle loading/unloading, waiting orders, water receipt.

**Q267/2020**

**Education –**

**Plans for increasing online provision**

**Clerk:** Question 267, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

2070

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Given that so many children will not be returning to school until the autumn term, what are the Government's plans for stepping up children's education online beyond the home learning programme put into place in the early stages of the lockdown?

2075

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

2080

**Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the arrangements we have made in respect of education have been the subject of advice from educational professionals in the Department of Education and from the teachers' union, with whom we have been working closely.

2085

Home learning will continue for students in the year groups that do not return to school during this term and those in year groups that do return but who have been advised that they should remain at home for medical reasons. The principal goal for our home learning programme is to provide children with a familiar structure and sense of purpose to support emotional well-being, while also reinforcing key skills without the need to follow the curriculum. The provision has been designed using positive psychology principles and the PERMAH model of well-being, which emphasises positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment and health. Our decision to pursue home learning in the manner we have done arises from these key principles.

2090

We have recognised that we are in an unprecedented situation and the reality of some households may not be conducive to enabling children to complete many of the tasks set. The last thing we have wanted to do is to add stress to these households or to make the children feel anxious about whether or not they complete a task or whether they are keeping up with their

2095 peers. There will be no penalty or disadvantage if children are unable to complete the tasks and activities suggested. We understand that some children will also be less able to complete the activities outside of the school environment. Children who are less able to learn independently may not have the parental input to help them with their work.

2100 All tasks and activities have been designed to add value to the development of the children's skills, to their knowledge and to their understanding. However, we have endeavoured to carefully balance progress with the reality of their situation at home, the fact that the method of delivery is not that of a classroom environment and there are less opportunities for children to check in with their teachers, ask questions, clarify their understanding, etc. There are consequently more opportunities for children's misconceptions and areas of doubt and insecurity to grow.

2105 Our aim has been to make the home learning programme valuable and provide all who engage with the provision with activities that move them forward in their learning and enable them to make progress.

2110 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for his substantial answer and also I take this opportunity to thank him for the series of interchanges we have had on email, where he has been very forthcoming with information, but if I may just ask him a couple of supplementaries here.

2115 He quite rightly says that he does not want households to feel stress about the fact that some children may be taking to this programme more or less than others because perhaps they have less or more resources, but can I ask, instead of in a punitive sort of way, just to have an idea of where the students are at, is the Department of Education keeping stats on online attendance to monitor any future gaps in individual students' progress in terms of their education for when the time comes and they sit back in school, to know who needs perhaps more or less attention?

2120 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I do not have the particular figures that the hon. Member refers to, but certainly the schools are aware of the number of children and have been monitoring the number of children that have been engaging with the home learning programme, both at primary level and at secondary level.

2125 The hon. Member may recall – I believe it was when answering a question from Mr Reyes – that I gave some details about the engagement of the teachers with children and in particular following up with children who were not engaging perhaps with the home learning programme, and therefore they are keeping tabs of those so that they can follow up and find out what the issues and the problems might be and provide support whenever that support is necessary or required. So, yes, there has been that level of engagement between the schools and the students.

2130 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Thank you for that answer, Mr Speaker.

2135 Can I ask the hon. Member, because a lot of people ask me: we are living in a moment where Zoom is taking a lot of priority in online meetings all around the world, and what exactly has stopped the Department of Education from putting Zoom as a mechanism during this crisis when even countries like Italy, which has been brought down to its knees, has actually managed to continue school education through measures like Zoom?

2140 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the Department of Education, in conjunction with discussions with senior leadership teams of the schools in particular – and they will also have had discussions with the teachers' union as to the input of teachers and what was required of teachers – considered what the best way of achieving this home learning programme would be.

2145 The view was taken that the Seesaw platform seemed to provide a very adequate and good platform for children of primary school age, and in fact the feedback on that has been very encouraging with the level of engagement by the children and the way the children have

enjoyed the activities carried out on the Seesaw platform. A different platform has been used in the secondary schools, where teachers already had an online platform in which to provide material and assistance to students.

