



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.33 p.m. – 5.05 p.m.

Gibraltar, Monday, 20th September 2021

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.33 p.m.

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

[ACTING CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: S C Galliano Esq *in attendance*]

PRAYER

Mr Speaker

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Monday, 20th September 2021.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the last meeting of Parliament, which was held on 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 26th, 28th, 29th and
5 30th July 2021.

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

Mr Speaker signed the Minutes.

Clerk: (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be
10 laid; (vii) Report of Committees; (viii) Answers to Questions

Questions for Oral Answer

TRANSPORT

Q196/2021

**Pay and display machines –
Numbers working and card payments availability**

Mr Speaker: We intend to start the process again. Mr Clerk will read out the question once more.

Clerk: Question 196/2021. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

15 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** How many pay and display machines are there in Gibraltar; and, out of this number, how many are working and how many accept card payment?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Transport.

20 **Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, at the time this question was submitted 31 out of the 34 machines were working. All of the machines accept card payments.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I have to say I find the answer very hard to believe because I, myself, driving around quite often looking for parking and trying to use these machines I find that a lot of them do not work; and the card payments are often not accepted, meaning that you have to call a number which delays things. So I ask the Minister if he just took a snapshot maybe one day sporadically on a convenient date that perhaps things were working for a few minutes? But I have also received many representations on the matter.

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30 So can the Minister give us a more detailed explanation of when they actually went out to get the information to answer this question, because it does not seem credible?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I do not have that experience because I bring my vehicle right into the places I work or live, but I am aware that on some occasions, in fact on many occasions, these figures do fluctuate ...

35 I have seen for myself, even though I cycle and do not use pay and display machines, I do have a keen eye, especially if the pay and display machines are jacketed. If they have a jacket over the machine then clearly they are out of action. It is harder to spot the machines which are not covered in that way. There are issues which I am trying to get to the bottom of, as the hon. Lady does mention and is alluding to. There are many instances when the machines may not work in their entirety; for example, one of the most common faults is failure to accept a card. I am delving, digging into why that is happening and apparently it is to do with connectivity and, unlike a mobile-held device which is moved round and it tends to pick up the connectivity, a static machine I am told will sometimes struggle with connectivity.

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45 The company that is responsible for these machines, a company called Matrix, I met with him just last week and I did speak to him about these certain issues that we have, especially with connectivity. They are looking at providing some sort of antenna, an aerial which will attach to these machines to increase the coverage of connectivity. Because the problem with these things is they take quite a bit of time and it is not just the card being read, the line has to remain intact long enough for the digital handshake to allow the transaction to take place. That does take up to 15 to 30 seconds and if there is an interruption at that moment in time because there is a dip in coverage and there is an issue, you have to restart again.

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55 Those are the most common issues that we have and this is why, as the hon. Lady says, there is a sign on each machine saying that if you have difficulties please call the office and they will charge you by phone to ensure that you have paid for your parking.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon. Minister for his explanation. But, given the stresses and the strains on the motorist arising from the lack of parking in Gibraltar, and our desire to cater for tourists who do not have access to the zoned parking, and given that pay and display zones were an important part of the STTP, are we not giving enough priority to the maintenance of this company, Matrix? Is the Government satisfied with this company or are they allowing it to leave these machines to fall into disrepair, leaving frustrated motorists and tourists having to spend several minutes on the phone in order to organise their parking?

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65 Does the Minister not think that this is a matter of priority that should be maintained more regularly?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, this is exactly what I am trying to get to the bottom of because it may not be the machines, *per se*, but it might be connectivity. If it is connectivity, regardless of the brand or type of machine we are using in those locations specifically, it may be possible to maintain that area or that machine available for card payments. But what we are looking at is the contractors, the owners of the Matrix machines, who are actually doing a survey of the areas immediately surrounding the machine because it may be just by moving the machine ... They are placed in the best location for users, so they do not have to walk too far.

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So we will get the median point and if there are two machines we will try to get them in between so that the walking distance is not huge. Sometimes it may be that that place is not the best place for it, because of buildings or interference, or whatever. So they are looking at the area with a view to see where the signal is strongest and even if the person needs to walk more – which is a positive thing, I think, because it will get more calories burnt and people will be healthier in that respect – I think that may help.

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So I am looking into it, and I am dissatisfied with one broken machine, because as you rightly say the SSTP says very clearly that it is through pay and display that we can give equity to people wanting to park, otherwise we will get situations where cars stay in given locations for days and months and weeks on end. That is something which is not acceptable and it is through paying that we can guarantee that more people have a right and have the ability to find parking in the places that they need.

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So for me this is extremely important, that these machines are working – and I am difficult to satisfy in that respect. I look around and every machine that I see is not working or every hooded machine ... And people will tell me that they are. The time of the reply, I have checked because yes I have seen that sometimes it is a fluid measurement, and sometimes I am sure there are more than 31 machines that are not working, and I am sure because I can see that in terms of the complaints that are coming through because we get complaints for anything.

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So it is important and I am making sure, and I will make sure, because that is such an important thing that needs to be as well kept as possible. Again, this is the reply that I received from the officers when I asked the question, that 31 out of 34 machines were working at that given moment in time, and that is the only thing I can provide the hon. Lady with.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your indulgence.

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Can I just ask, given that the parking machine system was a part of the STTP, it is only fairly recent. Are these connectivity issues not issues that should have been dealt with before these machines were put there? Does this not point to a lack of planning which is probably costing us money and inconvenience to citizens in Gibraltar or tourists who come in?

Should this not have been dealt with beforehand?

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Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I do not agree with that statement because what I am told is that these machines get interference from third parties, so what may be a good location at one given moment in time may turn out to be a bad location because of interference. I think we have to accept that for these machines to work properly we will need to, perhaps, now look to see whether it is a question of moving them around.

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We need to also have this discussion with the service provider to see what the solution is – and Matrix have this issue apparently in the UK as well – seeing whether these antennae will increase the bandwidth so we can actually get better coverage to the machines.

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I will look at every single option and if it is the machine that is failing, or the particular brand that is failing, then obviously we are committed to ensure that this is correct, as we will see, we will try a different type of machine for the needs of Gibraltar. But I cannot accept that this is something to do with bad planning because we have to find convenient locations for the machines and again we also need to find places ... These are solar machines and they take up light from the sun, so you may have maximum connectivity under a tree and that location is not suitable to pick

up the solar power. So there are a number of things we have to look at before we find the best location for the machine.

120 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

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

The Minister, in what I think was part of the original answer, was explaining that should unfortunately the machines not be able to take card payments, for the many reasons he has given, that there is a phone number provided. Is the Minister aware – and I can tell him from my own personal experience – that you do not always get a reply when you call that phone number? And could the Minister please advise us what do we do when the machine does not read your card and you get no answer from the phone?

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130 What alternative is the potential user of the paid parking left with?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I am unable to say what happens when you cannot get that, I assume you would call a second time and perhaps a third time. What I would not do –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): You can pay cash.

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Hon. P J Balban: Yes, that is the other option, thanks to the Chief Minister.

We are speaking specifically about card payments, but the machines are dual purpose machines so there is always the option for card payments, and not only in pounds sterling but also in Euros and also in –

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Hon. Chief Minister: If you cannot pay by card the alternative is you can pay by cash.

Hon. P J Balban: So then you have these three options: there is cash payments, in two denominations; there is card payments; and there is also an attendant, and you can call the number and they should be there to pick up the call.

I will most definitely take that up. Again, I am not a pay and display machine user because I cycle everywhere, so I circumvent all these issues that other people face. But I understand that for me it is incredibly important that these machines are there for a purpose and they should be working, and the *system* should work. So I will look into that comment.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

DIGITAL, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Q197/2021

Gibraltar Digital Skills Academy – Provision of Government support

Clerk: Question 197, the Hon. E J Phillips. The Leader of the Opposition will be asking the question on his behalf.

155 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, to the extent that there are questions of Mr Phillips today, given that he is away in Belfast with other colleagues, I will be asking his questions.

Can the Government confirm what support it is providing to the Gibraltar Digital Skills Academy?

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

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Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, the Government fully supports the setting up of the Digital Skills Academy, and has been instrumental in enabling its establishment.

