



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.40 p.m. – 7.40 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 17th March 2021

Contents

Questions for Oral Answer	3
Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security.....	3
Q519/2020 Health and safety inspections at GibDock – Numbers in 2019 and 2020	3
Q520/2020 Maternity grants and allowances – Reason for delays in applications	3
Q521/2020 Carers’ allowance – How to apply	5
Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education	6
Q547/2021 Dog fouling – Number of fines imposed.....	6
Q548-50/2020 Barbary macaques – Warning signs and safety measures.....	7
Q551/2020 Governor’s Street – Tree planting	8
Q552/2020 School buses – Rationale for cancelling	9
Q553/2020 Fly tipping – Number of complaints and prosecutions	9
Q554/2020 Waste Treatment Plan – Update	11
Q555/2020 Water production – Less energy-intensive methods	11
Q556/2020 Midtown noise mitigation – Update	12
Q557-8/2020 Environmental Agency – GibDock	12
Q559-60/2020 Air quality – Monitoring	16
Q561-71/2020 Air quality – Sensor costs and data collected	19
Q572/2020 High-pollutant bikes – Possible ban	23
Q573-5/2020 Idling vehicles – Government policy	24

Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.....	25
Q597/2020 Pedestrian crossing at Jumpers Building – Reinstatement.....	25
Q598/2020 Green bus service – Plans	26
Q599-603/2020 Line Wall Road closure – Impact	27
Q604/2020 Congestion charge – Non-resident vehicles	35
Q605-8/2020 Pay and display machines – Total cost	37
Q609-10/2020 Public electric vehicles – Charging points.....	39
Q611-16/2020 School buses – Availability and parking provision.....	40
Q617/2020 Introduction of STTPP – Number of cars removed since.....	41
Q618/2020 Illegal exhausts – Introduction of legislation	41
Q619/2020 Two stroke and electric motorbikes – Number sold.....	42
Q620/2020 Segregated cycle lanes – Testing efficacy	42
Q621/2020 Bicycle parking – Completion date	44
Q622/2020 Whitham’s Road and Castle Road – Driving against traffic flow	44
Q623/2020 International Driving Licences – Counter availability	45
Q624/2020 Bunker barge – Transfer procedures	46
Q625-31/2020 Oil spill – Procedures	47
Q632/2020 CSSC <i>Cape Town</i> explosion – Investigation update	51
Q633/2020 Business licences – Application delays	52
Q634/2020 Coach parking – Overnight reductions	53
Q635/2020 Room occupancy rates – Arrivals and tourist arrivals	54
Q636/2020 Hotel rooms – Reason for shortage.....	55
Q637/2020 Gibraltar-Malaga helicopter service – Start date	57
Q638-41/2020 Air services to Gibraltar – Financial incentives.....	58
Q642-3/2020 Gibraltar Tourist Board – New CEO appointment	62
Q644/2020 Cruise calls – Return to Gibraltar	65
Q645/2020 Gibraltar economy – ‘Back better than it was’	66
Q515/2020 Rental homes currently unoccupied – Reasons not yet allocated – Supplementary to original answer	69
Q646/2020 Royal Gibraltar Post Office – Electric vehicles lease arrangement	70
Q647/2020 Queensway parking – Plans for new spaces	73
Q648/2020 Line Wall Road – Data collected and costs incurred.....	74
Q649/2020 Electric vehicles – Possible subsidies	75
Q650/2020 Insurance companies – Payment of claims.....	77
Adjournment.....	79
<i>The House adjourned at 7.40 p.m.</i>	79

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.40 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*]

Questions for Oral Answer

EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Q519/2020

Health and safety inspections at GibDock – Numbers in 2019 and 2020

Clerk: Wednesday, 17th March 2021, Meeting of Parliament. Order of Proceedings: We continue with Answers to Oral Questions.

We commence at Question 519 and the questioner is the Hon. E J Phillips.

5

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of health and safety inspections which have been conducted at GibDock in the years 2019 and 2020 and the purpose of such inspections?

10

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

Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the number of inspections undertaken at GibDock in the years 2019 and 2020 respectively were six and two.

15

The purposes of the inspections were as follows: inspection of radioactive isotope to be used; inspection of accident location and investigation; inspection of GibDock premises and gathering evidence; inspection of site equipment, to be secured for approaching gale; inspection to assess compliance of lifting equipment and PPE; inspection of workshop and machinery which caused amputation of part/finger of an employee; inspection of premises where proposed liquid nitrogen works were scheduled; inspection of COVID-19 PPE available.

20

Q520/2020

Maternity grants and allowances – Reason for delays in applications

Clerk: Question 520, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state the reason for long delays in the processing of applications for maternity grants and allowances?

25

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

Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, following contingency plans to handle the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that arose from this, the administration of these benefits resulted in a backlog as the Department moved quickly to reduce gatherings in public areas and explore alternative methods of providing its services. This included the rotation of teams and a transition from counters to emails and drop off boxes, which as with all transitions, experienced teething problems.

30
35 It should be noted that whilst COVID contingency measures were not implemented until early March, applications for Maternity Allowance and Grant can be made up to 11 and nine weeks respectively, before the birth of the child. Therefore, at the start of each year there are already a number of applications for each benefit awaiting to be processed.

40 Whilst we acknowledge that there have been delays in processing applications for these benefits, I can confirm that the lead times for these are now back to normal levels. I would also like to add that Maternity Allowance is paid for 18 weeks, which was previously paid at fortnightly intervals in cash at the Department, requiring the applicant to have to go and queue at the DSS every two weeks to receive their benefit. As part of the response to the pandemic, these monies are now credited directly into the applicant's bank account thus negating the need for them to visit the department at all.

45

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer to the question. This arose as a result of a number of people approaching the Opposition in respect of the long delays that are being experienced, mainly on the area of counter service. At the time there was I think only one person that was dealing with this particular issue and recent emails that I have received in in the last, I would probably say, about 14 to 20 days, people are still experiencing some delays in relation to process.

50
55 So I just question a bit further as to what the Minister means by normal service, if those constituents that are approaching me in relation to maternity grant allowances are still experiencing delays?

55

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I will have to ask my staff at DSS what exactly they refer to as normal. We are aware that there is obviously some lapse by them between applying for the benefit and receiving it, so I would assume that there are what we call normal lapses between date of application and payment, which we have been used to forever, so that is what they refer to as normal.

60

65 What was abnormal was, unfortunately, that people have suffered; obviously we were not in a position to remedy and as I report back to the House now things are back to normal. If the hon. Member would like me to give them further details, how much a person should reasonably be waiting, I would be very happy to define what normal is for the Department, I am aware what that is.

Hon E J Phillips: I have one further question and that relates to the recent press statement by the Government insofar as digitalising the service that I think the Hon. Mr Isola dealt with in interviews. Is it envisaged that this type of benefit will also be incorporated into a platform that will deliver, effectively, speed to the customer? I.e. will these types of benefits be incorporated into the processes of Digital Gibraltar?

70

Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Yes indeed, Mr Speaker. It is the intention that this will, as I explained yesterday, as we are working through each of the

75 Departments bringing them onto eServices, people will be able to apply for their Social Security benefits and grants in the same way online, like everybody else is.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q521/2020
Carers' allowance –
How to apply

Clerk: Question 521, the Hon. E J Phillips.

80

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how people can go about applying for carers' allowance?

85

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

90

Minister for Employment, Health and Safety and Social Security (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, there are no provisions for a carers' allowance under Gibraltar's Social Security. If the Hon. Member can clarify what he means by the 'carers' allowance' I would be more than happy to reply to him in writing.

95

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, this was a commitment actually by this side of the House in the last General Election and indeed I think there was some debate between Members during the General Election about individuals that remain at home with and who care for elderly and those voters that have disabilities, Mr Speaker.

The carers' allowance was something that this side of the House was committed to delivering if it was elected into Government and I simply ask the question as to whether the Government is considering carers' allowance in the context of benefits?

100

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. Gentleman that it was this side of the House that won the election and that side of the House which lost it. The Hon. Member refers to the care allowance, not the carers' allowance. This is, as he rightly says, paid in respect of a child who is being cared for by a relative of the child. They can apply for this allowance to the Director of Social Security via the care allowance application form, so there is a process for that.

105

Hon E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, one further question. As the Minister knows, of course they won the election, but with any luck and fair wind, they will be sitting on this side of the House in the not-too-distant future. I look forward to implementing the carers' allowance, which was a commitment by this side of the House, Mr Speaker. But I did ask him specifically about carers' allowance, which is somewhat different to care allowance. There is no indication from him as to whether they will consider that?

110

115

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, seeing how certain people have brought up regarding who won the election, it was this side of the House, the Government today, has a care allowance, which is paid. The issue in this question was that the Hon. Member referred to as the carers' allowance and this is why we asked, I stated in the question, if he could clarify that, because if it was in fact the care allowance, which it was because it was referring to the person who was being looked after or who was looking after the child, but as I said earlier this allowance is available to people

120 by applying directly to the Department and the Director of Social Insurance via the relevant forms,
which is the care allowance application form.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EDUCATION

Q547/2021

**Dog fouling –
Number of fines imposed**

Clerk: Question 547, the Hon. E J Phillips.

125 **The Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of fines imposed on
dog owners in relation to dog fouling over the last 12 months?

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

130 **Minster for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E
Cortes):** Mr Speaker, 39 patrols were carried out by the Environmental Agency with 118 samples
collected. There was one positive DNA match which resulted in the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

135 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I know that the Government invested a lot of time, effort and
indeed money in establishing the profiling of dog faeces in order to fine individuals who carelessly
allow their dogs to foul on our streets, making them unsightly not only for our community, but
also for those that visit our shores and spend their hard-earned money in our jurisdiction.

140 Mr Speaker, isn't this an example of a Government policy gone completely wrong when only
one individual has received a fine in respect of dog-fouling in our community? Isn't this a failed
Government policy?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Or a huge success!

145 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Exactly, Mr Speaker; absolutely not. Let me just explain that 118 samples
collected does not mean 118 dogs or 118 dog owners because sometimes particular areas are
sampled several times, and it is often the same dog, in order to try and see, because not all
samples do develop their DNA because they may have dried and been collected rather too late in
the sequence. So we are not talking about 118 dogs.

150 However, no, I do not agree, and it actually shows that law abiding dog owners are responsible
and that all those dog owners who have taken the trouble of getting their dog analysed for DNA
are actually keeping to the law because there are lots of dogs registered on the database, and
those are clearly not the ones that are fouling the streets.

155 So, I think we have narrowed it down to those less responsible dog owners who have not taken
the steps and this is why now we will be stepping up once again the stopping of dog owners in the
streets and just checking that their dogs had been registered for these purposes. I think this
actually shows the success of the programme. I think we have reduced the number of people who
allow their dogs to foul and do not collect the fouling.

Clearly, there is a problem with dogs that have not been processed and the way to collect the
DNA, and those are the ones that we now have to tackle.

160 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, this is an extraordinarily expensive operation. Mr Speaker, I
understand the fine is currently levelled at about £500. Each test, as far as I remember from

answers to this House in the last Parliament, I believe the cost of sending one of these for samples about £500, Mr Speaker. Perhaps the Minister could correct me if I am wrong, but all we do recall from the last Parliament is a very expensive process.

165 So, therefore, Mr Speaker, what is the Government doing to try to increase efficiencies in this area so that those that have allowed their dogs to foul on our streets and make them look unsightly for visitors and residents alike, what is the Government doing about increasing efficiencies so that we can have cleaner streets in our community to stop our citizens walking in dog mess?

170

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: First of all, I have to thank all those, the vast majority of dog owners who are responsible, who clearly are keeping to the law, because otherwise we would be detecting the DNA in the faeces, the dog's DNA, in the faeces that is being collected.

175 I do not recall the costs. It must be in *Hansard*. I can get that information very quickly. It was certainly nowhere near £500 per test, because I would certainly not have supported it if it had been that. As I said before, what we are doing now, is challenging people who are out with dogs to ensure that they have their dogs registered and that the DNA of the dog has been taken. In that way, we will be able to ensure that we are able to detect the numbers that we would like to detect in order to further reduce the amount of dog fouling.

180

Hon. E J Phillips: A question just in relation to the statistics, he did clarify that there were 39 patrols over the last 12 months. Of those 39 patrols, 118 samples were taken. He did say that only one positive result came back. In relation to the other 117 results, they were all negative, insofar as the identity of the dog – is that correct or was it too difficult to read because the faeces were dried in the sun or some of the other reasons that he articulated?

185

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I believe that there were no matches. I would need to confirm that I believe that it is that there were no matches, so the DNA detected in the faeces did not match any of those in the database.

190

Mr Speaker, it is often the case that faeces is not a dog but a cat, and that has happened on a number of occasions and therefore there would be no match.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q548-50/2020
Barbary macaques –
Warning signs and safety measures

Clerk: Question 548, the Hon. E J Phillips.

195

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what signs have been placed in the Upper Rock in order to advise visitors and residents of the new law passed by this House prohibiting interference with Barbary macaques?

200

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 549 and 550.

205

Clerk: Question number 549, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state the vehicular speed limits in areas where Barbary macaques tend to roam?

Clerk: Question number 550, the Hon. E J Phillips.

210

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government say what measures are in place beyond speed bumps to reduce speeding, particularly in the hours of darkness in areas frequented by Barbary macaques?

215

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

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the speed limit in the Nature Reserve is 30km per hour.

Signs have been up for many years informing the public that feeding or interaction with macaques is not allowed. This said, we have placed further signs which include COVID advice.

220

The upper roads will now be closed off earlier. Stricter controls on access in the hours of darkness are being implemented, but it should be noted that in the hours of darkness the macaques will not be traversing roads.

Q551/2020
Governor's Street –
Tree planting

Clerk: Question 551, the Hon. E J Phillips.

225

Hon. E J Phillips: In the original plans for Governor's Street when the new payment was added, it was intended that trees planted alongside the roadside. Is this something that is being looked at for the future and is the Government intending to roll this out in other areas?