2150 It is a matter of judgement and a fine balancing act. What the schools have not tried to do is replicate the classroom environment. They felt that would have been impossible because the level of support that is needed when you engage with children at the classroom level is very different to what you can provide to children whether it is on Zoom or in any other kind of home learning programme. The schools and the Department have been very aware of the very trying circumstances in which we have lived over the last few months with children at home, and not  
2155 being able to replicate the classroom ... With the curriculum having been paused, there is in fact a limit, as I have explained in the answer, as to how much you can expect children to achieve, particularly because some children are good independent learners and others may not be. We specifically took the decision that we did not want to put in place anything that would disadvantage children who may not have the support, who were not in a classroom and may not  
2160 be able to work to the same level as their peers.

It is a balancing act that has been done. The view that has been taken is that what has been provided is the best that could be afforded in the circumstances, and the feedback I have had from all the schools is certainly positive.

2165 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, thank you for that answer. Just one last supplementary. The hon. Member talks about feedback. Can I ask him: have parents been consulted to provide feedback in case we have another lockdown? We talk about children being supported and all that, but have we had a parent survey or have parents been invited to provide this feedback, which I think would be very useful moving forward?

2170 **Hon. G H Licudi:** We certainly have not had a survey. We certainly have had contact. Some teachers have had contact with parents where there have been areas of concern.

Should we do a survey to find out how this has gone, in case we need it for the future? Perhaps, but this is part, perhaps, of the post-mortem, if I can use that phrase, as to what has  
2175 happened during lockdown generally, not just in relation to schools but how we have performed in all the areas where we have taken decisions in relation to lockdown. I am grateful to the hon. Member for the suggestion and this is certainly something that we will take into account.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I also urge the Minister to use the summer months to perhaps reflect  
2180 not just on that, on how it has gone so far, but also to come up with contingency ideas in case the situation were to get worse, which would justify some kind of restrictive attendance in the future ... that allows the Education Department to ramp up the rollout of online educational learning in the autumn, if that were *in extremis* necessary?

2185 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, yes, these are arrangements which were put together in great haste and were put together in fact very well. There was very little time in order to make sure that we made the provision available from the decision. I certainly remember all the meetings we were having on a daily basis in March and into the second part of March, and things were moving literally from one day to the other. We were having meetings deciding to keep schools  
2190 open, then things were changing and we decided to close the schools as from the following Monday, and very quickly we put together a series of programmes to support children who would not be attending schools.

Will there be lessons to be learned? Of course there will be lessons to be learned, and these are all matters that we will consider in the hopefully unlikely event – that we all desire should  
2195 never happen – that we should have some kind of lockdown keeping children away from school again. There will necessarily have been lessons to be learned from our experience in the last couple of months and how we can do things better, but I have nothing but praise for everyone at

2200 the Department and in the schools for the way they have handled this and the way they have, as we have said on many occasions, really stepped up to the mark to make this possible for children in a very short period of time.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q268/2020**  
**Assessed exam grades –**  
**Support and appeal mechanism for year 11 and 13 students**

**Clerk:** Question 268, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

2205 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Many year 11 and 13 students feel lost in the current situation. What support is to be given to year 11 and year 13 children in terms of their assessed exam grades and in terms of appeal mechanisms should they feel those grades are not truly reflective of their work or abilities?

2210 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

2215 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, all the information provided by Ofqual with regard to the awarding of centre assessment grades has been made available to students in order to support them in understanding the process. Students receiving exam grades this summer will be supported in the same manner as previous cohorts in understanding the appeals process whilst guiding them through the next stages of their educational journey.

2220 Once there is a final decision in the UK on what the autumn exam series looks like we will be in a better position to assess whether or not students will require additional support for the purposes of these resits. Until we have a concrete idea of what this exam series entails and what content it will cover with respect to individual specifications, it will be difficult to put any measure in place.

2225 Possible support strategies have been discussed and considered. Once we have clarity regarding what the process post the release of results will look like, we will be better placed to draw up a programme to support students.

The process for awarding centre assessment grades within our schools has been extremely robust. The Department of Education is satisfied that the process being followed is fair and objective and one which will result in students receiving grades which reflect the ability that they have demonstrated whilst following their courses.