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The Government notes and welcomes the Academy being nominated as a finalist for the National Cyber Awards of the UK and congratulates Mr Stewart Harrison on his excellent work with our students, and in his contribution to develop further learning and expertise in this important area.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, obviously we also welcome the establishment of the Digital Skills Academy. We would like to know a bit more about what support the Government is giving the Academy. The Minister said they are supportive, as indeed we would expect it to be. To what extent are they giving support, and of what nature is that support being given?

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The Academy, when it was launched, I think it was in August this year, talked about aspiring to have educational partnerships and partnerships also with the private sector. Is it also facilitating that? Again, perhaps it would be helpful to know to what extent support is being given.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the establishment of the foundation was facilitated by my hon. friend, the Minister for Education, who had within its Department Stewart Harrison.

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Stewart Harrison has now, for a fixed period of time, been seconded to the Digital Services Ministry in order to enable him to have the time to put the effort he needs to put into this. So he will be doing work for us but also for the Digital Skills Academy.

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The conditions that my hon. friend put on Mr Harrison at the time was that it would not cost Government any money to have the Digital Skills Academy set up, and that is in fact what has happened. So Mr Harrison and the Academy have gone out and found financial support from the private sector as well as accommodation from the private sector at no cost to Government or the Academy itself.

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We think it is a wonderful thing to be able to upskill our kids at an early age, and some of the work that Mr Harrison has done over these past years is testament to that, and indeed we will also have the ability to have him within the Digital Services Ministry working precisely in the area in which he is supporting the teaching and education of, namely cyber and all things digital.

So he is an enormous asset for us to have. We are going to see how it goes and how it develops over the next 12 months. The Academy clearly works with students outside school hours primarily and so it fits very nicely, and he is prepared to put in the time and effort required to make a success of both aspects of the coin of what is the Digital Skills Academy.

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I hope that is ...

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Hon. K Azopardi: It is helpful, yes, but helpful in part because really all I have heard there is support in terms of making time available for some key personnel. Is the Government providing financial support to the Academy, for example? That would be in the nature of the question I was asking.

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Does the Minister agree with me that really this is such an important issue – the whole issue of the repositioning of our digital skills space – that this is something that goes beyond the issue of support? And that while of course the Government *should* support initiatives such as this, that it should be a policy, a priority for the Government to ensure that we remain competitive in the new technologies and the new industries and that it has a vested interest, not just in supporting this but in going beyond that into ensuring it does all it needs to do so that our economy can be competitive as to the future in terms of the skills that the potential employees have.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, we believe this is extremely important and for that reason I have supported it in its early stages of growth in the past years. (*Interjection*)

210 I think the evidence of that is in what has happened in these past five or six years since Mr Harrison, from the Ministry of Education, began his work in enhancing not just knowledge and expertise, but understanding what the opportunities were for people in digital skills. The number of prizes he has won with our schools is recognition of the fact, and in the answer that I give you will know that the Academy has already been shortlisted for another award in the United Kingdom
215 which we are hopeful he will do well in. But just the recognition of what he has done in the time he has done it is really quite extraordinary.

Mr Speaker, in respect of the question as to whether we are providing any *funding* to the Academy, what I meant to say when I mentioned that the Minister for Education had put the condition that it should not cost Government money, is that he is 100% privately funded. So he
220 has got funding from the private sector both in respect of capital and in respect of rental accommodation from their base.

So the Government support is to enable the person driving it to have the time to be able to do this, and that is why he has been seconded from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Digital Services, precisely to enable him to take up this work and really give a boost to the work he has
225 done in the past years, which I have every confidence that Mr Harrison will.

Hon. K Azopardi: Finally, Mr Speaker, can I just ask about the scope in the interaction that the Government is having with the Digital Skills Academy? Can I ask what is the Government's understanding as to the scope of the Academy's work? There has been talk of cyber security both
230 when it was launched and indeed I think the Minister mentioned it and that is part of the awards they have been put up for, and it is well know that they have done work over the last few years in relation to that. But, is the work of the Academy in respect of that area, or is it a wider kind of digital skills work that they are doing which can be deployed in other areas of industry and, for example, in financial services or in other ways?

235 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, the scope is extraordinarily wide and it is wide because it is not being set by us in Government. This is Mr Harrison identifying the areas that he believes will be of benefit to the students. Obviously depending on the age that you bring a student into the Academy will dictate the nature of the learning that child is going to be undertaking. Therefore
240 what he is doing with his knowledge in teaching is to set different scopes of work for different age groups, going right up through to the work he will be doing with us in the mornings, if I can call it 'outside the Academy', in terms of some real cyber security support work for Government and its own systems.

245 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q198 and 199/2021
Unplanned power cuts –
Districts, numbers, duration and cause

Clerk: Question 198. The Hon. K Azopardi.

250 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can Government provide a breakdown of which districts have suffered unplanned power cuts since 1st January 2017, stating the number of power cuts and their approximate duration in each case and the apparent cause?

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

255 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 199.

Clerk: Question 199. The Hon. K Azopardi.

260 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Are Government considering any improvements to the electricity infrastructure, given that power cuts are suffered from time to time?

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

265 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, the Government, having inherited creaking infrastructure through the Gibraltar Electricity Authority, are constantly investing in new infrastructure and cabling throughout its network, with a view to modernising and continuously improving the network and the associated equipment to safeguard the resiliency of our power supply. The timing of this rolling programme is designed to cause
270 minimal disruption.

The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the schedule that I now hand to him.

Answer to Question 199

Year2017	Date and time	Duration	Districts/Areas affected	Reasons for power cut	Type
1	25 th Jan 2017 9.39 hours	29 mins- 1 hour 45 mins	Total Blackout — All Districts	MOD Water Section damaged interconnector SDPS-OBDC No 2 causing a total blackout.	Network Failure
2	5 th Aug 2017 3.15 hours	10 mins	Ocean Village Complex	CB tripped & SCADA comms lost simultaneously.	Network Failure
Year2018	Date and time	Duration	Districts/Areas affected	Reasons for power cut	Type
1	2 nd March 2018 15.10 hours	2-10 mins	Jetty Five, Viaduct, Marina, Glacis North, Laguna, Hesses, Water Gardens, Portland House, Glacis South, Landport, Ocean Village, Tradewinds, Casemates, Bedlam Court, Line Wall Road, William Jackson, Harbour Views, West View Park, Safeway, Eurotowers. King's Bastion, Forty Steps, King's Yard, Town Range.	Fault at GMES (MOD) due to rock fall damaging HV cables at North Face of the Rock.	Network Failure
2	25 th March 2018 12.05 hours	2 hours 45 mins	Lathbury Barracks, Clifton's, Lathbury Barracks & Mount Pleasant	Phase fault at TX1 Lathbury Barracks	Network Failure
3	5 th April 2018 08.44 hours	7 hours 16 mins	King's Bastion, Forty Steps, King's Yard, Town Range.	Faulty cable between S1 & OBDC. Power restored via split point at Kings Bastion.	Network Failure