230

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, there were no such plans.

235

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I must be entirely mistaken as to those plans to allow for trees to be placed alongside of Governor's Street. If I can slightly widen the scope of the question to tree-planting and avoiding stepping on a territory that was debated with the hon. Lady yesterday, of course, acknowledging the fact that the Hon. the Minister for the Environment is keen on trees nonetheless, I would be grateful if he could confirm what areas of Gibraltar that the Government is currently considering in terms of tree-planting more generally to increase greenery around our magnificent city?

240

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I do not want to repeat the ample information that I think I provided yesterday, in answer to the hon. Lady's question. There were no plans – and I have researched this with the pertinent departments, including Technical Services – to have trees in that section of Governor's Street, where I believe the pavement is too narrow to have taken trees.

245

I thought at first that there might have been a misprint and he may have meant Governor's Parade where, of course, we have put in six trees. We will put in trees wherever we are able to. It is often difficult to do this, because, sadly, there are often services under pavements in places where you would think it is crying out for trees, and it is very difficult to get clearance from

250

electricity, water and so on for the planting of trees. But, I have said this before, if anybody feels that we can put in trees anywhere, let us know and we will try. It is not an expensive exercise and it brings many benefits.

Q552/2020
School buses –
Rationale for cancelling

Clerk: Question 552, the Hon. E J Phillips.

255

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state their rationale for cancelling school buses from Mid Harbours estate to St Bernard's school?

260

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the bus will be continuing and the matter will be reviewed.

265

Hon. E J Phillips: Just insofar as the cancellation obviously occurred during some of the critical periods of COVID, and therefore that is why this question appears on the Order Paper, but the Minister has confirmed that the bus is currently working that route, it is under current review by the Government, but there are no plans to cancel that route, as far as I understand?

270

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: There are no current plans to cancel it, Mr Speaker.

Q553/2020
Fly tipping –
Number of complaints and prosecutions

Clerk: Question 553, the Hon. E J Phillips.

275

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of reports it has received in relation to fly tipping and how many complaints have been prosecuted resulting in a financial penalty over the last 12 months?

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

280

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, let me clarify that the 12 months I am referring to are the 12 months of 2020, given that there has been a delay in answering the questions.

285

The Environmental Agency have received a total of 47 complaints since 1st January 2020 to December relating to fly-tipping. Upon investigation of complaints, none have been forwarded for prosecution.

Complaints have ranged from fly-tipping in and around private properties, Government Estates and on public highways. If upon investigating, the Agency cannot find evidence to find those

culpable, it liaises with the Department of Housing or the Cleansing Superintendent so the waste can be removed and suitably disposed of.

290 There is also collaboration with the Litter Wardens to review CCTV footage to identify any culprits from footage they have obtained. When appropriate (considering the type of waste and the context) Environmental Health Officers have engaged informally, in order to have waste removed and suitably disposed of.

295 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, this is another question about the cleanliness of our community, about which the Opposition do receive a number of complaints a year in regard in relation to fly-tipping more generally. I understand in certain locations where there is a prevalence of fly-tipping that here is CCTV footage of those incidences, Mr Speaker.

I am surprised to hear, of course, that there have been no penalties imposed on those that continue to disobey the rules and, after I have interacted with a number of the individuals that are in the employ of the Government, who are regularly going round Gibraltar checking these particular sites and they have a way about them which allows them to investigate who has conducted this unsightly activity, Mr Speaker.

I am just wondering whether the Government is giving further thought as to how we can improve the process here, because as far as I see it, the fly-tipping does occur. We have got 46 complaints within that year. I am sure it is much, much more than that in terms of the incidents of fly-tipping, and what can we do to make sure that offenders who disobey the rules, in order to make sure our community is clean and safe ...? Some of the some of the harder white goods that are deposited on our streets, quite unsightly so, can be quite dangerous, of course for young children who may want to wander around them. There are horror stories about these kinds of incidents happening in other countries, Mr Speaker, as the Minister will be aware. But what other measures is the Government currently considering in order to try to stop this activity?

315 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, one of the problems is that when you have CCTV footage, it is sometimes not easy to identify the individuals in question. When there is an individual in question that is caught on camera, these are then shared with the RGP but it is sometimes difficult because of perhaps the angle on which a person comes, the person may be aware there is a camera, may be wearing a hoodie and it is sometimes that in my days as a Justice of the Peace, were the evidence provided, I might have found it unsafe to convict.

320 Therefore the Police are sometimes hesitant before taking it further because there is no certainty that they can prove that is the person. So I think what we are trying to do here is improved the quality of CCTV and review the angle at which some of the cameras are placed. The cameras are subjected to vandalism and theft, so it is a complicated issue, but we are constantly at it constantly trying to deter by identifying people when possible, and, sadly, although there have been some convictions in the past during the period in question, which in any case because of COVID was not so much an active period from the point of view of being out in the street, hopefully we will be able to improve it, but it is often difficult to identify the culprit.

330 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I wonder whether the Government would give further thought to something else. Obviously, this question intends to deal with the symptomology, of course and not the cause of this, which is ultimately people's behaviour. While it is difficult to control people's behaviour, will the Government consider education or at least some form of advertisement on GBC on our channels to show the effects of large-scale littering and fly tipping of this nature and the cost of removing it from that area so that people can become more aware of their actions and therefore avoid that?

So it is almost a sort of balance between the financial penalties that can be imposed by a court of law, but also on the other hand, educating members of our community to avoid doing these things in the first place.

340 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, if I may just comment on a related subject, there is a little bit of a situation in which, if we allow the rubbish to remain, then clearly it is visually disturbing and it is not good for hygiene and so on. If we remove it quickly and then people suddenly say 'Well, why do I bother to take it to where I should take it? If I leave it there, the Government is going to deal with it.' But if the Government should not deal with it, then that is a problem.

345 So clearly the policy is we clean it up as soon as possible because I think that is what we want to achieve. We have awareness campaigns regularly on various subjects. We have a littering campaign which, in its broadest terms include this, being planned at the moment. The answer is yes, of course we need to increase awareness. Sadly, is it going to stop completely? I think we have to be realistic and realise that we will always have to. We will always have some situations
350 that we will have to deal with.

Q554/2020
Waste Treatment Plan –
Update

Clerk: Question 554, The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government update this House on the position as regards the Waste Treatment Plan?

355

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the question that I received and which I am answering referred to the Waste Treatment Plan. Is that that what the question was, I thought I heard plant? Plan? Okay.

360

The Waste Management Plan is still undergoing review in light of recent Brexit developments. We now expect to be in a position to publish by Spring.

Q555/2020
Water production –
Less energy-intensive methods

Clerk: Question 555, the Hon E J Phillips.

365

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government confirm that it is looking into less energy-intensive methods of producing water for Gibraltar?

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

370

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, as was clearly established by my colleague the Hon. Minister for Utilities in his answer to Question 496/2020, AquaGib is constantly looking at the most energy and cost efficient ways to produce water in Gibraltar and as a shareholder, HM Government of Gibraltar is
375 involved in ensuring that AquaGib does this.

Hon E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, has anything come out of the wash in relation to that at all? I know they are constantly looking at ways of improving and increasing efficiencies. I am not going to trespass on the debate that most recently I had on that question on costs, but if there is any further information as to what particular ideas have sprung out of the internal debate on this question.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I think what the Hon. Mr Isola said in that meeting was that there has been a 28% saving in energy per cubic metre of water production between 2015 and 2019, which I think is extraordinary, and AquaGib has to be congratulated for that. They are constantly, I am sure, as the Minister stated at the time, reviewing how they can reduce energy consumption, and they have done it very successfully.

I wish every other entity in Gibraltar was able to achieve a similar saving, because we would have made considerable progress in our energy objectives if that had been the case.

Q556/2020
Midtown noise mitigation –
Update

Clerk: Question 556, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon E J Phillips: Can Government update the House on how the noise caused by the vibration of horizontal slats at Midtown is being mitigated or eliminated?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, since the last update in Parliament, there have been no new complaints made to the Environmental Agency. The Agency has however, been working in close liaison with the relevant parties. This has included joint site visits to ensure sufficient progress has been made.

The recipient of the abatement notice received proposals from an acoustic consultant. Their proposed solution consists of placing ‘supports’ to stop the reverberation. This will initially be installed on two sections of the louvres to assess and ensure that the proposal works in practice. The Agency will be involved in the verification process which will require specific wind directions and strength for an accurate assessment of noise.

The contractor recently met with the Environmental Health Officer on-site and we can confirm that most of the supports for the louvres have been installed on the Queensway and Reclamation Road-side of Midtown. It is envisioned that the works will be completed around mid-March. The EHO has a site visit with the contractor arranged for next week, just to confirm. So, it does appear that the problem has been resolved.

Q557-8/2020
Environmental Agency –
GibDock

Clerk: Question 557, the Hon. E J Phillips.

415 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of inspections conducted by the Environmental Agency at GibDock in the years 2019 to 2020 and the purpose for such inspection?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 558.

425 **Clerk:** Question 558, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon E. J. Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of complaints that it or the Environmental Agency has received in respect of smells and noise pollution emanating from GibDock for the years 2019 and 2020?

430 **Clerk:** Answer, Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Environmental Agency has been inspecting/monitoring the activities at GibDock daily (on week days) since January 2015. The visiting officer records ships docked, wind direction and if there is any evidence of smells, noise, dust, blasting, painting as well as any other observations.

435 This is done in an effort to proactively identify any potentially problematic work practices or activities as soon as possible, so that they can be addressed. Aside from this, the Agency also carried out inspections in the shipyard in response to complaints and in order to carry out checks with regard to authorised movements of waste:

440 By year – 2019: two inspections with regard to TFS waste movements (inspection of lorries), 13 inspections to investigate noise complaints, one Inspection to investigate smoke from vessels.

445 In 2020: three inspections with regard to TFS waste movements (inspections of lorries), seven inspections to investigate noise complaints, one inspection to investigate oily sheen in the harbour.

In answer to Question 558, 14 complaints were received in 2019 and five in 2020.

450 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Gentleman for the statistics that he has provided to us. The issue here, of course, is that a number of residents regularly update Members on this side of the House as to the noxious fumes and smells that emanate from this particular area and I know that the Government committed in its manifesto at page 81 to a full and proper compliance with the highest environmental standards. I note from his answer, he says that there are almost daily or weekly inspections. Is that right, Mr Speaker? That is just part of the first question.

455 Then he talks about 2019 and 2020, in particular naming those particular inspections, which are clearly not daily or just responsive or reactive inspections of those particular sites.

460 One of the things that I would like further information on is that there clearly is a problem at GibDock. We would not be receiving the volume of complaints that we receive about smells and noise, Mr Speaker, so for all the investigation that the Environmental Agency does and for all the reports that the Hon. Minister must have on his desk in relation to these incidences, what is the Government going to do, finally, about resolving the question over GibDock and its impact on our environment?

I understand there are commercial interests at play here, but ultimately the Government's the main plank of its offering to the public in the last General Election was about creating a greener community and a healthier community for our children and the lungs of our children.

465 It occurs to me, Mr Speaker, that in the context GibDock more generally, the Government
needs to do more about that, and I ask the question to the Government. What is the Government
doing about reducing those foul and noxious smells emanating from that site, but also the noise
pollution in the south?

470 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I am very happy to answer that, Mr Speaker. The Government is going to
be working based on real evidence. Normal monitoring is, as the answer says, daily, but I have also
referred to specific occasions when they are called in. This is all being put together and analysed
and a full report on the activity and the impact on the environment on GibDock is being prepared
and once that has been considered by me and then shared and discussed with the Government,
475 then the Government will decide whether and what action it would need to take.

Hon. E J Phillips: In respect of the report, I am very grateful for the confirmation that a report
and a full analysis is now being prepared as to finally understand the impact that GibDock has on
the environment, Mr Speaker. But will the Government now confirm, once it has that report in its
480 possession with the recommendations that the report makes, it will make it public so that
members of the community, who do approach the Opposition on a fairly regular basis as to the
complaints that I have alluded to in this question, are fully aware that the Government has
conclusively dealt with some of these issues so that they know that the Government will tackle it?

485 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, there may be issues which may be commercially sensitive
and therefore we would have to take a view on that, and I dare say that the environmental
information is probably already available online, because all the monitors that monitor this sort
of thing are on the Environmental Agency website and a lot of that information will feed into this
report. There may be commercially sensitive issues where we would have to take a view.

490 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, whilst I quite understand that some of the monitors in the air
monitoring website that the Government has established reveal very serious high levels of
pollutants within our community, I take the point that he may well make an answer to me that
there are peaks and troughs in relation to this and you cannot have more than 80 incidences over
495 a 12-month period. So I know about that.

But what I did say to him last time in this House in the last Parliament was that we need data
to be communicated to the community so that they can truly understand. It is very difficult. I know
he understands this, plotting your way through some of those graphs is extremely difficult. If you
are a data analyst, it might be easy, but not for the average Joe and average person in the
500 community who is worried about the health of their children, and that is the point, and that is why
this report should be published once it is available, Mr Speaker, so that we can all accept the risk
that GibDock imposes, exposes rather, on members of our community and it certainly is, in my
respectful view, right that members of our community understand the level of pollution and how
GibDock is contributing to that.

505 I cannot impress on him enough, it is information I received on a very regular basis as to the
levels in that particular area. So I would encourage him and the Government to publish that
report, warts and all, so that we can at least acknowledge the levels in our community and then
and try to solve the problem moving forward.

510 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I have said that there may be sensitive issues which are
commercially sensitive, which cannot be shared. Other than that, I take note of what the hon.
Member has said.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, with respect, I do not think that is right. The Minister talks about
515 commercially sensitive information about GibDock. What can be commercially sensitive when it

when it is the lives of our community, our children and the parents of children who are being affected by these noxious fumes?