2230 As always, our staff is available to students and will continue to be on hand via schools' educational platforms and other communication channels to answer questions, listen to concerns and guide students in the best and most appropriate manner possible. Students should know that they are not alone and that school staff will support them throughout the various stages of this process.

JUSTICE, MULTICULTURALISM, EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Q283/2020

COVID-19 related arrests –

Number since introduction of lockdown measures

2235 **Clerk:** We now move to questions to the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs. We begin at Question 283 and the questioner is the Hon. D A Feetham.

2240 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, how many COVID-19 related arrests have there been since the Government introduced its COVID-19 lockdown measures?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs.

2245 **Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs: (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, during the period 22nd March 2020 to 20th May 2020 the RGP has so far arrested 173 individuals.

2250 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I appreciate this could have been the subject of a separate question and if she does not, I will not press, but does the hon. Lady also have figures in relation to the report process rather than arrests?

2255 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, if this helps the hon. Gentleman, I know that 79 of those arrested have been charged for court and five of those have been cautioned. Mr Speaker, 75 of those who have been arrested are currently on police bail.

Q189/2020

Juveniles –

Number imprisoned in 2018-19

**Clerk:** Question 189, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

2260 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** How many juveniles have been imprisoned in 2018 and 2019 as a result of either (a) being sentenced for offences or (b) kept on remand while waiting for a court hearing?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs.

2265 **Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs: (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, sentenced in 2018 there were three, and sentenced in 2019 there were six. On remand in 2018 there were seven, and in 2019 there were 13.

2270 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I think perhaps my supplementary touches upon the following question, but I will ask it anyway.

Obviously my concern is about juveniles in prison and – not having had the Government finish providing a detention centre – their treatment and their stay, their quality of stay and the type of care they have, so I would ask the hon. Member ... I also understand that during the

2275 COVID crisis one or two, or three, underage minors had to be put in prison for some time. I understand there was a 12-year-old specifically. What type of care do they receive? And is she satisfied that these minors are getting adequate treatment in a facility that is not purpose built for this age range?

2280 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, yes, I do share the hon. Lady's concern. I was not the Minister for Justice in 2018 or 2019, but I was for the last two months; but in relation to the latter part of the supplementary question – and there is another question following this, which as the hon. Lady rightly says, will touch on that matter – it is something that I am indeed very concerned about.

2285 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for her answer. With respect, I believe that she has genuine concerns about this matter, but my question has not been answered. Is she satisfied that these minors have received an adequate level of care and service, given that we are where we are and we still do not have a juvenile detention centre?

2290 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** I apologise, Mr Speaker. Because the question relates to 2018 and 2019, I was not clear that the hon. Lady was asking about something that happened during the COVID period, but she has mentioned that some juveniles have been in prison during the COVID period and my answer is the same as the supplementary question before: yes, I am concerned. I will go into greater detail in the next question, which is why I did pre-empt it that way. Perhaps  
2295 the hon. Lady might wish to proceed to the next question and then we can deal with everything together.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q190/2020**  
**Juvenile detention centre –**  
**Plans and progress**

2300 **Clerk:** Question 190, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** What are Government's plans for a juvenile detention centre and what progress has there been in this area?

2305 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs.

**Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs: (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, the Government is committed to providing a facility for young offenders. A multi-agency working group has been set up to explore how this could best be provided, as well as exploring the best possible location for this. Plans are at an advanced stage.  
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**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, once again I thank the hon. Member for her answer. When she talks about plans being at an advanced stage is she confident that the centre will be completed during this legislature?  
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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q284/2020**  
**Support for the homeless –**  
**Plans to continue**

**Clerk:** Question 284, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Does Government have any plans to continue to support or assist the homeless, many of whom have been sheltered at the Garrison gym during the COVID-19 period; and, if so, what are these plans?

2325 Mr Speaker, just to say that obviously since I tabled this question there was a report on GBC giving us more information, and things have developed but I still look forward to hearing the answer from the hon. Member.

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs.

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**Minister for Justice, Multiculturalism, Equality and Community Affairs: (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, the individuals who were at the Garrison gym, which was an area designated for those with no fixed abode during the lockdown period, are not from Gibraltar and are not entitled applicants for housing. Social workers and the welfare team have been providing them support during the period that they have been there and they have also each had an offer of repatriation and additional cash offered to them to cover travel expenses and subsistence on arrival.