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Year2019	Date and time	Duration	District/Areas affected	Reasons for power cut	Type
1	30 th Jan 2019	15 mins	Watergardens, Ocean Village, Jetty Five. Bedlam Court, Line Wall Road, Governor's Parade, Cornwall's Lane	Energyst North tripped on load whilst removing sets from Energyst South activating FFP tripping the feeders.	Generation Failure
2	1 st Feb 2019	3 hrs 40 mins	Little Bay	Frame leakage protection relays zones 1+3. MHDC — JBDC Fdr 6 diff protection + Intertrips activated. Suspected Earth fault at S55, S71 and S43.	Network Failure
3	11 th March 2019	17 mins	Watergardens, Ocean Village, Jetty Five. Bedlam Court, Governor's Parade, Cornwall's Lane	Cable fault at Lathbury Barracks causing FFP to trip feeders. Int Conn 1 JBDC/OBDC panel 2 to MHDC also tripped on low frequency.	Network Failure
4	29 th March 2019	60 mins	Line Wall Road	S6 tripped on Earth Fault Protection	Network Failure
5	April 2019	50 mins	Line Wall Road	S6 tripped on Earth Fault Protection	Network Failure
6	9 th April 2019	20 mins	William Jackson, Watergardens, Ocean Village, Marina, Jetty Five, Montagu Gardens. Bedlam Court, Mount, King's Bastion, Cornwall's Lane.	NMPS tripped on commissioning tests on low frequency protection. Tripped WPS and auxiliary plant on overload.	Generation Failure
7	18 th April 2019	8 mins	William Jackson, Marina, Jetty Five.	NMPS Set 1 tripped on commissioning load 10MW causing falling frequency protection (FFP).	Generation Failure
8	30 th April 2019	13 mins	William Jackson, Watergardens, Marina, Jetty Five.	NMPS Set 1 tripped on commissioning load 14MW activating FFP.	Generation Failure
9	May 2019	60 mins	Governor's Parade, King's Bastion, Bayside, Line Wall Road, Bedlam Court, Casemates.	OBDC Ring 6 tripped on overload due to closing of open point	Network Failure
10	8 th June 2019	3-6 mins	William Jackson, Marina, Jetty Five.	NMPS Set 1 tripped on 12MW load test during commissioning. FFP activated.	Generation Failure
11	22 nd Aug 2019	2-3 hrs & 50 mins	Total Blackout — All districts.	System Earth fault. Interconnectors WDC-OBDC Nos 1, 2 & 3 damaged by contractors.	Network Failure
12	28 th Sept 2019	1.5-5 hrs	Bedlam Court, Bayside, Line Wall Road, King's Bastion, Governor's Parade, Cornwall's Lane, Regal House, Rosia Bay, Europa Business Centre, Sandpits, Europa Road, Little Bay, Alameda, King's Wharf, Queensway, Cumberland Terraces, Anchorage, Ocean Views.	Power outage due to cable fault on Willis's Road S15 to Catalan Bay S12.	Network Failure
13	3 rd Nov 2019	2.5 hrs	Midtown, Line Wall Road, Marina.	Power outage due to earth fault between MHDC panel 23 to S6 Line Wall Rd.	Network Failure
14	19 th Nov 2019	6 mins-1 hr	Watergardens, Ocean Village, Marina, Waterport Terraces, William Jackson, Waterport Place, Rosia Bay, Cumberland Terraces, Anchorage, King's Bastion, Governor's Parade.	NMPS Set 5 tripped on full load (diesel mode)	Generation Failure

Year2020	Date and time	Duration	District/Areas affected	Reasons for Power Cut	Type
1	16.01.2020 16.40	3 mins- 15 mins.	Montagu Gardens, Marina, Ocean Village, Western Arm, Varyl Begg Estate, Waterport Terraces, Waterport Place, Watergardens, Jetty Five. King's Bastion, Governor's Parade, Town Range, Midtown, King's Wharf.	NMPS Set 1 tripped on Reverse Power actuating IFLS Jetty 5 feeder and causing loss of supply to Gasnor plant thus interrupting NG supply and causing NMPS shutdown.	Generation Failure
2	18.01.2020 10.05	10 mins- 40 mins.	Montagu Gardens, Marina, Ocean Village, Western Arm, Varyl Begg Estate, Waterport Terraces, Waterport Place, Watergardens, Bedlam Court & Jetty Five. King's Bastion, Governor's Parade.	NMPS Bus ties opened to allow load tests on Load Banks and IFLS tripped supply to OBDC and tripped supply given to WDC.	Generation Failure
3	20.01.2020 10.13	4 mins- 22 mins.	Marina, Ocean Village, Waterport Terraces, Waterport Place, Watergardens. MHDC Panels Governor's Parade, Town Range, Midtown, Cornwall's Lane, King's Wharf.	IFLS activation upon opening of Busbar 2 at NMPS.	Software Failure
4	03.07.2020	20 mins	Alameda, Rosia Bay, Sunnyside Steps.	Phase Overcurrent and Differential Relay trip due to unbalance between phases.	Network Failure
5	24.09.2020	42 mins- 75 mins.	Total Blackout—All districts.	Human error. Technician from Winpower NMPS accidentally tripped the engines when trying to source black-start generator malfunction. NMPS tripped and the system could not cope and caused a total blackout.	Human Error
6	17/11/2020	26 mins- 40 mins.	Montagu Gardens, Marina, Ocean Village, Western Arm, Varyl Begg Estate, Waterport Terraces, Watergardens, William Jackson. Alameda, Sunnyside Steps, Cumberland Terraces, Europa Road.	HV fault at GMES caused various interconnector trips at MHDC, JBDC resulting in power outages MHDC, JBDC, SDPS and GMES networks.	Network Failure

Year2021	Date and time	Duration	District/Areas affected	Reasons for Power Cut	Type
1	25.01.2021	8 mins-16 mins.	Varyl Begg West, Marina, Watergardens, Ocean Village, Waterport Terraces, Waterport Place, Western Arm	NMPS Set 5 tripped on load due to faulty sensor state 3 tripping 8 HV WDC.	Generation Failure
2	15.02.2021	17-21 mins	Bayside, Varyl Begg West, Marina, Jetty Five, Montagu Gardens, Ocean Village, Waterport Place.	NMPS Set 5 tripped on load due to fault at tank farm diesel supply. Load not picked up by EN resulting in power outage at WDC feeders.	Generation Failure
3	08.04.2021	49-99 mins	Total Blackout—All districts	Operations/Maintenance holder broke and fell on ATs switching off local transformers causing total trip of MV feeders and causing overload to Energyst generators causing total power grid failure.	Human Error
4	1.06.2021	6-41 mins	Bayside, Varyl Begg West, Marina, Jetty Five, Watergardens, Montagu Gardens, Ocean Village, Bedlam Court, Waterport Terraces, William Jackson, Waterport Place, Western Arm. King's Bastion, Cornwall's Lane, Governor's Parade, Queensway Quay. Alameda, Sandpits, Sunnyside Steps, Rosia Bay, Little Bay, Europa Business Centre.	Routine black-start generator test caused trip to MV feeder to Set 2 at 12 MW causing overload trip to other generators on-line.	Generation Failure
5	02.06.2021	8-18 mins	Marina, Ocean Village, Waterport Terraces. King's Bastion, Cornwall's Lane, Governor's Parade. Alameda, Rosia Bay.	Set 5 tripped at 12 MW due to speed pick- up wire break and safety module freeze causing IFLS to trip feeders. Energyst picked up 5.2 MW before IFLS caused trip to feeders.	Generation Failure
6	03.08.2021	12-20 mins	Marina, Ocean Village, Waterport Terraces. King's Bastion, Cornwall's Lane, Governor's Parade. Alameda, Sandpits, Rosia Bay.	Set 2 tripped due to Knock-control communication failure. Energyst North did not pick up any load.	Software Failure
7	24.08.2021	40 mins	Ex-Mod districts	JBDC HV panel 5 tripped due to Phase Fault as indicated at Panel Protection at 1.7 MW. Power restored through Panel 22 MHDC. Investigation ongoing.	Network Failure

275 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, obviously I am grateful for the schedule that the hon. Member has just handed to us and I will, as I stand, look through it and ask supplementaries as may be relevant, but it may be that we need to come back to this issue in due course once we study the detail. But just from a cursory look at this, it is obvious that there have been more than 30 power cuts since 1st January 2017, and while the hon. Member talks about creaking infrastructure, the reality is that it has been nearly 10 years since the Government took office and the number of

280 power cuts in the last few years has been significant. You can see 14 in 2019 and another six in 2020 and seven in 2021. They are of different lengths, but certainly there are power cuts that range from a few minutes to over two or three hours.

285 So is the Minister saying that all of that – and I can see from the 'Reasons' column that not all of that is related to a roll-out of investment in the network, they are obviously related to various causes. So what can the Minister say about that?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, there are always different reasons as to why we have power failure. From the chart, from the record that the hon. Member has he will see that we have traditional generation failure, lack of power because something has happened in the station; network failure on the grid, somewhere on the lines some of that creaking infrastructure has failed. It could be that a building contractor has drilled through a cable, causing a power failure, which there is that here too; and one of the new reasons is software failure, obviously new because there was no software in the previous systems by comparison to what we have today.