520 Mr Speaker, the first position should be: publish the Report warts and all, forget commercial interests. These are their lives and health care of children in our community. Does he not agree with that?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is feeling better and that he is back with us, but I do not think that the way that he has interpreted the answer of the Minister is fair or proper. It would appear from the way that he is trying to put
525 his supplementary that he is simply trying to suggest that he is the only one who cares about the health of our community and how pollution might affect our children.

As a resident of the South District with three children, I care greatly about how pollution affects children in the South District and in the whole of Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, the Government has been very clear that the Hon. Minister for the Environment is saying that we will publish a report, but that we will have to be conscious of the fact that there may be parts of that report, which may be
530 commercially sensitive.

The hon. Gentleman is saying throw caution to the wind and publish warts and all. Well, the warts may not be what is commercially sensitive, but there may be aspects that may have to be redacted, excluded, etc. Because what the Government cannot do is act outside of the
535 constitution, if there are issues relating to the rights and property of individuals or companies in our community, and simply trample over them.

That is what we are trying to ensure the hon. Gentleman understands is what would lead us to either not publish parts or redact parts of a report that is to comply with the law. The hon. Gentleman is a lawyer: he cannot be asking for a Government not to comply with the law.
540

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the clarification of the Chief Minister on that. Certainly on this side of the House we had interpreted a more intrusive kind of approach in respect of commercial considerations, but having heard the Chief Minister, I think we are still at a loss in respect of the answer.
545

I certainly can understand why there may be parts of a report which may refer to, for example, the basis of the licence arrangements of the particular company, which may be commercially confidential and those may want to be redacted and so on, but insofar as the environmental findings as to whether there is noise or pollution or breaches of the law, those should not be redacted, and will the Government agree that insofar as the environmental findings themselves,
550 they will be published?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, given that you have asked us to try and limit the number of supplementaries that are put and to keep our answers short, I am surprised that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has got up to ask me to agree with my earlier statement.
555

That is exactly what I said. I said that the warts that might not be published might not be the elements that are commercially sensitive because they are the elements that relate to the environmental issues, but that there may be other aspects that may have to be redacted and therefore, what we cannot do is agree to publish a report without redactions because we do not know what is going to be in the report that might be commercially sensitive. That is exactly what
560 I said.

The hon. Gentleman may want to go back and see that he has asked me to agree with something that I said before.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, yesterday in your Ruling you made it clear to us that to assist this particular session, but without setting a precedent, you wanted us to keep to a certain number of supplementaries and I think we have done that.
565

This is the first question I asked today. You also said that it would help if Members opposite adhere to your recommendation that they should keep their answers short and – may I add, which you, Mr Speaker, did not – clear. The reason I got up to ask the answer to ask the question is because it was not clear. If it had been clear, I would not get up because I would not feel the need to do so.

With all due respect to Chief Minister, he has given his answer in such a roundabout way of what will be redacted and not redacted or warts and all, and this, that and the other, he does not string together the phrase that would give us the clarity necessary, which is: are the environmental findings going to be published, yes or no?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I do not agree. I believe that I have set out clearly what the position of the Government is. I am not going to be drawn as if I was being cross-examined by the hon. Gentleman, to give an answer which is simply yes or no. This is a parliament and I am speaking from a despatch box not from a witness box. Mr Speaker, if we have to redact, the report will be redacted, just like the Lloyds report that was redacted. The hon. Gentleman might want to remind himself of that.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q559-60/2020
Air quality –
Monitoring

Clerk: Question 559, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the air quality monitoring system is fit for purpose?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon, Prof. E J Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 560.

Clerk: Question 560, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it has considered the deployment of mobile air quality monitoring and, if so, please confirm the outcome?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the air quality monitoring network meets and, indeed exceeds, the minimum requirements stipulated under EU legislation, the Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive 2008/50/EC. The air monitoring stations presently located in Rosia Road, Witham's Road and Bleak House were installed following recommendations at the time from the Environmental Agency's air quality consultants AEA Ricardo, in line with criteria set out in annex III, IV and V of Directive 2008/50/EC. The Witham's Road monitor will in the coming months be placed in the north district.

The Directive requires one sampling point per 250,000 population in urban/suburban areas. (Rosia Road) and one sampling point for rural (Bleak House) background, per 50,000 square kilometres. Gibraltar has two urban stations and one rural background station – clearly exceeding the requirements of the EU.

615 These stations capture data from major pollutants as per EU directives and contain reference
instruments, which are calibrated bi-weekly; passive sampling equipment, which is useful in
providing indications of average function concentrations; active sampling methods used for
particulate sampling and automatic real-time point analysers, which provide the latest up-to-date
hourly measurements of air pollution. These are reported on the Air Quality website for public
620 information.

The network is further supplemented by three mobile AQMesh pods, which are currently
located Line Wall Road, Rosia Road Clocktower and Europort Avenue, 32 nitrogen dioxide,
diffusion tube sites and 15 hydrocarbon diffusion tube sites across Gibraltar. The AQMesh pods
and diffusion tubes provide indicative measurements.

625 Mobile monitoring has been considered, but the advice we have received is that the
interpretation of the results generated by mobile equipment are not up to reference standards,
and the results therefore can only be considered as indicative. The Air Quality limit values are
based on averaging periods are not conducive to mobile monitoring – hourly, daily or annual
averages – as the results do not compare with these periods.

630 In the experience of Government-appointed consultants, the quality of data from these kinds
of instruments tends to be lacking and there is a risk that this can confuse the wider scientific
evidence and potentially diminish its value.

While these can appear an attractive option due to the relatively low price, these kinds of
technologies are still evolving and are highly susceptible to environmental interference such as
635 humanity and temperature.

These often demonstrate inconsistency with other instruments and data can even vary
significantly within their own sensor models. As a result, for the purposes for which the Gibraltar
Air Quality Network was established, hand-held monitors do not currently offer enhanced
understanding or evidential value to the network.

640

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for that expanded answer by the Minister on the question of
air quality, ultimately, Mr Speaker. One of the major complaints that I receive from constituents
is about Gibraltar's air quality and to be fair, Mr Speaker, and whilst I understand the number of
instruments that have been deployed to our streets, Rosia Road and other spots in our community
645 on Line Wall Road, particularly, when was the last time that Government reviewed the geography
of these instruments and where they were? I believe it was Ricardo, as the Minister said, had
recommended these particular sites for these particular monitors to be placed. Because it occurs
to me, of course, that this is a bit of a moving target, air quality.

650 That is just the first question; if I can bundle it together with the second question, if I may as
well?

In many countries around the world that most of us used to visit, of course and hopefully we
will return to travel soon, there are daily information broadcasts too, particularly those cities that
are highly polluting, on low, medium to higher levels of pollution within certain areas. Has the
Government given some thought to broadcasting the levels of pollution within our community
655 more generally, though, rather than the breakdown?

As I said, in my first intervention on this question, it is very difficult for the average member of
our community to download the data, analyse it put in the information it requires for the data to
be shown in a certain way. Therefore, wouldn't it be helpful to members of our community who
live in particular areas to know about the quality of the air that they breathe during the course of
660 the day?

In fact, I think in some countries there are mobile warnings which show either the high levels
or the low levels or the medium levels of pollution within any given particular day. It might be

helpful if the Minister could give his view as to the efficacy of those types of instruments that might be more useful in terms of information to members of the public.

665

Hon. Prof. E J Cortes: Okay, yes, the position of the large monitoring units was last reviewed just a couple of months ago and a decision has been taken, as I said in my answer to remove the one from Witham's Road to Devil's Tower Road. The reason for that is that Witham's Road mainly detected pollution from the temporary generators and the old power stations, which we inherited in the South District, which fortunately now are no longer in use and therefore air quality in south district has improved tremendously and now, we feel that with the Rosia Road monitor it is sufficient to monitor an area of traffic and Witham's Road will be used at Devil's Tower Road, so that we can get more of a sense of what is happening in the North District.

670

So that was reviewed quite recently, and we are looking at when the move will be carried out. This has to be done by specialists who have to come over from the UK and therefore we have to co-ordinate, but that should happen very soon.

675

I do not know whether the hon. Member at the end of his question was suggesting that we use these temporary monitors for reporting to the public, maybe to GBC. I do not think he was saying that because these temporary monitors they can give you a relatively less than accurate reading at that particular moment, but they cannot be used for comparing like with like.

680

They cannot be used for comparing overall status, because if you happen to point a monitor at a car's exhaust at this particular point in time you will get a high reading, but that is not the average for that location.

I do not think the hon. Member was saying that; I think the hon. Member was once again saying what he said before, that it should be easier for the public to interpret. There is no reason why GBC, for example, could not pick up this information from the website, with a little bit of advice on how to interpret it. That could be organised. I suppose this could be facilitated by the Environmental Agency. I will have a conversation with them.

685

I dare say that the air quality, there will be very few occasions when we can say that the air quality is as bad as in some of the broadcasts that you can get, for example, in highly industrialised cities. The air quality has, despite what people say – it has always been the worst year for rain, the worst year for heat and the worst year for cold, even though it has not been because it is our more recent recollection that we remember – therefore we might say air quality is now worse than ever, when actually it is not. Air quality is continuously improving as the statistics show.

690

So it might be relatively exciting for GBC to transmit this but it is public information. I will talk in the Environmental Agency and if GBC, as a broadcaster, or any other broadcaster or news medium wants that information interpreted I am sure that we can facilitate it.

695

Hon. E J Phillips: I think what I was trying to get out was the question of a pollution index information, where it could simply be added onto the weather, for instance, which is done in many countries around the world, of course.

700

I know the Minister says that air quality – and this is what these questions are about – has improved somewhat. We clearly have from the latest health report I have seen from the GHA, which is of course of keen interest to the Minister as well in terms of his responsibilities for public health, very high levels of incidents of asthma and allergic children within our community. That has been the case for some years, Mr Speaker, and in a growing numbers of asthmatics and those children's suffering from allergies.

705

Mr Speaker, that is why I point towards air quality is a major issue for him and the rest of the Government in dealing with and so I would not want to minimise that point. I just think it is helpful to the community to have that information, so that they can then make decisions about their own use, for example, of pollutants themselves, such as a 50cc motorcycle, for instance, and how that impacts on the environment.

710

A bit of a wider question and I invite him to comment on it, but it is certainly a point that if someone knew in our community that our pollution was particularly high in this area in a particular

715 week, 'What is our individual contribution', one would ask oneself, 'to that increase in pollution
in our community?' So I think it would be helpful from a wider perspective in the population
understanding their individual responsibility and impact on the environment going forward.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I will never minimise the impact of pollution or the
720 importance of air quality. This is why I work so hard during my terms of office to improve air
quality, and we have done this successfully. It is not just that the Minister says it, we have been
below EU levels for the last two to three years for the first time ever since the air quality
monitoring began. The air quality in Gibraltar is improving steadily and will continue to improve.
725 There is always going to be work to be done for as long as we are going to be driving a car or using
fossil fuels, and we got have to work on that, but certainly air quality in Gibraltar is better than it
has been for decades.

Q561-71/2020

**Air quality –
Sensor costs and data collected**

Clerk: Question 561, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many AQMesh sensors were
730 purchased and the price per unit?

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

735 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E
Cortes):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 562 to 571.

Clerk: Question 562, the Hon. E J Phillips.

740 **Hon E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the cost of procuring AQMesh sensors?

Clerk: Question 563, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state the maintenance and running costs of AQMesh
745 sensors?

Clerk: Question 564, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state why the Europort AQ Centre has been offline for
750 a month?

Clerk: Question 565, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state why an AQ Sensor has not been installed at Devil's
755 Tower Road?

Clerk: Question 566, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state the date on which the Air Quality Commission was
established and how many physical or remote meetings have been held?

760 **Clerk:** Question 567, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state why the Gibraltar Air Quality Report or Digest for 2019 has not been made available to the public or otherwise published?

765 **Clerk:** Question 568, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state that it has increased the range of pollutants monitored by all air quality monitoring devices including the monitoring of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)?

770 **Clerk:** Question 569, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Minister please state what the maximum and minimum permissible levels of: NO₂, Sulphur Dioxide, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and Carbon Monoxide are?

775 **Clerk:** Question 570, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Minister please provide average daily levels of the following pollutants: NO₂, Sulphur Dioxide, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and Carbon Monoxide, for the period November and December 2019 and for the period March and April 2020 and July and August 2020?

780 **Clerk:** Question 571, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon E J Phillips: Can the Government state the average levels of nitrogen dioxide by ug/m³ recorded by each of our pollution stations per every month for the last six months?

785 **Clerk:** Answer, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, three AQMesh pods were purchased. Unit prices at the time of purchase were approximately £8,779 each. The overall price was £59,648 which included the pods, installation, data management/ratification and reporting from the point of installation. Mr Speaker, running costs so far have been £480 per pod per year.

795 Sensors are usually required to be changed every two years at a cost of £280 per sensor and each pod has five sensors. They do not all come to end of life at the same time, but if they did then it would be £1,400 per pod every two years (sensors have a life span of two years). The data management fees are approx. £2,750 per pod per year.

800 Faults with the sensor were identified, in relation to Question 564, and it was not possible to repair locally. A UK engineer's visit on the week commencing 16th October 2020 confirmed this and the sensor was returned to the UK for maintenance/repair. A message was placed shortly after on the Gibraltar Air Quality website to inform users.

An AQMesh pod was installed on Devil's Tower Road from 16th November 2019 to 21st May 2020. This pod was then relocated to Line Wall Road where it has remained since. And will be moved back to Devil's Tower Road, if I may add, from 1st April.

805 The Air Quality Commission has not yet been established.

In relation to Question 567, the material was only recently presented to the Government last month and will be published shortly.

810 All major pollutants, Mr Speaker, are measured using the three air monitoring stations in Gibraltar as well as a network of diffusion tubes and AQMesh pods. Air Quality standards and objectives adopted by the Government of Gibraltar are closely associated with the Limit Values and Target Values laid down in EU Directives.