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Mr Speaker, if I could update the House, since this question was last prepared two of those individuals who were in the Garrison gym during lockdown have since accepted the Government's offer of repatriation home and they have already left.

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**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I heard that the number was 16. Can the hon. Member confirm whether this is correct?

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, from my information I have 14 and a maximum of 14 during this period.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, regardless of the fact that all these people, it seems, are not Gibraltarian, if they have been living in Gibraltar is there nothing we can do in a humanitarian spirit to provide some kind of middle-of-the-road assistance in this period to provide a roof for these people until they get back on their feet? From what I understand, many of them are vulnerable. Some have mental health issues, some drug dependency issues. Is repatriation the only option that we can provide to them?

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, the important thing is that we have provided for them during the period of lockdown, because had we not provided a designated area, then by virtue of being homeless they would have been in breach of the lockdown measures. Not only did we do that but in addition to providing an area for them they have at all times been provided with food and with welfare, ranging from medical attendances to being seen by social workers and counsellors.

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Beyond that, I think the Government has been extremely generous in offering repatriation to each and every one of them and, in addition, a maximum of £500 cash. This was something that was done in Canada and was very successfully taken up in Canada by people who found themselves in the same situation there.

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In addition to that, Mr Speaker, yes, we have a hostel. The hostel has a long waiting list for people who are entitled to housing in Gibraltar. We all know that we have a housing problem in

2370 Gibraltar because there are always waiting lists for people who are entitled. Because these individuals are not entitled to housing ... The hon. Lady is right that you may acquire an entitlement to housing by virtue of how long you have been here if you are not Gibraltarian by origin. Nevertheless these individuals still have to meet other criteria and they do not meet the criteria for eligibility for housing. It is for that reason that we have offered them a generous offer of repatriation so that they can go to their country of origin, where they will then be entitled to benefits in that country.

2375 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I can, one last supplementary – and I thank the hon. Lady for her answer. Are we saying that if all these people who went and stayed at the Garrison gym were foreign nationals, effectively, are we saying that there were no Gibraltarians who were actually homeless and needed a shelter over the ...? Did the fact that there were no Gibraltarians needing shelter over the COVID period imply that we actually do not have a homeless problem, because everybody was a foreign national? Or did we have any Gibraltarians at all?

2385 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, this question is specifically in relation to the Garrison gym. There was one individual who is from Gibraltar but not entitled to housing in Gibraltar, but everybody else was not Gibraltarian and therefore had no entitlement. This question is limited to those in the Garrison gym.

2390 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I ask the Minister: apart from that individual she has just spoken about, in terms of the Garrison gym, the 14 other individuals ... I think 13 others ... I thought the Minister had mentioned the number of 14 in relation to the Garrison gym, but that is a global figure. So, in respect of the other 13, they were foreign nationals, as I understood from the answer. Are these people who found themselves in Gibraltar at the time that the lockdown was imposed? Or were they people who both had been recent arrivals but also some of them might have been longer-term arrivals that the Government might not have been aware were homeless, but when lockdown was imposed it became obvious that they were homeless?

2400 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, in relation to 13 it was a combination of various situations. Some people had been in Gibraltar squatting more long term, some people had been in Spain and came over to Gibraltar at the time of the lockdown thinking that we might probably be more generous here than over the border, and other people appeared, quite frankly. We understood that there were some people who were squatting around Gibraltar but this has shown us that there were more people than we expected, because not everyone came to the Garrison gym on the same day. People were referred to the Garrison gym mainly by the Royal Gibraltar Police to make sure that we had a safe space for them.

## Questions for Written Answer

2405 **Clerk:** Answers to Written Questions.

**Hon. Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions W63/2020 to W76/2020 inclusive.

2410 **Mr Speaker:** Ordered to lie.



**ADJOURNMENT**

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move that the House should now adjourn *sine die*.

**Mr Speaker:** I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn *sine die*. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.  
The House will now adjourn *sine die*.

*The House adjourned at 7.15 p.m.*