So the reasons for the power failures vary significantly and the infrastructure that we have, which we are now rolling out to rebuild over the next years, will deal with high voltage, low-voltage substations, as well as the interconnecting systems between them. So the grid is enormous, the grid is huge and many of the times the failures occur through no fault of generation. But, again, even in generation when you build a new power station like we have, which is new and innovative, this is not like a car which you start and it should not fail. Generation systems of this complexity and this size will have teething problems and will have issues. These go on for some considerable period of time. The hon. Member will know that we have a company operating the new power station for its first 12 months precisely in order to help us to deal with the teething problems that we expected to encounter, and indeed are encountering. So nobody should be surprised that it is going to take us some time to get to the situation where we have less and less of these power cuts.

In terms of power generation, one of the issues or items that the GEA is currently considering ... *(Interjection)* So if you look at one of the systems of power generation, we are looking at the option of having basically a large battery which will withstand for a period of time if there is a power failure in one or two or three or four sets, and it would basically give enough time to restart the particular engines if and when possible. It will also help to stabilise the power supply, which I think would be indeed welcomed by the majority of users.

So a whole host of reasons as to why and how these things happen. But, as far as I am told by the GEA, who are the experts, that what we are experiencing *this* year and since the commencement of operation of the new facility, it is very much anticipated and expected and being dealt with.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, obviously, I can see from the column and the hon. Member's explanation that indeed the reasons for various power cuts are wide-ranging. They go from technical issues to human error – there are some of those; and some faults of cables. Or that simply things trip, but you do not get an explanation beyond that as to the cause of the trip, whether that is something systemic which is related to the infrastructure, or whether it is a particular reaction to something else in the structure. *(Interjection)* Yes, there is an explanation, but it is an abbreviated explanation, Mr Speaker, and unless you are a technical electrical engineer it would be difficult to discern what cause is specifically related to that and whether it is related to the infrastructure or not.

The question I had for the hon. Member is: given that there are a number of these power cuts that have been happening every year, does the Electricity Authority analyse, when power cuts happen, whether the fault is something that is, if I can call it, 'light technical' or whether it is something that requires an infrastructural improvement? Is that an ongoing process that the Authority are involved in?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, every time there is a power cut the GEA are required to know and understand what caused it. Indeed, in some of the instances during my time with responsibility for the GEA, this has been a significant amount of work. But of course they are simply not going to switch the power on and hope it never happens again. Each and every occasion there is a power cut, a full investigation is carried out by the GEA to understand precisely what has happened and to ensure, as far as is possible, that it will not happen again. That is exactly what they do, yes.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EDUCATION

Q215/2021

**St Martin's School –
Number of students and age ranges**

Clerk: Question 215. The Hon. E J Reyes.

340 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can Government provide details of the numbers of students currently enrolled at St Martin's School with a breakdown of age ranges?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for the Environment and Education.

345 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Yes, Mr Speaker, I will now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

Answer to Question 215

Age in years	Total number of children
2	18
3	11
4	14
5	10
6	4
7	5
8	4
9	6
10	2
11	3
12	5
13	3
14	4
15	3

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q216/2021
Vocational courses –
Numbers, establishments, completion, qualifications

350 **Clerk:** Question 216. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Mr Speaker: May I interject at this moment?

If the Hon. Mr Reyes has a supplementary, or any other Member has a supplementary to make, then by all means he can do so, but he does not have to do it immediately, we can continue with
355 the rest of the questions.

Is that acceptable? Yes?

Right, let's continue with Question 216.

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

360 Yes, all I need to do is really add up the total number of children in each age range to provide a grand total, but I am very grateful for your offer in case something does crop up from there.

On 216 specifically, Mr Speaker, can Government provide details of which Vocational Courses are being delivered at our schools for the academic year 2021/22, together with details of
365 numbers of students following these courses, the educational establishment delivering the courses, the completion date of the courses and the qualifications obtainable upon successful completion of said courses?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

370 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, there are a total of 18 students who will complete their Level 2 Hair and Beauty Course delivered at Westside and Bayside schools, this academic year. An additional nine from Bayside and seven from Westside are expected to complete the same course next year.

We have 78 students at Bayside and 23 students at Westside who will complete their Level 2
375 Digital Technologies qualification at the end of this academic year. A further 24 students from Bayside and three from Westside are expected to complete their Level 2 Digital Technologies qualification in 2023.

We must not forget that we also have 85 students at our comprehensives and 377 students at
380 the Gibraltar College who are following courses which are vocationally assessed. That is, they are in subject areas which are not traditionally considered as vocational subjects, but are being assessed in a vocational manner. This includes the four students who are now working towards the new Music Performance qualification which was introduced this year. This number of students does not include those students who at some point in their journey are completing Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network qualifications which are vocationally assessed at Level 1
385 or Level 2 at our comprehensive schools.

In order to assist further I now hand over a schedule with a breakdown of the information requested.

Answer to Question 216

Vocational Courses & Vocationally Assessed Courses 2022			
Course	Bayside	Westside	Date of Completion
Hair and Beauty Level 2	0	18	2022
Hair and Beauty Level 2	9	7	2023
Digital Technologies Level 2	78	23	2022
Digital Technologies Level 2	24	3	2023
Vocationally Assessed Courses			
Course	Bayside	Westside	Date of Completion
Cambridge National Child Development Level 2	0	58	2022
Cambridge National Child Development Level 2		27	2023
Course	Gibraltar College	Date of Completion	
ASDAN Preparing for Adulthood (Entry Level)	4	2022	
ASDAN Certificate in Personal & Social Development (Level 1)	8	2023	
ASDAN Certificate in Personal & Social Development (Level 1)	3	2022	
Award In Health & Social Care (Level 1/2)	20	2022	
Certificate in Engineering & Technology (Level 1)	21	2022	
Award in Administration (Level 1)	26	2022	
Technical Certificate in IT (Level 2)	26	2022	
Certificate in Enterprise & Marketing (Level 2)	12	2022	
Certificate in Health & Social Care (Level 2)	22	2022	
Certificate in Engineering & Technology (Level 2)	19	2022	
Cart in Administration (Level 2)	36	2022	
Certificate In Applied Business (Level 3)	22	2022	
Extended Certificate in Applied Business (Level 3)	15	2022	
Technical Certificate in Health & Social Care (Level 3)	55	2022	
Technical Extended Certificate in Health & Social Care (Level 3)	38	2022	
Technical Certificate in IT (Level 3)	19	2022	
Technical Extended Certificate in IT (Level 3)	27	2022	
Music Performance	4	2023	

Clerk: The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

390

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

The Minister, in his answer, said that there were also courses that have some part of it which are traditionally vocationally assessed. I do not know at what level, but are those here in this chart, or are those over and above? Because he could have been referring to the four students at the college who are under the heading of music performance, and if that is the case he does not tell me whether it is a Level 1 or Level 2 type of qualification. It could even be a Level 3, which is equivalent to the A-level. I am not certain what standard of level qualification that achieves.

395

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it is a Level 3. It is an A-level equivalent.

400

Clerk: The Hon. Damon Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. Can I go back to the Hon. Minister's answer to question 215?

405 My total is 92. I am not sure if that is correct, if I have passed with flying colours as far as addition is concerned. Can I ask him whether he is satisfied that the new school is of a sufficient size to cater for this number of children? And at what stage does he consider, if he is not so satisfied, that there may be a requirement to build further floors and an extension to that school in order to cater for the, what is clear, rising number of children who need this special needs facility?

410

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the school is adequate at present. There is clearly an increase in the number of children who are being identified.

415 Not all the children who are essentially in Early Bird, which is a nursery section, aged two and three, will necessarily continue in St Martin's because some of those after assessment and after assistance are likely to go into mainstream schools. But we have to keep an eye on this. If the number continues to be on the increase, then clearly we will have to assess and plan ahead for the next five or 10 years. At the moment we are fairly comfortable, but clearly the much higher number of children who have come in this year is something that we have to keep an eye on.

420

Hon. D J Bossino: Does he have a number as to a maximum capacity for that school? Is that available to him, beyond which it would become nigh on impossible to cater for children above that number?

425

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I would have to consult on a specific number.

Mr Speaker: We will have just one final supplementary on this.