815 VOCs are measured at Rosia Road using an automatic analyser. The Rosia Road site was chosen to measure VOCs as it is near a major road which is also in addition to the 15 sites throughout Gibraltar with BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylenes) diffusion tubes. The VOC analyser at Rosia Road and the BTEX diffusion tubes provide speciated VOCs and not just a measure of total VOCs. All of the low-cost sensors presently available that measure VOCs aggregate the complete mixture of VOCs in the atmosphere, which does not help in identifying sources as the specific compounds are not identified.

820 The information requested by the hon. Member in Questions 569 and 570 is in the schedules which I now hand over. During 2019 and 2020 there have not been any exceedances of the hourly and daily limit values for NO₂ and SO₂ respectively.

825 The NO₂ annual average concentrations are below the limit value of 40 ug/m³. Looking at the three highlighted periods (P1, P2, and P3) the effect of the lockdown can be seen in the NO₂ concentrations with much reduced values during the lockdown period (P2 March/April 2020).

Due to issues with the PM (particulate matter) monitoring equipment and not being able to get them repaired as a result of the COVID lockdown and travel restrictions there is a low data capture which is why this has been omitted from the table. The equipment was faulty and we tried very hard to get the engineers over but they were unable to travel during the COVID lockdowns.

830 The limit values for air pollutants come under EU Directive 2008/50/EC which was transposed locally to the Environment (Air Quality Standards) Regulations 2010. They are provided in the Schedule. The information requested in Question 571, is in the schedule which I now hand over.

Answer to Question 569

Pollutant	Value	Averaging period
CO	10 mg/m ³	Maximum daily running 8 hour mean
NO ₂	200 ug/m ³	Hourly mean (not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a calendar year)
	40 ug/m ³	Annual mean
PM2.5	25 ug/m ³	Annual mean
PM10	50 ug/m ³	Daily mean (not to be exceeded more than 35 times in a calendar year)
	40 ug/m ³	Annual mean
SO ₂	350 ug/m ³	Hourly mean (not to be exceeded more than 24 times in a calendar year)
	125 ug/m ³	Daily mean (not to be exceeded more than 3 times in a calendar year)

Answer to Question 570

P1 = November/December 2019 P2 = March/April 2020
P3 = July/August 2020

		P1	P2	P3
NO ₂ (ug/m ³)	RosiaRoad	33	21	26
	Witham's	28	18	25
	Bleak	23	15	18
CO (mg/m ³)	Rosia	0	0	0
SO ₂ (ug/m ³)	Rosia	3	1	2
PM10 (ug/m ³ , gravimetric)	RosiaRoad	22.4		

	Bleak House	17.8		
PM2.5 (ug/m3, gravimetric)	RosiaRoad	9.1		

Answer to Question 571

Nitrogen Dioxide recorded for the last six months

Month	BH	RR	WR	ER	DTR	LWR	RRCT
June	20.1	29.1	24.5	LDC		LDC	32.5
July	17.8	26.1	LDC	LDC		33.1	31.6
August	19.6	31.5	29.5	44.9		28.6	31.0
September	LDC	19.8	18.6	LDC		19.5	27.6
October	19.3	28.8	20.4	LDC		28.8	29.4
November	14.1	27.3	18.1	LDC		23.0	27.6
December	18.4	25.4	LDC	LDC		20.1	29.4

Hon. Prof. E J Cortes: Mr Speaker, there should be 571, 570 and 569. There should be one sheet with two tables and one with one table. Have you not got that?

835 **A Member:** I have not got the second sheet.

Hon. Prof. E J Cortes: My apologies. It was in a separate paper clip, so apologies.

840 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I will come back to some of the statistical answers if need be, but I just wanted to ask the Minister this question. Why has the Air Quality Commission not been established, I would have thought that this was a vital organ for the Hon. Minister to rely when talking about whether what one of the most significant issues, which is air quality affects all of us in our community. I just wondered why it has not been able to meet or has not been established and therefore has been unable to meet as a consequence of not being established? Has the
845 Government at least identified those particular individuals that will sit on the Commission?

Hon. Prof. E J Cortes: Indeed, one of the issues is identifying suitable individuals to sit on the Commission, and this is something that I am actively looking at. I am looking at suitable individuals and also perhaps some expertise because this is very specialised. Maybe a member from outside
850 Gibraltar, and this is the sort of thing that I am looking at, and obviously the past 12 months have not been conducive to giving this perhaps the time that I would have liked. But the main thing is we are trying to identify people we feel could make a positive contribution to the Commission.

855 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Is it envisaged that members of NGOs might well populate that Commission because clearly a special interest in the quality of the air that we breathe?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I think it is quite possible that there would be NGO representation. I think that that is healthy in this sort of situation.

860

Q572/2020
High-pollutant bikes –
Possible ban

Clerk: Question 572, the Hon. E J Phillips.

865 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state its position in respect of the banning of highly polluting 50cc motorbikes within the city walls?

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

870 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, it is envisaged that the importation of such motorcycles will be prohibited in the future as part of the Climate Change Strategy.

875 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, this is a question that I have asked on numerous occasions with varying degrees of success in relation to the answers that have been forthcoming. I note that whilst this is part of the general approach by the Government into having a cleaner community, cleaner air, it does not really answer the question. It is quite clear that these types of vehicles are highly polluting to our community. In fact, I think the Minister has mentioned that on more than one occasion in this House and that we need to discourage climates around buying 50ccs and
880 scooting around our community.

Look, it is quite often the case, and I am sure the Minister will undoubtedly be aware, that when one attains the age of 17, the first thing that one's parents does is investing in a highly polluting 50cc motorcycle and ultimately it is a change in the chip, in the culture of many members of our community in avoiding these vehicles.

885 So, I would like a bit more information, if the Minister can, on what measures the Government will be doing to ban the importation of these highly polluting motorcycles that clearly impact on the health of our community and, indeed, our children.

890 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I am being more strategic in my reply. The Climate Change Strategy will be setting up a target dates for a number of steps, are consistent with the steps that have been announced by the Chief Minister in the past Budget sessions. Completely consistent with that that and consistent with the Climate Change Act, which has been passed in this House and with a climate emergency requirements.

895 This will be part of that, and there will be times set for that. The Climate Change Strategy would have been presented probably exactly a year ago. And that was the intention. Clearly with COVID, priorities have changed, and we have had to review some aspects of the strategy. But it is going to be published very soon and this will be clearly a part of that.

900 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I assume the Government will be rolling out education programmes and the like, because ultimately, many of our young people in fact complained about this issue themselves, because of course they are intimately involved with the environment. They care much about the environment, as I know the Hon. Minister does, and all Members of this House have given our commitments to the climate change agenda.

905 Of course, those deadlines have had to be pushed back given the pandemic and the effects on Government business and, indeed the business of the entire community, Mr Speaker. But it is quite clear what needs to happen in my mind, and that is for those polluting vehicles to be banned at some point or to have that effect on the wider community, so that we make better choices about how we move around the city.

910 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I do not disagree. I think we have already taken steps, if my recollection is correct, by raising duty on such vehicles of 50cc. I would need to seek confirmation of that. But clearly the writing is on the wall and that, as he quite rightly says, it is the young generation that is going to lead on this and they are going to stop buying these motorcycles.

Q573-5/2020
Idling vehicles –
Government policy

Clerk: Question 573, the Hon. E J Phillips.

915

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state why it has not started an information campaign to prevent idling?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister and laughter)*

920

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 574 and 575.

925

Clerk: Question 574, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker will answer the muttering under the Chief Minister's breath about idling, but can the Government state if it intends to bring legislation to ban idling of motor vehicles in Gibraltar?

930

Clerk: Question 575, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state why it has not implemented a no idling policy across its entire fleet of vehicles?

935

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Government has a no idling policy for its fleet, which it does communicate to the public and various departments from time to time.

940

In relation to legislation, Question 574, this is under consideration.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I would invite him to repeat that non-idling policy to everyone in our community because not just me, but many members of our community walk up and down our streets, particular in Irish Town, see a number of these ageing trucks that pump out dirty, grimy fuel smells in our community and still do it, Mr Speaker. So that information programme needs to be much more verbose from the Government, Mr Speaker, and indeed from their own fleet itself.

945

There are incidences, Mr Speaker, reported to me on an almost weekly basis about cars outside schools pumping out fumes and idling, whilst dropping off children and standing around by members of our community. This cannot continue to happen, Mr Speaker. These fumes that are being pumped out of all of our streets are from often decaying vehicles, old vehicles from commercial interests in Gibraltar that have not replaced their vehicles and they should be incentivised to do so, in some way Mr Speaker, but the Government must in my view lead from

950

955 the front and ensure that the financial penalties imposed on people that idle in our community
and pump out these noxious fumes outside our schools and other places in our community. Does
the Minister agree?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, on leading by example, this Government has not been
960 idling for one moment since 10th December – when was it? – 2011. (**Several Members:** Hear,
hear.) It is a long time ago now. We have not been idling for one second and some of the
comments of the Member opposite remind me of the ‘grimy, smelly diesel’ – GSD for short! – that
we did away with at the time. (**A Member:** Hear, hear!)

Mr Speaker, idling is something which is to be discouraged. It is discouraged in our fleet, and it
965 is something that has to be discouraged and a publicity campaign and so on will take place, as they
take place periodically, absolutely. But as I say, we take air quality very seriously and we have
succeeded in improving it tremendously. There is still a lot of work to be done, and we will do it.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just on these sign issues outside schools, I know that many of the
970 Ministers must see the small signs that are being put up outside some of the schools, not all of
them, of course, where children are decanting from vehicles and these cars are polluting the air
that they breathe in immediately. What can we do about that, what is the Government trying to
do about that?

Also on a wider issue, what is the Government doing about commercial interests that are
975 pumping fumes outside, down Irish Town, for instance, which is one bugbear and one complaint
that I receive quite regularly, from idling trucks that are dropping off deliveries, Mr Speaker. There
has to be a real solution to that, and that is by encouraging members of the public involved in that
type of business to replace their fleet so that they use other vehicles that are less polluting.

I think, of course, the Government in a sense, I take the point, in relation to the Post Office for
980 instance, is leading from the front, and I have seen that; we acknowledge that, and the community
is impressed by that. But this needs to be rolled out amongst all the Government and, indeed the
policy needs to be much more robustly adhered to in my view, so what is the Government actually
going to specifically do about tackling this issue?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, as the Hon. Member has rightly said, we have started with
985 the Post Office and there are similar projects in hand, which he will be hearing about sooner rather
than later, so it is definitely moving in these areas.

BUSINESS, TOURISM, TRANSPORT AND THE PORT

Q597/2020

Pedestrian crossing at Jumpers Building – Reinstatement

Clerk: Question 597, the Hon. E J Phillips.

990

Hon. E J Phillips: I am pleased to say that this question is redundant now effectively, Mr
Speaker, and that is can the Government state whether it plans for the reinstatement of the
pelican crossing adjacent to Jumpers Building?

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, the
works were completed on Wednesday, 24th February 2021.

Q598/2020
Green bus service –
Plans

Clerk: Question 598, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1000

Hon E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state its plans for a green bus service?

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

1005

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, on 3rd July last year, the Government issued a tender notice inviting bids for the acquisition of fully electric buses. These buses will be used where possible, to replace our existing buses. We have also last October, had the opportunity to test drive different models of electric buses, on current bus routes in Gibraltar.

1010

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. Has the tender now been awarded? That is the first question;

The second question is what were the results of the tests conducted in relation to the particular type of vehicle that Government now will be purchasing?

1015

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, the tender still has not been awarded, it is something that is still at a very early stage. Regarding the actual trials that we carried out, we trialled three buses in total. one for the Upper Town and two for our flat routes.

1020

Obviously, Gibraltar's topography does not allow us to use these buses on certain routes. It is an expensive decision to take so we are taking our time and, of course, with technology ever changing and the electric vehicle market, we need to be sure that when we take the decision that is the right decision for the taxpayer.

1025

Hon. E J Phillips: Is the Government prepared to disclose the names of those who attended for this particular project?

Hon. V Daryanani: Not at this stage, Mr Speaker, because we still have not decided. It is not fair that we disclose names.

1030

Hon. E J Phillips: Is one of the electric buses a BYD electric bus sourced from China?

Hon. V Daryanani: BYD you said?

Hon. E J Phillips: BYD Plus.

1035

Hon. V Daryanani: No, Mr Speaker.

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one final question, does the Government have any idea when it will get to a decision on this change?

1040

Hon. V Daryanani: During the course of the lifetime of this Parliament.

Q599-603/2020
Line Wall Road closure –
Impact

Clerk: Question 599, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1045 **Hon E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the name of the consultant it has engaged to review the impact of the closure of Line Wall Road on Mondays?

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

1050 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 600 to 603.

Clerk: Question 600, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1055 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state the costs of engaging a consultant to review the impact of the closure of Line Wall Road?

Clerk: Question 601, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1060 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state how it monitors compliance with the Line Wall Road ban on non-authorized vehicular traffic from Saturday to Monday weekly?

Clerk: Question 602, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1065 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state what parking arrangements are in place for the many who, despite being Zone 2 Permit holders, are unable to park their cars on Line Wall Road on Saturday through to Monday?

Clerk: Question 603, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1070 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government confirm the cost to the taxpayer of security officers being used at each end of Line Wall Road during the weekly Saturday to Monday closure?

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

1075 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Line Wall Road pedestrianisation is no longer going to proceed. The company contracted to analyse the data collected at Line Wall Road was Ramboll. The cost of this data collection exercise is not yet available to Government.

1080 The Government monitored the compliance of the Line Wall Road rules with Parking Management Officers and Royal Gibraltar Police Officers who were deployed at the entrances to the restricted area along Line Wall Road. There was no cost to the taxpayer in respect of these services which involved only redeployments of personnel

1085 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am not sure the Hon. Minister answered the question in 602 and 603.

Hon. V Daryanani: Well, Mr Speaker, that applied when Line Wall Road was closed. Now we are back to normality.

1090 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Therein lies the problem, of course, because Hon. Minister completely failed and abandon his project in the first place, and that is the reason why these questions were on the Order Paper at the time and the reason why they have not been answered is because the Government abandoned its policy, which was a failed policy, it was a stupid idea in the first place, Mr Speaker, but it is what it is.

1095 Mr Speaker, I have got one question in relation to the closure is it Ramboll Ltd, Mr Speaker. I am not too sure. He said Ramboll, but he did not say Ramboll Limited who are the directors and shareholders of Ramboll Ltd?

1100 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman's supplementary ends with a question about the directorship and shareholding of a company. We would need specific notice of that question, but probably the reply would be that it is publicly available information. Certainly, I do not think any of us on this desk know that information and I am surprised, Mr Speaker, that it should be a question across the floor of the House.

1105 But, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman, before his question, put a preamble which referred to stupidity and accused the Minister of abandoning a policy. In fact, Mr Speaker, it was the Government that abandoned the policy. It was the Government because we felt that we had pursued a policy which was not appropriate and was not welcome and had more problems than we had reckoned with.

1110 But at every stage we did that because we thought it was the right thing to do. At every stage, we did it because we thought it would deal with issues of pollution in one way. Others took a different view. Some strongly supported us.

1115 Mr Speaker, in my New Year's Eve address, not on New Year's Eve, my New Year's message, I said that we had got it wrong, and I thought it was important that I should tell people that we had got it wrong. I think that is what mature politics is about. I think that is the politics that this community needs today.

1120 It does not need people getting up to raise issues in the way that the hon. Gentleman has today in a manner that I think lets down the dignity of this House. Something that perhaps we might all sometimes do in the heat and passion of an argument but when we do, I think we need to reflect on to ensure that we do not go down that road, again.

1125 So, Mr Speaker, I would invite the hon. Gentleman to accept that the Government has already made a statement to the general public in Gibraltar, saying that we were wrong about this project saying that we accepted that we were wrong about this project. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that, although the Leader of the Opposition had indicated to me that he was personally supportive of the idea, many of them were against the project from the beginning, and they can claim that they were against the project from the beginning.

1130 I do not think, however, Mr Speaker, that it is in the interests of anyone that we characterise the actions of anybody in this place as stupid or in any way motivated by a desire to do anything other than to bring about the best Gibraltar for current generations of Gibraltarians and future generations of Gibraltarians, and I am sure that you agree, Mr Speaker, that that is the best way to address our differences in respect of policies in this House.

1135 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for the Chief Minister explaining that they made a mistake and they put their hands up and they say they got it wrong and Mr Speaker, and that is fair enough, Mr Speaker. But I have been ridiculed by the Chief Minister several times in this House, without any objection from anyone else, Mr Speaker, and I maintain it was a stupid and ridiculous decision to take in the first place. I maintain that position, Mr Speaker, I am not going to resile from it because the Chief Minister thinks he is a better man than I am on this question.

1140 But it is quite clear, Mr Speaker, they got this so dramatically wrong, the question of Line Wall Road. I am not going to give up on it, Mr Speaker. That is not what the people of this community expect me to do. But not only have they got it dramatically wrong, Mr Speaker, the current set up

– and this is the question I want to lead to in relation to Line Wall Road insofar as its efficiency at the moment – part of it still remains closed, actually by the park opposite Holy Trinity and where there are numerous 50ccs. We have just had a debate about highly polluting 50cc motor vehicles and the Government have cordoned off this particular area for motorcycles and on the other side of the park there are now a dozen motorcycles on either side of this particular park where children play.

1145
1150 What is the Minister going to do about the Line Wall Road project, in fact, the remnants of his failed project, where a park outside a church, on either adjacent side of the park there are probably about 100 polluting motorcycles, Mr Speaker? What is the Government going to do to resolve that remnant of his failed project, Mr Speaker?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, it is not his failed project. It is our failed project. This is a Government which is run on the basis of collective responsibility. It is a collegiate Government, a cabinet Government and this is not the mistake of one Member. This is a mistake of the whole of the Government because we take our decisions together.

1155
1160 I know it is quite different on the other side where they had different opinions and the Leader of the Opposition was expressing to me his support for the project whilst the GSD was against the project. I understand that.

1160
1165 But we are not going to take advice on what we should do next from somebody that tells us in one question that we need to be providing more parking on Line Wall Road, more parking in Gibraltar, in another question implying that we should be providing less parking in Line Wall Road, particularly in that area, on the basis of somebody who tells us that providing parking next to a park is bad because it causes pollution, but tells us that it is good to keep open the whole road with two-way traffic going through the other side of the park.

1165
1170 We are not going to take advice, Mr Speaker, from somebody that tells us that we have to be conscious of the environmental issues caused by GibDock, something on which we agree, whilst at the same time telling us that we should not be so conscious of the environmental issues that are created elsewhere.

1170
1175 Mr Speaker, we will continue to deploy our policies in this area, conscious of the fact that we were wrong about Line Wall Road but believing that we will continue to be right about much else and when people come to make a judgement, the ridicule of the hon. Gentleman will continue, but at the ballot box.

1175
Mr Speaker: We need to settle down. The Leader of the Opposition may speak.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, first of all, I have to say it is salutary to hear the hon. Member opposite talk about dignity and about behaviour. Do you know, I will certainly get a transcript of what he said because I hope he lives by the creed that he has set out. I think, in my interventions in the House, I try to precisely be reasonable and constructive and when I have to I am robust, but I do not think I exceed myself. But there are times that the hon. Member, having set out the creed of behaviour and conduct and what should and should not happen, and when someone goes beyond the bounds of on those parameters, he does precisely that.

1180
1185 The hon. Member has to recognise that there are moments, perhaps in the heat of the moment, but you know there is a long list. Members opposite here, as we sit here contemplating the hon. Member, see him behave in a way that he has just chastised the hon. Member to my right. So I would make that point to the hon. Member and, in the cold light of day, perhaps he will reflect that it is not far wrong and that we should all agree and behave and conduct ourselves in a better way.

1190
1195 Secondly, Mr Speaker, you know, I am glad that he accepts the principle of collegiate Government. Of course, there is a doctrine of collective responsibility in the constitution as indeed we live by the same by the same principles on this side of the House.

1195 He is right that we have had discussions about Line Wall Road, but I think when the hon. Member tries to bring that up as if it were some kind of defence to chuck back at the hon. Member to my right, he needs to properly express the context of it.

1200 The context was that the hon. Member opposite and I were working together at the height of the COVID situation in April last year, when we were – (*Interjection*) well no, be honest about it Mr Speaker, be honest about it. We were working together at the height of a COVID situation in the drafting of the *Unlock the Rock* document, which he showed to me privately and at a few hours' notice and asking me to comment on it. I did on a candid basis and on an honest and constructive basis.

1205 But he knew, when I did that, that I was expressing personal views only in relation to aspects of the document to assist everyone in Gibraltar to go forward in the *Unlock the Rock* document. He knows that and he knows also that the paragraph in respect of Line Wall Road, a small little paragraph, and it was clear always that it was not central to the *Unlock the Rock* document and I was going to go back and discuss it with my colleagues and the party would take a position as indeed we did. So let us put it in context.

1210 **A Member:** Is there a question?

Hon. K Azopardi: There is a question, Mr Speaker, there is a question, because I fear that we are digressing and when the hon. Member to my right asks a series of questions on Line Wall Road and asks about how the remnant of the project is going to be dealt with, he got no answer. It is up to the Government if they want to answer that, but I have got a question as well.

1215 I think the Hon. Minister said that the consultants did the work at no cost ... (*Interjection*) ... the data to be quantified. Did the consultants who concluded, who gave advice to the to the Government on the closure on the impact of the closure of Line Wall Road, did they make other recommendations in respect of traffic flows relating to Line Wall Road?

1220 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, that is the longest preamble that I think any Speaker has ever permitted to a question in the history of Parliament, and I think the hon. Gentleman should be grateful for your indulgence.

1225 Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman needs to understand that he cannot get up and pretend to be an altar boy when it comes to the parliamentary debate, as if he never raised the ante etc. and he has to understand, Mr Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman pretends that whenever he gets tough, it is just that he is being robust and when I get tough, it is that I am being brutal.

Well look, Mr Speaker, one man's brutal is one man's robust and another man's stupid, which is what the hon. Gentleman referred to in the context of agreeing with a policy to close Line Wall Road, is his candid and honest.

1230 The Hon. Mr Phillips says that we were stupid to agree a policy. The project was stupid.

A Member: Not you.

1235 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Thank you. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has said that he is not calling us stupid, I really do appreciate it. But he says that the project that we embarked upon was stupid. Okay. I appreciate that that is what he is saying. I appreciate the distinction is an important one and it is appreciated, Mr Speaker.

1240 But then in what he is saying is that the project is stupid, when we agreed to it, but when Mr Azopardi agreed to it, it was just a candid and honest agreement with the project. Mr Speaker, that is the double standards that we are dealing with.

I want to be very clear, Mr Speaker. The hon. Gentleman getting up and preaching to us about the fact that I may have been a little too robust in the context of the of the exchanges that we have had today and in the past is not going to stop me from being robust in the future.

1245 Let us be clear, in this Parliament I have been called by hon. Members opposite and not opposite, members of the party who are no longer here, things which I would never consider calling them. I do not mean by him; I mean those potentially behind him.

Now that, sometimes, we have to accept as part of the cut and thrust of the political debate. That is fine. I understand that. But in the context of a policy which the Government has already said, Mr Speaker, look we are not pursuing, we think we have got it wrong and that he agreed within the context of being candid and honest, he has to understand that when the person sitting to his right says that there was a stupid project, he is saying it is not just those of us who agreed it on this side of the House, but also of him. That is the issue.

1255 So, Mr Speaker, the approach that we are going to take to projects like the Line Wall Project, is to continue the advice that we had in the STTPP, which we think is the right advice, which is to carry out pilot projects like that because if what we want to achieve is less traffic on our roads, what we want to achieve is less pollution, we have to carry out pilot projects like that, because that is the only way that we find out whether they work or not.

1260 Believe it or not, Mr Speaker, it is not possible to simply design things on a desktop exercise and the advice in the STTPP is to try projects out like that, pilot projects like that. Therefore, Mr Speaker, we think that we did the right thing. We think we did that for the right reasons. We think that we turned the policy when we realised that it was not working and it would not have public acceptance.

1265 We do not think that stupid is a way to characterise those who took the decision. The hon. Gentleman has now clarified that that is not what he meant. We do not think that the project is properly described as stupid simply because it did not proceed for those reasons. We do not think that is the best way to go about the parliamentary debate and we do think, Mr Speaker, that, frankly, hon. Members have not wanted to withdraw their questions about Line Wall Road, simply because they wanted their pound of flesh on the project in Question Time, but that is fine. That is politics, but we are now some months away from the time that the Line Wall Road project was cancelled.

1270 These are not current questions, Mr Speaker. When the Government has other projects that it is ready to announce, which our advisers might suggest to us a pilot projects, we shall make announcements about them, What I will not do is bothered to suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he might want to agree them with me, because I will know that his candid and honest view might not be the views of his cabinet or shadow cabinet colleagues.

Mr Speaker: I think we have cleared this subject –

1280 **Hon. E J Phillips:** It is not an invitation to raise the temperature, it is a very specific question on costs. I am grateful for your indulgence, Mr Speaker. I am grateful that the Chief Minister has now clarified that this project was some months ago and it is not a current question. I am grateful for that indication, but why do we not have full visibility on the question of how much it has cost this community to pay a consultant to close a road?

1285 How simple can it be for the Minister now to tell me how much it has cost for Ramboll to be engaged to do this project?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, the Government is not saying that we will not have the figure. The Government is saying that we do not yet have that figure in a way that we can give across the Floor of the House.

1290 But it took quite a considerable period of time for us to work out the cost of £10 million of this community's money to end up with a hole where the Theatre Royal used to be. (*Laughter*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon has one supplementary.

1295 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can I just say that as a concept I do not think, my party does not think that this was a stupid idea as a genuinely environmental party. Anybody would think that the concept was anything but stupid. It was green, it was responsible and it was progressive. What was not very clever was the planning of it and how we little management and planning had gone to it.

1300 That is what I think was not welcomed by the public, and that is my main concern, because we want people to embrace environmental incentives and not shun them. So, I would like to ask the Chief Minister in considering how unwelcome this was due to the lack of planning – which I think we are all grateful for the Chief Minister’s explanation that the project itself as it was, has failed – how are we going to bring people back in terms of attracting them to green environmental measures for the future, and not let them be left with this sour taste of the effects of this bad planning?

1310 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady knows that I would not agree with her. She knows that I will not agree with her that the problem with the Line Wall Road project turned out to be bad planning. Nobody who was objecting to the Line Wall Road project said it would be fine to close Line Wall Road and they would agree to it if only they had been given four months’ notice or if only somebody had put 10 more notices in the *Gazette* to advise me on the days that I could and could not travel through Line Wall Road.

1315 There was a wholesale rejection by the community of the project. We have to recognise that and it is not fair, Mr Speaker, for the hon. Lady, who is usually but not always fair, to say that the problem with the project, which, of course I understand, was an emblematic one for her, it was in her manifesto, was in the planning of it and if she had been elected, she would have delivered the closure of Line Wall Road, with better planning, in a way that would have been accepted by the community.

1320 So for that reason, Mr Speaker. I do not accept the premise of her question. But she will note that I do agree with her that it is important that our community continue to welcome green initiatives and that the aspect of our manifesto that we will not abandon is our desire to make Gibraltar as green as possible and, on that, Mr Speaker, my view is that the community actually believes that we should be as green as possible and that the rejection of the Line Wall Road project is not about rejection of green policies, it is about simply not accepting that a thoroughfare that had been open for so long should now be closed.