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

430 I was referring to, because I think my colleague was too, with Question 215, some minor thing has cropped up in reply to the schedule the Minister gave me for Question 216, if that is permissible by you?

435 Mr Speaker, a minor clarification. On the part of the Gibraltar College there are 20 students due to complete their Award in Health & Social Care in 2022, but it says in brackets '(Level 1/2)'. It should either be Level 1 or Level 2 because they are two completely different curriculums that are being delivered. It is not one of those things where you follow a course, Level 1 has a set curriculum and Level 2 has a set curriculum. So I do not know. Are the students aiming towards Level 1 or Level 2?

440

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I think it is because they actually have the option of continuing to Level 2 and the distinction is not made here. But I will check and I am very happy to provide that information to the hon. Member.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker, that would help tremendously.

445 I do understand it makes a bit of sense, but if they do continue to Level 2, then the end date will probably be a year later. So for the record and for Education lists clarification, I would be grateful if the Minister could eventually give us information.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q217/2021
Mandatory scholarships –
Number granted, commencing 2021-22

Clerk: Question 217. The Hon. E J Reyes.

450

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of the number of new Mandatory Scholarships which have been granted and commencing during the 2021/22 Academic Year?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

455

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Government has granted 217 new mandatory scholarships. The process is still ongoing and this number is expected to increase over the next few days.

Mr Speaker, some students are still processing their documentations and so on, so it is likely that there will be at least a few more coming up shortly.

460

Hon. E J Reyes: And obviously, Mr Speaker, my question was with the new Mandatory scholarship year, but am I correct in saying that students still have an option of not necessarily taking up the offer for a mandatory scholarship at the start of *this* academic year, but they could delay it for a year? If that option is available then those figures will appear next year.

465

In the manner I have not asked for it, but the Minister might be aware, there could be students who are taking up this year now, what could have been taken up by somebody doing a scholarship last year. If he ever does come across those details it would be interesting for statistics purposes to have them.

470

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I do not have those details. It is possible to take a gap year. Normally, the students would advise the Department of Education *this* year about them wanting to take a gap year and then that would be considered and it would normally be allowed at that level.

475

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q218, Q225 and Q226/2021
New applications for Discretionary Scholarships –
Numbers; original success, or upon appeal; or unsuccessful, with reasons

Clerk: Question 218. The Hon. E J Reyes.

480

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government say how many new applications for Discretionary Scholarships were received for the academic year 2021/22 and, of these, how many were: (1) Successful applications as per original applications; (2) Successful applications after appeals lodged by applicants; and (3) Not successful at all, together with reasons why?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. Minister for the Environment and Education.

485

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 225 and 226.

Clerk: Question 225, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

490 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Of the discretionary grants refused, how many were successful on appeal?

Clerk: Question 226. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

495 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Can Government provide a list of: Discretionary grant applications by subject for which funding has been sought; followed by which applications were approved/declined; and, in the case of unsuccessful applications, what reason was given for refusal?

500 **Clerk:** Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, a total of 206 new applications for Discretionary scholarships were received; and 141 applications were successful as per their original application. An additional 39 were funded upon appeal; and 26 applications were not funded. Four of these applications were from individuals who did not meet the eligibility criteria. Another four applied for a programme which would not be funded by the Discretionary process. The unsuccessful included requests for funding for a third degree or for courses to be taken some time after completion of the previous degree, or was for a subject unrelated to the original degree.

I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

510 **Answer to Question 226**

Course Name	Initial	Reason
Access to Nursing	Approved	
Accountancy and Tax	Approved	
Accounting and Finance	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Adult Nursing	Approved	
Advanced Computer Science	Approved	
Advanced Diploma in Accounting	Approved	
Advanced Diploma in Accounting and	Approved	
Applied Clinical Psychology	Approved	
Applied Professional Studies in Education	Approved	
Archaeology	Approved	
Architecture	Approved	
Architecture	Approved	
Architecture	Not Eligible	Applicant did not meet the eligibility criteria.
Architecture	Approved	
Architecture	Approved	
Art and Design: Secondary with Qualified Teacher Status	Approved	
Association of Accounting Technicians	Approved	
Bachelor of Business Administration	Approved	
Bar Practice Course	Approved	
Bar Training Course	Approved	
Bar Training Course	Approved	
Bar Training Course	Approved	
Bar Vocational Studies	Approved	
Batchelor of Business Administration	Approved	
Biochemistry with Molecular Biology and	Approved	
Business Administration	Approved	
Business Administration	Approved	

Business Administration	Approved	
Business Administration	Approved	
Business Administration - Maritime	Declined	
Canine & Feline Behaviour & Welfare	Declined	
Cellular and Molecular Medicine	Approved	
CITBAC LEVEL 3	Declined	
Civil Engineering	Approved	
Clinical dermatology	Approved	
Clinical Health Psychology and Wellbeing	Approved	
CMI Leadership and Management	Declined	
Comparative Literary Studies	Approved	
Composition for Screen	Approved	
Computing and Information Systems	Approved	
Computing and Information Systems	Approved	
Consumer Behaviour	Approved	
Contemporary Performance Practice Writing for Performs	Approved	
Counselling	Declined	
Counselling	Approved	
Creative Writing	Approved	
Creative writing and Journalism	Approved	
Cultural and Critical Theory	Approved	
Designing Architecture	Approved	
Dietetics and Nutrition	Declined	
Doctor of Philosophy in Materials	Declined	
Drug Discovery and Pharmaceutical Sciences	Approved	
Endangered Species Recovery and Conservation	Approved	
English Literature	Approved	
Environmental Health	Approved	
Events Management And Music Business	Approved	
Fashion Photography	Declined	
Finance	Approved	
Finance and Accounting	Approved	
Fine Art in Writing for Stage and Broadcast Media	Approved	
Fine Art: Painting	Approved	
Football Coaching and Analysis	Approved	
Forensic Science	Approved	
Forensic Science	Approved	
Global MBA	Approved	
Graduate Diploma in Law	Approved	
Graduate Diploma in Law	Declined	
Graphic Design	Declined	
HCPC Registration	Declined	Chosen course did not meet the necessary criteria with respect to the level of the qualification required for funding applications to be considered.
HCPC Registration	Declined	Chosen course did not meet the necessary criteria with respect to the level of the qualification required for funding applications to be considered.
Health Psychology	Approved	
Health Psychology	Approved	
Health Psychology	Approved	
Human Computer Interactions	Declined	
Implantology	Approved	
International Business	Approved	
International Business	Approved	
International Business Management	Approved	
International Tourism Management	Approved	
Journalism	Approved	
Law	Approved	
Law	Approved	
Leadership and Management	Approved	
Leadership and Management	Approved	
Leadership and Management	Approved	

PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Not Eligible	Applicant did not meet the eligibility criteria.
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
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PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PGCE	Approved	
PhD	Approved	
PhD in Psychology	Declined	
PhD Research	Approved	
Philosophy	Declined	
Physician Associate Studies	Approved	
Physician Associate Studies	Approved	
Primary PGCE	Approved	
Public Policy	Approved	
Registration for Biomedical Scientist	Declined	Chosen course did not meet the necessary criteria with respect to the level of the qualification required for funding applications to be considered.
Social Work	Approved	
Social Work	Approved	
Sport and Exercise Medicine	Approved	
Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation with Foundation Year in Sport and Health	Approved	
Strength and Conditioning	Declined	
Sustainability & Environmental Modelling	Approved	
Sustainable Intervention in the Built Environment	Approved	
Theatre (Musical Theatre)	Approved	
Top-up module	Declined	Chosen course did not meet the necessary criteria with respect to the level of the qualification required for funding applications to be considered.
Translation Studies	Approved	
Visual Communication	Declined	
Zoo Conservation Biology	Approved	

515 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can I understand a little bit more from the Hon. Minister, when the applications that originally get declined and then they get approved the second time round. Where is the ... ? Let's say, at the beginning, there is no funding for the extra students which then make the grade to be funded. If there is a funding cap originally, how does Government overcome that funding cap, or does it have an allocated amount of funding in order to provide for the second-time applicants who have initially been declined? How does the budgetary policy on this work?