1325 There was a very interesting report this morning on the *BBC Breakfast Show* about exactly the same thing where roads are being closed in areas close to schools and how that is creating less pollution around the school but is creating huge kick-back by parents and others who want to take children to school.

1330 So this is an extraordinarily complex area. We have to accept. We have to bring people with us in creating a greener environment for all of us. That is the challenge of politics now and in my view, it is a great challenge, because I will give the hon. Lady my honest view and assessment and that is that most people will tick the box that says walking to work is better people should, in particular, not drive polluting four-by-four vehicles to work. They will support that policy. They will say it is the right thing to do. And then they will get into their polluting four-by-four and drive to work, because people say that is the right thing to do for everyone else to do, but not themselves.

1335 Mr Speaker, I think that I am doing as much as I can by walking to work every day that I can and for some people, it is impossible to take more than one child to school. They need to go on to take children in different directions, and I fully appreciate that and squaring the circle is not easy. There is not one right and easy answer and we will need to continue to work on those issues as a Government where we can. We should continue to try and collaborate together to achieve that, but this is the challenge of the current and future generations, and perhaps the electrification of vehicles may be what ensures that we can continue to have as many cars on our roads as we want/need without pollution being created as a result.

1345

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon, this is the final supplementary.

1350 **Hon. Ms M D Hasson Nahon:** Mr Speaker, with all due respect I think that the first problem that we have here is that our Chief Minister does not accept that this project was poorly planned and hence was a disaster because of that.

1355 The plan that my party had that we put forward in our manifesto was staged, phased, discussed with designers and architects and surveyors. It was not something that came out almost on a whim the day after an unprecedented lockdown. That is what I was trying to address is how can the Chief Minister equate the planning of the project that he came out with barely a day after a lockdown of three months with a plan that would have succeeded because it was very well thought of and prepared?

1360 This is why I would like him to perhaps reflect, if he would, and offer the community a well thought-out and managed project that would actually fly in the community instead of fail. This is my question to him if he would be willing to rethink that Line Wall Road could be a green artery with bicycle lanes, with green lanes, instead of just throw it away simply because they came out with it practically from one day to the next.

1365 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, we did not come out with this project from one day to the next. Simply because one day the project was not announced and the next day it was announced does not mean that we came out with the project from one day to the next.

1370 Of course the hon. Lady could be accused of having come out with the Line Wall Road project from one day to the next, because one day she did not have a manifesto and the next day she published her manifesto, which had the Line Wall Road project in it. Is that to have come out with the project from one day to the next?

We had the benefit of considerable advice before we came out with the project, which we came out with at the end of the period of the pandemic. But, Mr Speaker, what I am saying to her, is that I do not believe that she is right that the problem with the project is planning.

1375 The position that the hon. Lady has taken, which I appreciate is honest, is that it remains her policy or her party's policy to close Line Wall Road. That is what she has said. The hon. Lady I know will realise now that I have put it quite distinctly to her, that that is an uncomfortable policy for her to have confirmed that she holds, but that is her policy.

1380 She has said that she will, if elected, ensure that Line Wall Road, becomes a green artery open only to bicycles and pedestrians, and *Hansard* will show that. So she is saying the closure of Line Wall Road can be achieved if it is a better planned, and I am saying to her that we had the best planning available and we were not able to succeed in that project and we have abandoned that project.

1385 This is not about planning, Mr Speaker. This is not about staging. This is not about phasing. This is about the end result, which is the closure of the road and matters, and that is what there has been a rejection of by our community, and that is what we have accepted.

1390 **Hon. Ms M D Hasson Nahon:** Supplementary. I do not know if that constitutes a point of order, Mr Speaker but we never called Line Wall Road a closure. They called it a closure. It was a redefining of an environmental policy.

Mr Speaker: You cannot get up to defend your policies as part of a question. You do both need to ask a question.

1395 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, may I just say to the hon. Lady, it is not fair that she gets up, switches on the microphone and puts the position that she wanted to put and then, having put it, simply sits down, because that is not to play by the rules.

The hon. Lady has a position which she put in the context of her question, and she put it very clearly and *Hansard* will show how she put it, and that is what I was reflecting on, and she might

1400 now feel, Mr Speaker, that that is an uncomfortable position to be in because there has been a
wholesale rejection of that. But that is the position and what you cannot do at Question Time is
get up and without asking a question simply put a statement to try and get herself off the hook.
She can put a motion if she likes and we can have a debate about that. He or she can issue a press
release and she can do that, Mr Speaker.

1405 **Mr Speaker:** I think we need to move on.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. Lady, yes could have put a question,
should not make a statement could have put a question. But in reply the Hon. Chief Minister
proceeded to give a long, discursive answer that was hardly a point of order. I think, on this side,
1410 speaking for the Members that at least I lead, we are striving quite hard to keep to the short
number of supplementaries, but, yes extent more extended in terms of where we think there is a
public interest as indeed with Line Wall Road there has been. But the hon. Member rose in reply
to the hon. Lady, I assumed purporting to make a point of order, but in fact was not a point of
order and replied to a non-question so made a redundant and unnecessary answer.

1415 **Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady did make a statement in the short time that when she rose or partly
rose, which the Chief Minister then had to respond to because she introduced issues there, which
required a reply. It might not have been a question but it was a statement where she tried to
clarify an earlier answer, an earlier question, which carried a prelude to it. The hon. Member rose
1420 to expand or to clarify. That was not acceptable. I allowed it because she was halfway up and
saying it.

Then the Hon. Chief Minister responded and I cannot criticise the Chief Minister for that
because the hon. Lady was the person who brought the subject up in the way that she had tried
to expand on the matter in hand. I think that is a fair analysis of what has taken place in the past
1425 moments. I do not agree with the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on that.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, may I? I just wanted to clarify that in my view, the
Chief Minister was misleading in saying that I had called for closure of Line Wall Road. We were
saying was that we had a completely new concept and we did not deem it a closure. It was a
1430 future, progressive way of having an environmental policy for Line Wall Road. It was not a closure,
so when he deemed my policy as a closure I wanted to correct it. If I do not have the right to do
that, I accept it.

Mr Speaker: You have a right to rise on a point of order to correct an erroneous analysis which
1435 the Chief Minister might have made, which is what you have just done. You have not referred to
it as a point of order. (*Interjection*) I know, but when you rose this is what you were doing. You
were expanding and you were making a point of order, because you consider the Chief Minister
to have taken the wrong analysis of it. The Chief Minister rose to counter that. Now, I think that
is perfectly in order.

1440 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, if I may say so, please, with respect to the hon. Lady that the
Rules of the House provide that if somebody is alleged to have misled the House, they should be
invited to withdraw that what they have said, which is misleading. I do not believe, but that have
for one moment misled the House. I believe that I have properly characterised (a) the hon. Lady's
1445 policy as set out in her manifesto, and (b) the way that the hon. Lady herself characterised her
policy as *Hansard* will show.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, if the hon. Lady still believes that there is somehow any suggestion that
her policies anything other than a *de facto* closure of Line Wall Road, then she should bring a
motion in order to demonstrate that I will be happy to engage in that motion.

1450 Mr Speaker, I cannot believe that, given the challenges facing this community at this moment in our history, this is where this Parliament is this afternoon having a debate on something that happened six months ago something and something that is not relevant going forward. Mr Speaker, the Government will continue to give discursive answers where we believe that where we are doing so, we are giving information to the House.

1455 When we give discursive answers, we are told we are giving answers that are too long. When we do not, we are told that we are giving answers are shorter than we are not giving information. We will continue to do our best to ensure that the public is informed of the Government's policies.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

Q604/2020
Congestion charge –
Non-resident vehicles

1460 **Clerk:** Question number 604, the Hon. E J. Phillips.

Hon. E. J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it is considering a congestion charge for non-resident vehicles entering Gibraltar?

1465 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, this subject will be considered in the context of the result of the negotiations for a Treaty on mobility between the UK and the EU which is being expertly handled by the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister.

1475 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Apologies, Mr Speaker, I was momentarily transported to the Westminster Parliament where people pat each other on their backs. But, Mr Speaker, one question I have in relation to this congestion charge: is it driven predominantly by the environmental policy here? Because quite clearly this question, in my view, was posed as that type of question in order to avoid the large number of vehicles coming into Gibraltar, polluting the air we breathe and the air of our children, that they breathe. *(Interjection)* Mr Isola actually produces a lot of wind and gas all the time – we can hear from but there here we go, Mr Speaker. *(Laughter)* Would the Government confirm that this is led by the environmental issue as opposed to Brexit?

1480 **Mr Speaker:** Let me intervene here. I think we should not introduce remarks which are likely to provoke individual Members and create a scenario which is not conducive to good parliamentary business. So I am asking you, with respect, to try and not make unnecessary remarks, which might attract unnecessary responses, please.

1485 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that indication. Of course, it is obvious when one feels goaded or one has to respond, but if Mr Speaker would send a message to the other side, Mr Speaker and say goading people from a sedentary position is not exactly how we do business, Mr Speaker, so it would be helpful. But the slap on the wrist the Speaker gives me, which I accept open-handedly but that it is also delivered on the other side, Mr Speaker, in relation to the same issue.

1490 **Mr Speaker:** I am grateful for your understanding of the matter.

1495 **A Member:** Sorry, Mr Speaker. (*Interjection*)

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, it is entirely environmental and congestion considerations. (*Interjection*)

1500 **Mr Speaker:** When we ask a supplementary, let us keep it to ask a supplementary let us keep it to the subject matter and not introduce diversions from the subjects please.

Hon. K Azopardi: No pun intended, as we are talking about traffic. Yes, of course, I wanted to answer, as I understand the Hon. Member's original answer, it is whether the congestion charge is linked to the negotiations on the treaty, I think that is what he said.

1505 It is the first we hear of and I think it has not been made public. Nor do I think, at least my recollection I do not have in front of me, hon. Members will correct me if I am wrong, I do not think it features in the framework agreement or anything like that. Is it the Government's position that they are proactively seeking this, seeking to negotiate something like this as part of the discussions? Is that the Government's position?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, we are not seeking to proactively negotiate such an issue. If a congestion charge were to be introduced in Gibraltar where you can introduce that charge, which vehicles will be affected etc. is not something which the Government feels it would be able to make a final decision, once we know what the state of our future relationship with the European Union would be.

1515 The hon. Gentleman will know that, even in the context of a charge to access to the Upper Rock, consideration of EU rights were engaged and so we need to understand what it is that we will be able to agree in the treaty and what consequences the treaty would have in the context of any controls on some vehicles coming into Gibraltar, because the question put by the hon. Gentleman is about non-resident vehicles entering Gibraltar.

1520 If we want an unrestricted right for Gibraltar vehicles to enter the European Union, we need to understand how that is framed how that ends up being framed or what the consequences of that are and what the rights of residence in Gibraltar would be or whether there will be rights of neighbourhood residents in respect of a particular area, etc. That is what we are talking about.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am glad for that clarification, Mr Speaker, because certainly it had raised concerns when I first heard the original answer. Can I ask the hon. Member not simply to say that they will not proactively seek it, but rather to reflect further, not perhaps today, but to reflect further on the issue and to consider the dangers on frontier flows if we were to seek to move in that direction, and I will just reflect on that and remind the hon. Member, perhaps he may recall that a Mayor of La Línea, had a similar type of the proposal was viewed very suspiciously and with concern in Gibraltar because of the effect it might have on frontier flows, and to take a step in that direction here in Gibraltar, I think would be counter-productive to a free flow at the border.

1535 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am delighted that he has now clarified their position in that respect, because their question seems to suggest the opposite.

The question seems to suggest that the Government should be considering a congestion charge. That is why we have responded, Mr Speaker, by saying that we would not be able to do so until we were clear what the final result of the negotiations with the European Union were, not just because of the example of other Alejandro Sánchez's infamous "*Bordillo*" attempt to create a charge for Gibraltar vehicles to enter Spain, but because of the other potential consequences there could be, whilst at the same time, preserving the right to do something like that in respect of some areas, and indeed, that is the way that the Upper Rock charge for the entry of foreign vehicles was characterised at one stage, and those were the issues that arose in that context.

1545

1550 So, Mr Speaker, the Government is entirely alive to the issues that could be caused, and it is salutary to hear the hon. Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition supporting the Government in seeking to obtain a treaty with the European Union that maximises fluidity through the frontier, and it is something that I am sure that I will have an opportunity to remind him of should he ever suggest that we should not do so.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

Q605-8/2020
Pay and display machines –
Total cost

Clerk: Question 605, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1555 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state the total cost of the Pay and Display ticket machines at our car parks?

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

1560 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 606 to 608.

Clerk: Question 606, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1565 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state the total revenue from Pay and Display machines?

Clerk: Question 607, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1570 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state by reference to each month from January 2020 how many complaints/reports have been received in relation to unworkable Pay and Display ticket machines?

Clerk: Question 608, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1575 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state by reference to the last 12 months the costs of maintenance and repair of the Pay and Display ticket machines?

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

1580 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the total cost of the Pay and Display machines is £175,950.

The total revenue from the machines from 2012 to date is £3,405,869.13.

The maintenance is carried out by two technicians that are employed on a full-time basis.

A total of £16,254.01 has been spent on replacement parts.

1585 The information requested is in the schedule I will now hand over.

Answer to Question 607

Month	No. of Reports
Jan-20	31
Feb-20	25
Mar-20	19
Apr-20	11
May-20	12
Jun-20	35
Jul-20	20
Aug-20	22
Sep-20	28
Oct-20	30
Nov-20	25
Dec-20	29
Jan-21	44
Feb-21	38

1590 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Just one question before ... [*Inaudible*] ... reports, the complaints received, in relation to the £3 million-odd received in relation to the Pay and Display machines, does the Minister have the breakdown? He has just simply refer to 2012, as the total costs when they were first installed to date. Does the Government have any some more useful information of the breakdown, of that?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I do not have the breakdown with me, but it is something that I am sure I can get for him if he wishes.