520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the funding is set here in Parliament during the Budget session, and then we have an independent panel which considers the applications and ranks them,

and the first consideration clearly is in relation to the funding available. Then those that appeal are considered on their merits to see whether there is cause for making that available and clearly supplementary funds would be required for us to be able to fund those students.

525 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for that answer.

I would like to ask him if perhaps, given the sentiments that arose from so many disappointed students this year and the poor timing in which they were given this news, would the Hon. Minister agree that there could have been more done by way of support and that perhaps they will try and change their timing next year, so that students do not get left in the lurch in the last week of August as they did this year, which causes a lot of issues and heartache for them, and logistical nightmares?

530 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, part of the delay was precisely in trying to assess and see how we could fund as many as we possibly could, but I have already asked the new Director of Education to work with me in reviewing the process to ensure it is streamlined and effective and efficient as from next year.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Edwin Reyes.

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

Referring to the schedule the Minister has handed out. He said in answer to my question that 26 applicants had not been successful. In this schedule he lists the subjects that have been approved and there are only *eight* identified as not being successful, mainly for the reasons that either the applicant did not meet the eligibility criteria or that the children caught did not meet the necessary criteria in respect to the level of qualification – that I take it probably because it was below a Bachelor's degree level, and that could not meet that. But that only accounts for eight. There are others missing.

545 I know he mentioned, at some stage, that one applicant seems to have been an application for a third degree, but that does not make him ineligible, it was probably because it is a discretionary award that the Board may have decided we are not going any further. But I am missing that information from this answer.

555 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has looked at the third column. There is in the second column a larger number of declined. The explanation specifically has not been given. They fall under the three categories that I mentioned in my answer: a third degree; time after completion; or an unrelated subject. The reason why those have not been specified is because Gibraltar, being as small as it is, if you look at the reason and then you look at the subject, you are going to identify the person.

560 If he wants me to go into further details I am happy to do that behind your Chair, but those that are declined without an entry in the third column fall under the categories in the main text of my answer.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, it does make sense.

565 May I very humbly suggest, Mr Speaker – because the Minister does facilitate a lot in his answers employing the schedules – however, the size of the printout for those of us and I think, Mr Speaker, you can perhaps empathise (*Interjection*) with the hon. Members yourself, those of us who are midway through our 60s and have reading difficulties. Could the font of the print be *slightly* larger, Mr Speaker, to facilitate our reading? Because, despite reading glasses, we do struggle a little bit.

570 Then, Mr Speaker, also on a serious note, the Minister just mentioned something for which I wanted clarification. He said now that the possible reason could be the *length*. Are you referring

to the gap between when the individual graduated and is now asking for a discretionary? Is there a rule with a discretionary that if a certain length of time has passed then that applicant becomes automatically ineligible?

575 Can he clarify a bit on that point?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, as to the second part, it is discretionary and that is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

580 On the first, being more into my mid-60s than he is, Mr Speaker, I too struggle, but I manage because I am short-sighted to take my glasses off and bring my paper closer. But I do understand exactly what he is referring to. Sometimes there is so much information that the hon. Member requests, Mr Speaker, that I do not want to use reams and reams of A3 paper, or A1 paper even, in order to reply. But I take his point.

Thank you very much.

585

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

Hon. K Azopardi: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

590 Can I ask, just to pick up a point that the Hon. Minister said about a couple of answers ago, which is that I think I took an accurate note that supplementary funds would be requested to fund those additional students that had on appeal been successful. There are quite a few – I think statistically there were about 64 – presumably people who potentially could have appealed, and 39 were successful. I do not know if everyone appealed, but certainly 39 of the 64 remained there were successful.

595 I had assumed, I have to say that when the original process had been carried out on a merits-assessment basis by the independent panel, they would approve who they thought was merited to obtain it, in accordance with obviously that they may be subject to the financial cap imposed by the Budget, but it would not be the very last penny that they would be spending. But the way that the Minister answered suggested that there was at least all, or a large proportion of the additional successful applicants, who might have to require supplementary funding.

600 Is that the case as I understood it? And, if so, has the Minister or the Department been able to cost the supplementary funding that would be required to enable that?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, this engages my public finance responsibilities.

605 What the appeals process identified, Mr Speaker, was that a lot of people had been rightly rejected by the panel as applicants for discretionary scholarships, because actually they should have applied for *mandatory* scholarships. They were *not* applications for discretionary scholarships, although those were the boxes that had been ticked. Therefore, there will have to be an allocation of a large number – and I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the number of which, 610 on my feet. A large number of those will be funded through the *mandatory* applications column, because that is what the appeal process identified. Some of the rejections were because this is not a discretionary application, it is a mandatory application.

615 The person is told that they are rejected as a discretionary applicant. Then they are advised that actually they are granted as a mandatory applicant. Therefore the column that provides under the Department of Education, the spending for mandatory applicants, will have to change also. Hon. Members will know that is a demand-led column where the best that we can do in terms of estimating is to look at the average of numbers who have had the mandatory scholarships in years before and extrapolate that forward; and that will obviously fluctuate. I believe that is the column that is going to rise the most, and that will be affected by the mechanisms that we have had in 620 place this year for A-level results, which have not been examined and have been a teacher-led assessment. It will be affected by those who are covered by our policy of granting a first Masters as a mandatory scholarship and, indeed, of continuing to grant those who seek a professional

qualification to bring into effect their first degrees also as mandatory applications. So that affects that calculation.

625 You are then left, Mr Speaker, with a number who are what one might describe as *proper* applications for discretionary scholarships. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how that column will change in terms of funding. We have said 'supplementary' here, I think that is the term of art. There may be some 'viring' between the heads in education and less supplementary, but hon. Members know that is something that is done at the level of controlling officers who will decide
630 whether they need to vire or seek supplementary, depending on how their numbers are developing in any particular financial year.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful for that answer. At least it is helpful to that extent.

I think the Chief Minister said that he does not know how many of the 39 were people who
635 really should have applied for mandatory. But perhaps given that we are discussing that, if either he or the Minister could revert to us once they coalesce around the specific numbers, how many of those 39 were really people who *should* have applied for a mandatory scholarship and would be granted that?

Then, secondly, if someone can help me on this basis. As I understood the process there is a
640 sifting being done, presumably by educationalists, some kind of panel in the Education Department, and it then goes on appeal. The appeal presumably is a separate body on which it contains different people. But again I am asking; I do not know. Is it that it is different people? Who is on each of the bodies? I am not asking for specific names, but can we have an idea of who is on it?

645 Then, thirdly, if some of the 39 should have really applied for mandatory awards and the first tier contains educationalists, why was that not spotted at that stage?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the original assessment is carried out by the scholarships panel, which includes some relatively junior members – I say, *relatively* junior members – of the
650 Department of Education, plus I think it is three independent members, but with a certain academic background. The appeal is done by senior members of the Department of Education. I think that there has been some confusion in that in the past the Masters have been dealt with as discretionary and not as mandatory, and that is where the confusion has been.

This is why I said to the hon. Lady I have asked the new director to completely review the
655 process so that everything can be clear and we have absolutely clear guidelines to make sure that this does not happen next time

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q219/2021

New applications for Distance Learning Scholarships 2021/2022 – Numbers; original success, or upon appeal; or unsuccessful, with reasons

Clerk: Question 219. The Hon. E J Reyes.

660

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government say how many new applications for Distance Learning Scholarships were received for the academic year 2021/22 and, of these, how many were: (1) Successful applications as per original applications; (2) Successful applications after appeals lodged by applicants; and (3) Not successful at all, together with reasons why?

665

Clerk: Answer the Hon. Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, we received 31 new applications for distance learning awards; 16 applications were successful as per their original application; one additional application was funded upon appeal; 14 applications were not funded.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Minister add something? My question said those who were not successful. Does he have any sort of general reasons why, as he did for the previous question?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, of course. There were a number which were not considered eligible and others which were beyond the allocated budget for distance learning.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q220/2021
Schools' green walls –
Replacing with artificial planting

Clerk: Question 220. The Hon. K Azopardi on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state that it will be removing the green walls at St Anne's and Notre Dame School and replacing the same with artificial planting?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I must say, I am really sorry that the Hon. Mr Phillips is not here because the answer is no, sir. But I would really like to know how it occurred to him that that was even the remotest possibility, Mr Speaker. *(Interjection)*

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q221/2021
Midtown Park trees –
Name of providing company

Clerk: Question 221. The Hon. K Azopardi on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the name of the company which provided the trees at the new Midtown Park?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the trees for the Midtown Park were provided by GJBS as the main contractor for the project.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

705 GJBS presumably obtains them from somewhere and, if so, which entity was that?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker.

710 They were sourced via Landform Consultants who are the designers of the park and, indeed, designed Commonwealth Park. They were sourced via Majestic Trees, which is the name of the company, and the olives and the corks came from Barcelona. The remaining trees came from Lyons.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, Majestic Trees is a Spanish entity, or was it ... ? I am just asking.

715 Majestic Trees is presumably not a Gibraltar entity, and these trees could not be sourced via a Gibraltar operator? Why would that be?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker, they are not in Gibraltar. These trees are very high quality, they are very mature. I know this market well, I used to work in it for 20 years. It is not possible to obtain that quality of trees, certainly anywhere in the surrounding area, and they were sourced – *(Interjection)* Sorry?

720

Yes, they were sourced by GJBS, absolutely. They were sourced by GJBS. There is nobody in Gibraltar who can grow these trees for us, they would not have the space; and, secondly, we had to ensure that we had the best quality trees available.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am sorry to hear the hon. Member say that we cannot obtain such high-quality trees in Gibraltar. That must be a real dismay to the hon. Member, given his track record *(Interjection)* as someone who works in this industry, who has got a track record as an environmentalist – that is what I meant.

725

Mr Speaker, from his – *(Interjection)* Yes, indeed! From his position as someone with knowledge in the area, why were these particular trees sourced, given that they may be difficult to grow here?

730

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker.

We would not be able to grow them here, and the reason why I said that is because we do not have the space to grow mature trees as a nursery. We just do not have the space. Those trees – if he happens to have walked through Commonwealth Park any time recently, he would have seen how well the trees do – but they had to be obtained elsewhere.

735

The ones in the park at Midtown will equally do very, very well. Some of them might not, there is always a slight percentage lost, but they had to be sourced from a reliable source, and that was simply not available here. But, as we were saying earlier, sourced *by* a Gibraltar company.

740

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q222/2021

Removal of jellyfish nets – Which beaches; and Government replacement policy

Clerk: Question 222. The Hon. K Azopardi.

745 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, have jellyfish nets been removed from beaches and, if so, which beaches and what is the Government's policy on their replacement?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

750 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, all the jellyfish nets have not been removed. They are placed every year and indeed we added one in the north side of Eastern beach in 2019.

One net was removed from Catalan Bay on 24th July because the shallowness of the sea this year resulted in it not being possible for the net to be properly anchored. This resulted in it repeatedly becoming detached, thus proving a significant safety hazard.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am not sure the hon. Member has answered. Perhaps he can volunteer an answer when he rises again as to the Government's policy on their replacement.

Is there an ongoing programme in respect of the replacement? Is the Government committed (*Interjection*) to ensure that jellyfish nets are placed in each of the relevant beaches?

760

Will there be an ongoing programme of maintenance? And, as one has been removed in Catalan Bay, will the Government commit to ensure that it is replaced in a good way in future? (*Interjections*)

765 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, these jellyfish nets were introduced by this Government. We have continually maintained them, we have increased the number (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) and we will continue to replace them.

As I explained, this year because of the shallowness of the sea there was not enough weight for them to be anchored down, they were coming loose with the slightest swell, and that was a danger. But of course they will be maintained as they are regularly, and if any should deteriorate they will be replaced.

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The number of jellyfish in the sea, sadly, because of the changes due to climate change, continues to increase, (*Interjection*) and totally vindicates this policy. (*Banging on desks*)

775 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, was the fact that it had to be replaced in Catalan Bay anything to do with the lack of maintenance of the jellyfish nets?

Has the Minister got any kind of sense of the cost of the maintenance programme of the jellyfish nets and their establishment in particular beaches?

780 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I would need to have notice of that question if we are going to go into a breakdown of costs. But the jellyfish net was removed from Catalan Bay because keeping it there floating about, roaming about, could have resulted in a child, or an elderly person, or a non-elderly non-child person getting entangled and drowning. So it was a health and safety measure. The maintenance is done regularly by local people with specialist support, and we are committed to continue to have this.

785

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q223/2021

Medicinal cannabis –

Commercial party discussions and opportunities

Clerk: Question 223. The Hon. K Azopardi.

790 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, what discussions with commercial parties have there been and what commercial opportunities has Government been approached on or is considering in relation to medicinal cannabis?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

795 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has been approached by two different commercial entities in respect of establishing a regulated industry for the production, import, export, marketing and sale of cannabis for medicinal purposes.

Government's plans in respect of this innovative and potentially thriving sector of Gibraltar's economy are set out in its Press Release 582/2021 and in the published Medicinal Cannabis Bill.

800 I sincerely hope that hon. Members opposite will support the Government's firm commitment to back the efforts of the private sector in establishing the appropriate legal and regulatory architecture that creates a medicinal cannabis industry robustly regulated to the highest of standards.

805 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, that unfortunately gives us very little information in respect of the question that I actually asked, apart from giving us the information that there are two entities that had been approached. I asked the question of what discussions there had been and what commercial opportunities had Government been approached on.

810 The Government says that it has been approached by two entities but has not given us, in the Minister's answer, specifics about the actual opportunities in respect of the medicinal cannabis industry that those entities are discussing. So can I ask the Minister to perhaps give us a bit more detail about the precise opportunities that those entities have approached the Government on?

815 Can I also ask him, (*Interjection*) once he finishes his aside, as to these two entities? Are they Gibraltar entities or Gibraltar-established entities; and are the beneficial owners of these entities resident in Gibraltar?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is asking a very specific question about a very specific area of policy: medicinal cannabis. The hon. Gentleman has asked us how many people have engaged with us in respect of this particular new policy area, and we have told him it is two. He has asked us what it is that they want to do in that area that they have approached us on and the answer, Mr Speaker, I think is glaringly obvious. It is to do the things which the Bill before the Parliament will permit, if the Parliament passes the Bill.

825 So it is very difficult, Mr Speaker, to see what the hon. Gentleman thinks we have been approached on, which would be beyond the writ that may go from this Parliament if we pass the Bill. Now we have presented the Bill as a Government Bill and therefore there is a very good chance it will pass, but it may be amended, Mr Speaker, etc. That is what it is we have been approached on.

830 My Ministry has been involved with the Ministry of the hon. Gentleman because there are potential public finance aspects to this, there are duties, etc., Mr Speaker, which will be of interest to the public purse. What each of them is talking to us about and how each of these entities, or indeed other entities in future, may wish to discuss with the Government, would have to be confidential because it is commercially sensitive to each of them. In other words, one may come with one proposal to do things in one particular way, which is their way of doing things and is proprietary; and ditto, another.

835 So discussing across the Floor of the House before the Bill is even an Act, what it is that we may or may not be able to see establish itself as an industry in Gibraltar is, I think, very much to create a hostage to fortune which may not enable us to see those things prosper. I am very happy to have a discussion with the hon. Gentleman and tell him what I know, and if the hon. Gentleman will happily tell me what he knows about what it is that these entities are proposing, but we do not think it would be fair to air publicly what has been put to us by two entities which may affect their ability to then do it, and there are competition issues here, etc.

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845 So the hon. Gentleman can rest assured that there is nothing proposed which is outside what would be proposed by the existing legislation before the House as a Bill. I am very happy to give him a heads-up privately whilst we have coffee, if he wishes. But I think going into those discussions publicly now would potentially mean that those discussions do not flourish. He, no doubt, wishes to see the Government's discussions with these entities flourish, if there is a law that provides for their business to be done properly in Gibraltar.

850 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I am happy to have that conversation with the hon. Member. I do not think it is, as he put it, glaringly obvious, that we can discern what they want to do from the Bill before Parliament, because the Bill before Parliament, he will appreciate when I make this comment, is a very widely drawn Bill. It would allow a number of things to happen and really what I was seeking to ask in my question is of all the number of things that the Bill would provide if it is made law, presumably these parties might be talking about doing everything under the sun as
855 provided for by the law, or may be actually asking about something extremely specific.