1595 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, insofar as the complaints are concerned over a period of 12 months, there seemed to be a very significant number of complaints about the Pay and Display units themselves. I have received a number of complaints about this particular issue of people being unable to pay at any one point, either in cash or in the use of cards. I understand that the entire, the total sum – I am grateful to my hon. Friend, Mr Clinton for totting up on abacus – Mr
1600 Speaker, about 369 complaints were received in just one year about the Pay and Display units that the Government has installed.

Can the Government provide information as to why the significant levels of complaints about the functional ability of these installations?

1605 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, he said that there was in total of 369 complaints, so that is over the over 14 months.

A Member: 12 months.

1610 **Hon. V Daryanani:** No, 14 months from January 2020 to February 2021 –14 months. So we divide that by 14 months it is 26 complaints a month. That is less than one complaint a day, and that is about and we have ... I am trying to explain to the Member opposite that it is not that many complaints as the way he puts it. These are machines that we have had for a few ... (*interjection*)
1615 yes, of course, like everything else. We have had these machines for about four years and there have been issues.

There have been issues with connectivity. There have been infrastructural issues and we need to deal with them, and we are constantly dealing with them. We are looking at ways of improving of the service, and that is the way that it is. So I think it is very unfair to say that these complaints are numerous, as such.

1620

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q609-10/2020
Public electric vehicles –
Charging points

Clerk: Question 609, the Hon. E J Philips.

1625 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state when it will begin the rolling out of Public Electric Vehicle charging points beyond those located at Midtown?

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

1630 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 610.

Clerk: Question 610, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1635 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state why the current charging points only allow for 30 minutes per charge?

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

1640 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the rolling out of public electric charging points will occur during the life time of this Parliament. The electric vehicle charging points at Midtown Car Park are not restricted to a half-hour charge. The points charge the vehicle until the battery is full or the client leaves before it is fully charged.

1645 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Does the Minister agree with me that Government's main plank of its promise to the community and the wider electorate in relation to a Green Gibraltar and, indeed, trying to encourage many more people to purchase hybrid and electric vehicles, Mr Speaker, to have an answer by a Minister to say within this lifetime we will deliver charging points is not satisfactory.

1650 Mr Speaker, the Government is trying to encourage people to drive electric cars and good on them, I agree. We should all be encouraged to drive electric vehicles. But the infrastructure for using these vehicles in terms of charging points must be rolled out as soon as possible.

1655 Mr Speaker, to suggest that it is in one location and to suggest that it will be delivered in the 'lifetime of this Parliament' – whenever that may be, I suppose when the Chief Minister calls it – Mr Speaker, is not good enough, quite frankly. So, is the Government reviewing this issue? Will it attempt to escalate the provision of these charging points so that it can give reassurance to members of the public who are looking to charge electric vehicles on the advice they have received from the Government?

1660 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, I do not agree with the comments of the Member opposite. Like I said, we have a mandate to do this over the next four years and we will roll out this initiative during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Q611-16/2020
School buses –
Availability and parking provision

Clerk: Question number 611, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm whether or not it will increase the availability of school buses?

1665

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 612 to 616.

1670

Clerk: Question 612, Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state what preparations were made and plans put in place for the provision of school buses before the start of the staggered school term?

1675

Clerk: Question 613, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can Government state how many on street parking spaces existed before the introduction of the STTPP?

1680

Clerk: Question 614, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state how many on street parking spaces have been lost since the introduction of the STTPP?

1685

Clerk: Question 615, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state how many parking spaces have been converted to pay parking spaces since the introduction of the STTPP?

1690

Clerk: Question 616, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state how many cars have been registered locally since the introduction of the STTPP?

1695

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member will no doubt be aware, Press Release 617/2020 announced an increase in school buses to tackle the rise of students using public transport. Prior to the introduction of the STTPP, there were approximately 3,000 on-street parking spaces throughout Gibraltar; 529 of these on-street parking spaces have been reconfigured to create Pay and Display areas and 30 spaces have been removed to facilitate two-way traffic on Fish Market Lane. Other than that, all remain.

1700

The total number of parking spaces is therefore now 2,970 of which 2,441 are still free. I can confirm a total of 10,019 cars have been registered locally since the introduction of STTPP.

1705

Q617/2020
Introduction of STTPP –
Number of cars removed since

Clerk: Question 617, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1710 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many cars have been taken off the roads since the introduction of the STTPP?

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

1715 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the total amount of cars that have been taken off the road since the introduction of STTPP is approximately 2,240.

Q618/2020
Illegal exhausts –
Introduction of legislation

Clerk: Question 618, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1720 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state when it intends to introduce legislation and provide the authorities with the necessary equipment to clamp down on illegally loud exhausts?

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

1725 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the legislation is in place and the Driver Vehicle and Licensing Department (DVLD) have the necessary equipment which is used for the roadworthiness testing. If the RGP stop a motorcycle or any other vehicle which they believe to be causing excessive noise, they will take the vehicle to the DVLD and test the vehicle decibel level if necessary.

1730 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, this is a question that has been raised on a number of occasions and the information that I am receiving is that the authorities do not have the particular equipment they need to measure the sound and the noise, which is causing the pollution for many of our residents, Mr Speaker. That gives rise to, obviously, complaints about that issue. But I am given to understand that the authorities do not have the equipment they need to enforce the law, ultimately.

1735 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, I do not know what to say: that is information you have, but in answering this question, we know that we do have the equipment and if somebody, if the RGP, of course, arrest someone because they think they are causing excessive noise, they can take the vehicle down to DVLD and the DVLD will have the equipment to check that.

Q619/2020

**Two stroke and electric motorbikes –
Number sold**

Clerk: Question number 619, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1745 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of (1) two stroke engine motorcycles and (2) electric motorcycles sold/registered in the last 24 months?

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

1750 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker In the last 24 months, no two stroke engine motorcycles have been registered. Four electric motorcycles and 20 electric mopeds have been registered.

1755 **Hon. E J Phillips:** That could be an error on my part on the basis that a two stroke – I do not have a motorbike, so I would not know – but is a two stroke a 50cc motorbike? It is. None within two years have been registered in Gibraltar.

Hon. V Daryanani: That is proof of our success of our policy of registering two stroke motorcycles.

Q620/2020

**Segregated cycle lanes –
Testing efficacy**

1760 **Clerk:** Question 620, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government confirm whether or not it will utilise pop up cycle lanes in order to test the efficacy of the introduction of segregated cycle lanes in certain areas?

1765 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

1770 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Government is considering all options for the deployment of cycle lanes in Gibraltar, by reference to the recommendations made to Government as part of the STTPP, and further consultation with other organisations in the months leading to the General Election in October 2019. As part of this review, the Government is required to balance its ambition to deliver a Green Gibraltar with the practical reality on the ground today.

1775 The Government will consider the deployment of segregated cycle lanes where it considers it appropriate in the circumstances. Where relevant, the Government will be happy to consider the advice of experts in relation to the utility or otherwise of pop-up cycle lanes in the development of cycling infrastructure in Gibraltar. The Government further considers that while segregated cycle lanes are, in the main, desirable, they are not the panacea for all Gibraltar's transport and traffic challenges.

1780 The Government therefore remains committed, as set out in its manifesto for the 2019 General Election, to continuing to 'promote cycling as an alternative means of transport, creating segregated cycling lanes where possible to help encourage people. to feel safer'. It is important the Government's commitment to segregated cycle lanes should be set in this, the correct context, to which I have just alluded.

1785 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Minister, behind the Chief Minister will be chomping at the bit to answer this question. I know he is a passionate individual cares about cycling. I know the Chief Minister is as well. I was referring to Mr Balban, of course.

1790 Mr Speaker, the problem with this question is that the Minister and I both know, but we have gone round this House many times as to the efficacy of cycle lanes in our community. It is an important nettle to grasp. I would suggest to him, and I know that his Department have investigated about long continuous lines and having the availability of areas in Gibraltar where we can use bicycles more productively and then encourage more people to do that.

But I do not think, Mr Speaker, that we are grasping the nettle and dealing with it in a way which encourages people to cycle, Mr Speaker.

1795 So what are the specific plans? I know that he will maybe come back within the lifetime of this Parliament, but where there are the real concrete proposals that he is looking at to ensure that we encourage people to cycle in Gibraltar? Pop-up lanes are pop-up lanes. They are used to trail blaze cycling in certain communities. Why is the Government not doing that now to see whether these would work in particular long routes across Gibraltar, because they are what they are, pop-up cycle lanes?

1800 I would genuinely ask him and encourage him to utilise them as soon as possible, so that we can really test on the ground. I know it is not the panacea, I agree entirely with him on that. It is not a panacea. But let us at least test on the ground and do a better job of it, in my respectful view.

1805 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister has said that we are considering all options. That must mean that the option that the hon. Gentleman has put is also one of them being considered.

1810 The hon. Gentleman has referred to me. I took up cycling last year. It is one of the things that most helped my mental health during the very difficult period of COVID-19 and the lockdown. It helped my head more than it helped my heart, and I hope that I have encouraged many people to take up cycling.

1815 I would put it to him that although there is still a long way for us to go in doing everything we can to encourage people to cycle and to cycle safely in Gibraltar, he might be interested to know that last week, given that I have taken up cycling, I sought to buy a further bike. I could not get one in Gibraltar. There were almost no bikes available in Gibraltar. There were almost no bikes available in the region. They are not stuck at the border, as he says from a sedentary position, not even available, Mr Speaker, in the context of the shops around us.

1820 In terms of the border, Mr Speaker, he would be very pleased to have seen our cyclists be able to continue to cycle into the hinterland at the weekends, almost as if 31st December had not happened, and I think there is a backhanded compliment there that he was giving us by making that reference because they can continue to flow across the border.

1825 So, Mr Speaker, we have not done everything that we need to do to encourage cycling and to encourage cycling safely, but we have done a hell of a lot. We are a good way down the road. The market speaks for itself almost the fact that there are almost no bikes available. Cycling is being taken up, not just by me and many others in Gibraltar is being taken up internationally. People have seen that this is something that adds a lot to their lives, and the Government is very pleased with the way the policy has been developed and will continue to be developed in coming weeks and months.

Q621/2020
Bicycle parking –
Completion date

Clerk: Question 621, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1830

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state when it expects to complete the roll out of the bicycle parking?

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

1835

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, the roll out of 35 new bicycle parking racks, which provide parking for up to 70 bicycles, as announced in the Press Release 560/2020, was completed on 9th September 2020. This is the first phase to provide bicycle parking throughout Gibraltar. The Government are actively looking into further phases to roll out more bicycle parking as and when demand arises.

1840

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one question, does the Government now believe that the supply now meets the demand, because I think he said at the end of that question was that they will now review demand going forward, but it is currently at the moment that the supply of bicycle parking sufficiently meets the needs of cyclists in our community?

1845

Hon. V Daryanani: I think it does. I must say that when I am walking around and I see bicycle racks I like to see whether they are actually being used, because I think that that is the real barometer of it. If there is space still available, that means there is enough space. But at the moment, like I say, we are constantly monitoring it and we want we want to have a second phase of bicycle parking and will do so when we feel that there is a need for it.

1850

Q622/2020
Whitham's Road and Castle Road –
Driving against traffic flow

Clerk: Question 622, the Hon. E J Phillips

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how it intends to deal with the prevalence of driving against the flow of traffic on Witham's Road and Castle Road to name a few?

1855

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, although the Ministry has not received any formal complaints regarding driving against the flow of traffic on Witham's Road and Castle Road, I have asked the Highways team to monitor the areas in question to ascertain the prevalence of this and assess if there is anything that can be done.

1860

Having said this, it would be a matter for enforcement. If the motorists wishes to ignore the Traffic Signs, they will.

Q623/2020
International Driving Licences –
Counter availability

1865 **Clerk:** Question 623, the Hon. E J Phillips.

The Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, Can the Government state why only one counter is available at the Post Office for the application of International Driving Licences?

1870 Obviously, I should preface that this Question was placed at a time where there was a huge demand on the issuing of International Driving Licences and at the time the Minister will be fully well aware of the large queues that were spilling out to the streets at the time when there was only one counter available.

1875 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Yes, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member was right there was one counter but because of the queues we put two there. There are currently two counters at the moment and we expect to open additional counters at the MOT test centre very soon.

1880 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to ask the Minister, because it is an International Driving Licence-related question and if he does not have the answer, I appreciate it, and will come back next time to discuss it. One of the issues that constituents have raised with me in relation to these licences is the fact that the authorities, as they cross over the border, at least when they are stopped by the Spanish authorities, they are not asking for these particular licences.

1885 I just wondered because there was such a rush on them at the time and obviously the Government deployed resources to get these licences out, I wonder whether the Minister would know and why the authorities – he may not be to answer that specific question, I can understand why he would not be able to answer it – why it is not being utilised ultimately now as a document to demonstrate the ability to drive or at least the licensing requirement.

1895 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker first of all, as you remember, may recall, this measure was one of the Government advertisers gave considerable publicity, so in the context of there being no agreement with the with the EU for the future relationship for Gibraltar, in the event our successful negotiation led to a framework agreement. That in turn led to bridging measures, which see us through – in relation to Spain, obviously – to the negotiation, hopefully, of a treaty which will provide for this.

1900 The short answer to the question is that that was part of the planning for there being no agreement on 31st December and people would then be required to take an international driving permit if they drove into Spain. Because there are no bridging measures in place, that international driving permit for Spain is not required.

1905 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am very grateful to the Deputy Chief Minister for answering that question. He may be able to answer this question as well. I believe they are limited to 12 months, these particular driving licences for Spain. I think one of the problems that the members community that approached me about is the fact that you will have to renew them, even though you are not using them, and I think that they are struggling to understand why we need to get them and renew them when they are not being used and I think it would be helpful – actually it would be helpful for members the public to understand whether we need to continue to renew them now, even though we are in this very difficult period of time as to their usability. I understand that, but it is certainly a question has been raised with me a number of times.