Without revealing commercial confidences, is it possible for the Government to let us know the specific nature of the proposal? If the answer that the hon. Member has given is 'No, because of commercial confidence issues', then I am happy to have the conversation with him.

860 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the answer is that we will not get into specifics, but if the answer the hon. Gentleman wants is that widely drawn, in other words, from a helicopter view, what type of business is it that you have been approached to do, then the answer has been given.

The Hon. Minister for Digital Services draws my attention to the fact that we have said in the first answer that two different commercial entities have approached us to establish a regulated
865 industry for production, import, export, marketing and sale of medicinal cannabis. So if he wanted to know whether they were widely drawn proposals, or they were narrow proposals in discrete areas, then I think we have given him the answer, Mr Speaker.

I would still nonetheless be delighted to have the coffee with him and talk about last night's or this weekend's football, which was particularly good from where I am sitting.

870

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, if I may ask the Hon. Minister, at what point in the last few years did these commercial discussions start to take place? Because from what
875 I remember, I put a motion to Parliament on medicinal cannabis four years ago and it was roundly let down by the entire House which voted against it. So from where I am standing, not in a commercial frame of mind, it could have been helping many people since four years ago.

880 So I would like to know at what point did the Government do a U-turn on their manifestation that it was not a good idea; and at what point did it start becoming a good idea and these commercial discussions started taking place?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, that is not the position, of course.

885 If the hon. Lady seeks to make memory and look back at the terms on which her motion was rejected, it would not reflect the things that she has said now, it is actually quite different. This is not a question of a U-turn, but actually ensuring that what we do is in keeping with what we consider to be in the best public interest of Gibraltar, and not simply supporting a widely drawn motion which was at the time seeking to, in our view, jump on the bandwagon of something that appeared to be popular to her.

890 Frankly, this is a very sensitive area of policy, which will engage also importation and exportation – importation of some aspects, sometimes potentially of seeds or potentially of dried leaves, the exportation of seeds potentially, exportation of oils – all of which has to be done in a

very controlled manner and which is quite different to the things that the hon. Lady was in her motion proposing, from our view.

895 So, far from a U-turn, this is more about taking the right highway and not U-turning on the same highway.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q224/2021

**Mask-wearing policy in schools –
Teachers warned or disciplined**

Clerk: Question 224. The Hon. K Azopardi.

900 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Have any teachers been warned or disciplined in respect of their compliance or otherwise with the policy requiring masks in schools since the beginning of the school term in September 2021?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education: (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, no teachers have been warned or disciplined in respect to their compliance with the policy of requiring masks in school.

910 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware if any concerns have been expressed by teachers, either directly to the teaching establishment or through the unions, in respect of the policy? If so, can he provide us with some information as to the nature of the concerns?

915 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, there have been no formal processes. There have been informal discussions with, I think it is about 20 members of staff, not all of them teachers, in relation to mask-wearing policy. We are just through the third week of term and the matter is being dealt with internally by discussion, without the need so far of any formal warning or disciplinary measures.

920 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, does the Minister know whether, in respect of those 20 members of staff, are those members of staff scattered around different schools, or is it in a particular school?

925 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I know of at least two schools, it could be more, but I would not like to commit without being able to check those figures. I would not like to mislead this House.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

**SOCIAL SECURITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE,
TELECOMMUNICATIONS & THE GSB**

Q210/2021

**Gibraltar Construction Training Centre and the Engineering Trades Training Centre –
Numbers; completion; qualifications**

Clerk: Question 210. The Hon. E J Reyes.

930 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can Government provide details of the number of Trainees currently enrolled at both the Gibraltar Construction Training Centre and the Engineering Trades Training Centre, providing details of the estimated completion date of such courses and the qualifications to be obtained upon successful completion of said courses?

935 **Clerk:** Answer the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Enterprise.

Minister for Social Security, Economic Development, Enterprise, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, there are 48 trainees currently enrolled at both the Gibraltar Construction Training Centre and Engineering Trades Training Centre.

940 Estimated completion in 2022: 13 x NVQ Level 2 in Building Maintenance; and two x NVQ Level 2 in Plumbing & Heating.

Estimated completion in 2023: nine x NVQ Level 2 in Building Maintenance; three x NVQ Level 2 in Plumbing & Heating; one x NVQ Level 3 in Fabrication & Welding; six x NVQ Level 3 in Electrical training; two x NVQ Level 3 in Mechanical training.

945 Estimated completion in 2024: two x NVQ Level 3 in Fabrication & Welding; five x NVQ Level 3 in Electrical; five x NVQ Level 3 in Mechanical.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q211/2021

**Gibraltar twelve-sided coin –
Estimated date of issue**

Clerk: Question 211. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

950

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: When will Gibraltar be able to issue its own twelve-sided one pound coin, given the Minister for Economic Development said in 2017 that Gibraltar would be in a position to do so by March 2018?

955 **Clerk:** Answer the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Enterprise.

Minister for Social Security, Economic Development, Enterprise, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, no decision has been taken yet by the Treasury on the date of the issue of the 12-sided £1 coin.

960

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I understand that the companies who make coin machines, the parking and vending machines, no longer build machines which accept the old circular coins. For example, the parking machine at the ICC does not accept them either. *(Interjection)* Are we not getting into a complicated situation where our Gibraltar pound is on the

965 one hand legal tender, but on the other not accepted, causing difficulty for merchants and the
general economy in that sense? (*Interjection*)

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, the only bit that sounded like a question was: are we getting
into a bad situation? The answer is: not as far as I am concerned.

970

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, it was a question. We are running around without
coins that are accepted in machines. I would ask again to the Minister for Economic Development
if it is a concern if he wants to try and catalyse a process to ensure that these coins get minted
because it is causing disruption to our machines in Gibraltar? I think that this is an issue which I
975 I have had various representations on and it is a valid issue, on which I would expect a more
substantial answer from the Minister, please.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The hon. questioner has asked, am I in a position to tell them when it is
going to be done, and the answer that I have given is the answer I got from the Treasury, that they
980 have not yet decided on a date. We have got millions of the existing coins in circulation. We have
not yet figured out what we will do if they all start coming back, which could mean a considerable
cost to the Government.

I have not had the representations the hon. Member has had. Perhaps she can tell the people
who went to see her to come and see me.

985

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, if they do come and see him, is he going to give them
the same answer that he has given me in this House, as a representative of these people; or will
he give them another different answer?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, the answer they will get is dependent on the question that
they ask; and since the Hon. Member is here, not as somebody that makes a living out of machines
but makes a living out of a collective vote, I imagine it will not necessarily require the same answer.
990 (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker: One final and then we –

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker may I just rectify, I am not here to collect votes, I am
here to represent people as I was elected to do. But, given that I have asked the Minister in my
question, he said that he would be in a position to advise on the minting by 2018. Can he now give
1000 us a reason why, three years later, he is not in a position to give us an answer that he said he
would be in a position to do so four years ago, a year later?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I have just given her the information, although probably it
was too complex for her to understand it. (*Interjection*) So I will simplify it for her.

1005 That 2018 was the point at which the coins were expected to be made available for those who
wanted the blanks because, at the beginning, the United Kingdom Royal Mint was taking all that
was being supplied and not allowing any of the overseas territories – those that have coins similar
to the UK or the Channel Islands – to use the blanks. So the blanks were expected to be available
from 2018. I do not know whether they were or not, since then.

1010 But the decision on changing what we are doing here – which will be done when a new set of
coins is made for the whole, not just for the pound – is dependent on the consideration of the
costs involved. Not in having the coins, but in taking back all the ones that are in circulation. That
decision has not been taken by the Treasury and it is not a decision that I will take.

Adjournment

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

1015

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I propose that the House should now adjourn to Thursday, 23rd September at 3.30 p.m. in the afternoon, when we should all come back to represent the people that elected us, the majority of which decided we should sit here.

1020

Mr Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 23rd September 2021 at 3.30 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 23rd September at 3.30 p.m.

Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

1025

The House will now adjourn to Thursday, 23rd September 2021 at 3.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 5.05 p.m.