1915 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, there are three different international driving permits for different countries. As the hon. Member will know the one for Spain, I think is one that is renewable every year, so that that would require the holder of the licence to renew it. There is another one that you only need to renew every three years. I think that is the one for Portugal. So, there are different types of permits for different countries which has added to the general confusion. That is a requirement of the Convention that the UK and Gibraltar both belong to.

Q624/2020
Bunker barge –
Transfer procedures

1920 **Clerk:** Question 624, the Hon. E J. Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the process and procedure between the bunker barge and the vessels taking on bunkers?

1925 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

1930 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Port Authority has developed the Gibraltar Bunkering Code of Practice, which draws on international industry standards and goes beyond international recommendations delivering what is widely considered to be an industry exemplar of best practice in terms of regulations in a port. This Code of Practice is a 'live' document in that it is constantly updated and reviewed to ensure it keeps being at the leading edge of best practice. In its current version (version 9 – December 2020) the code of practice is a 65-page booklet.

1935 There are numerous checklists and information exchanges which are required to take place before a bunkering operation can commence. In Gibraltar these are mandated and enforced by the GPA on all the bunker suppliers as part of the licensing regime, and forms part of the licence conditions which all suppliers must follow, at all times.

I have this document here it is quite a technical document, but if I can, I can pass it on to – if I am allowed to – I can pass it on to you so you can have a look at it.

1940

Hon. E J Phillips: I think that is a very helpful use of time actually because otherwise I will ask questions that the Minister may need to reflect on and, in fact, do a deep dive into the document. I am grateful.

1945 **Hon. V Daryanani:** I am not sure I can actually pass it on to. I need to check.

Hon. E J Phillips: As I said, Mr Speaker, I would be unable to scrutinise in the level of detail over the process and procedure, so it is pointless asking a supplementary.

1950

Q625-31/2020

**Oil spill –
Procedures**

Clerk: Question 625, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1955 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the process for notifying shipping operators in the event of an oil spill?

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

1960 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 626 to 631.

Clerk: Question 626, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1965 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the effect of notification to shipping operators of an oil spill?

Clerk: Question 627, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1970 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state at what time they notified shipping operators of the oil spill from the AV Gwent?

Clerk: Question 628, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1975 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state why bunker activities have continued unabated despite notification of an oil spill from the AV Gwent?

Clerk: Question 629, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1980 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for the Port state whether the cause of the recent oil spill has been identified?

Clerk: Question 630, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1985 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for the Port provide details of the costs incurred by the Government to date in connection with the recent oil spill?

Clerk: Question 631, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1990 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for the Port state which private companies have been engaged to provide assistance, in connection with the recent oil spill? Recent as in when I filed the question, of course.

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

1995 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I do not know what the hon. Member means when referring to 'shipping operators'. Bunkering activities did not continue unabated. The incident that occurred on Friday, 12th February 2021 is still on going with the clean-up operations on the final stages, with the P&I Club of the vessel representatives and the GPA working together.

2000 The investigation has been completed by the vessel's flag state and the GPA is waiting to receive a copy of such report. The RGP also concluded their investigation with evidence showing failure of the vessel's equipment stated as part of the cause and a successful prosecution was concluded.

2005 The Gibraltar Port Authority has contracted the services of Brightside, GJBS, Bland, Neptune Marine, PAS, Tarik and Molinary for the initial stages of the response. The P&I Club has now engaged with some areas of the clean-up and have contracted some local companies to work directly under them.

2010 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker I have not taken a full note of the answer, which I assume is the answer to Question 630. No, it is not? No, it is the answer to Question 631 where he lists the private companies which have been engaged to provide assistance and he mentions Brightside, did he say, GJBS. What is the process in relation to this? Are they like some sort of a panel which the Government can call upon when something like this happens? I see that the Minister from a sedentary position is nodding his head. In order to get on to that panel, should that be the answer, 2015 is there a tender process or that in order to achieve that positioning?

2020 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, I do not exactly know whether there is a panel, but I do know that in a situation like this, when there is an emergency, when you are dealing with an oil spill, what you need to get out is all the people possible. There are not that many companies in Gibraltar that can provide certain services. These companies do that, and it is not a question of a tender or not. There is an oil spill, you need to deal with it immediately and that is exactly what we did.

2025 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Just to draw on the answer a bit, is he saying that all the companies that are available to provide the service were utilised or did the authorities or himself, as the Minister responsible, choose which companies he was going to be utilising for these purposes?

2030 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, our professionals in the Port Authority are the ones who determined who they needed at that moment in time. They did not call up to ask me whether a certain company should be brought in to deal with this emergency.

2035 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does he know which criteria are used by the relevant authorities? Is there a criterion which is utilised, or is it based on because the relevant individual within the Port Authority knows the company personally? Because, you know, you could end up in a situation where it is simply because they know him or through chumocracy the company gets the job. So can he answer the question as to whether there is any criteria which is set and which is employed before a decision a decision is made in relation to the identification of the company has got to provide the service.

2040 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I rise to defend the professionals in our Port Authority from any suggestion that they would at any time appoint anyone on the basis of a chumocracy. Absolutely contrary to my experience of the great professionals that we have in the Gibraltar Port Authority who have done such a sterling job of dealing with this oil spill in a way that I think will be seen, once the spill is analysed, was exactly the right way to do it.

2045 The criteria that they apply are the same criteria under the GSLP that they used to apply under the GSD: need. What do we need? How can we deal with it and what is the quickest way to deal with it? Without ministerial interference and looking at what is the best value for money for the taxpayer in order to ensure that they deal with the emergency that is developing on the basis of being able to deal with it on a cost-benefit analysis in the most cost-effective manner.

2050 Absolutely not on the basis of a chumocracy, and I would remind the hon. Gentleman that to make throwaway remarks like that is to impute the potential that someone might have acted in that way, and although I have absolutely nothing to do with it, although there is no ministerial

involvement whatsoever, I stand here and I defend the professionals of the Gibraltar Port Authority for the magnificent work that they have done, for their magnificent way they quickly rolled out the need to deal with these issues.

2055 Indeed, Mr Speaker, within a week and a half they were dealing with an explosion on another vessel and also dealing with that. People sometimes do not see and appreciate the huge amount of work that goes into keeping our ports open, attractive and operating.

2060 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, there was no intention on my part and no suggestion in my part that there is anybody within the Port Authority was delving into chumocracy in relation to this. That is not what I was saying. What I was saying was, if there are no set criteria as to which company to employ, that it could lead to that situation. That is the only point I was making and the Hon. Member has answered the question by stating that the criterion which is used is based on need, which was quite frankly, in my view, pretty nebulous and too wide ranging. I think there
2065 ought to be more detailed criteria.

By way of further supplementary questions in relation to I think it is 630, which deals with the details of the costs incurred by the Government, I am not sure if I have got the answer, because he bunched quite a few questions together. I am not sure the answer is in the same order that the questions had been filed. Can I ask him to repeat that unless he does not have the information
2070 available and that is why I was not able to take a note?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, how can need be too wide a criterion in order to procure the services that one needs to deal with an emergency? I really do think that the hon. Gentleman is indulging in the politics of *a tirar la piedra y esconder la mano*, which is to throw the stone and
2075 hide the hand.

It is Mr Speaker, if I may say so, characteristic of some of the way that he approaches his politics, he makes the suggestion that there might be something akin to a chumocracy. When it is put to him that the suggestion is actually a scandalous one that suggests that there might be a behaviour which is inappropriate on the part of people whose professionalism is beyond repute
2080 he then resiles from it.

Well, Mr Speaker, it is up to him be able to do that politics if he wishes, and it is up to him whether he thinks that it is going to garner him any particular support, but I will tell you, Mr Speaker, that this Government will have sufficient trust in the professionals who are employed in the Port Authority in Gibraltar and indeed in other sectors of public service in Gibraltar to permit
2085 them the leeway to deal with emergencies on the basis of need.

But Mr Speaker, I would accept that if I had said that any public servant in Gibraltar can purchase anything on the basis that they need it ... a point of order, which I am sure will refer to the relevant Standing Order rule, Mr Speaker, which I am alleged to have offended.

2090 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. Member has not answered the question. The question that I asked was a supplementary in relation to Question 630, which dealt with the issue of cost at all –

Mr Speaker: That is not quite the case when you started off in response, when you started your question, in your preamble, you made certain suggestions in your preamble. The Chief
2095 Minister is responding to the preamble. You also asked a question about the cost, which has not been answered. But you did suggest something in your preamble and the Chief Minister is responding to it. I cannot accept that point of order. What I can accept is that the answer to the question that you posed at the end has not been answered. You asked about the cost.

2100 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The answer has not yet been provided, because what he wanted to do, Mr Speaker, was stop me in the flow of replying to his scandalous preamble. Mr Speaker, what I was saying was that he was giving a licence to, you know, public servants in Gibraltar to purchase outside of procurement rules simply on the basis of need across the board in any circumstances,

2105 I would accept that that could open the possibility that people might act in manners, which were not in keeping with procurement rules. That is not what I am saying.

2110 What I am saying, what the Government is saying, is that in this context of an emergency, aside from the fact, there are services contracted for emergencies – in other words, when there is an oil spill – people have tendered and you press a button and those who have tendered are able to provide services. When you need additional services, you procure on the basis of need. That, Mr Speaker, does not leave open the opportunity that the hon. Gentleman has suggested.

2115 Mr Speaker, as to the second part of his question, what the hon. Gentleman was asking is about detail, which I will permit the Minister to provide if he is able to provide, but I think it would have been singularly unfair, in particular to the public servants of Gibraltar, who, in my view had their reputations imputed by the hon. Gentleman's innuendo, not to have got up to respond, first, to his question and, second, to the preamble, his supplementary question.

Mr Speaker: Will the hon. Minister be ready to give that information. Does he have the information?

2120 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, may I before the Hon. Minister – (*Interjection*) ... sorry, I thought before we moved on to the question of costs we could stay on the issue of the criteria, but I am happy to do it either way that is fine.

2125 **Mr Speaker:** Let us sort out the question, then we can get back to ... [*Inaudible*] ...

Hon. V Daryanani: Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is ongoing, so the last figure that we have is approximately £170,000, but this will go up because there is still works to be done. I would be happy to provide further information when I get it.

2130 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does he have an idea as to when there will be finality in relation to the cost? He says it is ongoing and I appreciate he may not have that answer with him, but this does he have an idea as to when he thinks that the works are going to conclude.

2135 According to the press reports, it is progressing quite well, the clean-up, so I wonder if he can say whether we are close to reaching a conclusion or whether it is still a few months, we still have a few months to go?

Hon. V Daryanani: Yes, I mean we are close. There are two things. One is the clean-up and then there is damage on certain parts of the harbour walls, etc. So yes, that will probably take a little bit longer, but insofar as the clean-up is concerned, we are nearly there.

2140 **Mr Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition, but with a question, please.

2145 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Yes, Mr Speaker, when I rise, it is usually with a question or a point of order. (*Interjection*) Well, if it is not, it is because it is not Question Time or a point of order – or because the hon. Member is asking me questions.

2150 Mr Speaker, can I just ask on the criteria which were the subject of the answer given by the Chief Minister – which is what my right hon. Friend to my left was trying to get at – presumably, this is not done in a sort of informal way? I assume, but I ask the Government to confirm that we are a seafaring nation. So presumably there is an oil spill response plan like there was when I was on the opposite side of the House. In fact, we updated the oil spill response plan that there was.

2155 So, presumably in the context of the overspill response plan, there is thinking and planning as to what happens in the case of an oil spill of different tiers. My understanding and my recollection from those days was that there was a graduated plan, depending on the severity of the oil spill that was caused and you would call on either local or external resources, depending on the severity. But there would have been a system of approved people that you would have called on

who would have expertise, locally and externally, in the context of a severity assessment of the oil spill.

2160 Now, in that context of that introduction, is there an oil spill response plan currently and does it embed within it a system which sets out the criteria or a list of companies that are approved for the purpose of calling upon for these oil spills?

Hon. Chief Minister: Exactly, Mr Speaker, that is what he needs to explain to his colleague sitting next to him. The criteria, as I said to them a moment ago, establishes what rank of oil spill it is that you are dealing with.

2165 You have a pre-tendered for how you are going to use in those circumstances. You press the button and the people who have the tender for that are the ones that come in.

2170 But the hon. Gentleman's then was any other services, what did you do? That is what was procured on the basis of need. Who was it procured from? People or agencies or entities or companies that are already on the Government-approved contractor list or were already port operators. So all entities that have already been approved for this purpose, Mr Speaker.

So I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is saying anything that we have not already explained in the context of the answers that we have given.

2175 **Mr Speaker:** One more, Damon Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, by way of further supplementary to Question 629, which deals with the cause of the recent oil spill. I think he mentions an investigation that has been carried out by the vessel's flag states, which obviously is common in these circumstances. Are we carrying out an investigation ourselves? Should the answer to that question be in the affirmative, or does he know the results of that investigation will be made public?

2185 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has just said that it is common that the flag state carries out the investigation and that that is what is happening and the Port Authority is waiting to receive the report.

Mr Speaker: Does the Hon. Elliott Phillips wish to ...? We move on then to the next question.

Q632/2020
CSSC Cape Town explosion –
Investigation update

Clerk: Question 632, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2190 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for the Port provide an update with regards to the investigation being carried out in Gibraltar in connection with the explosion which occurred on *CSSC Cape Town*?

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

2195 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Marine Accident Investigation Section (MAIS) of Hong Kong Marine Department is carrying out a marine safety investigation in accordance with the International Maritime Organisation's Casualty Investigation Code. They are currently in a stage of evidence collection for the full investigation of the accident.

2200

2205 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, I think he is referring to the investigation which is being carried out in effect by the flag state of the vessel and there was a report in the press locally, which revealed I think the preliminary results of the preliminary investigation, which took place. But it also made a reference in tandem with that, to, I think I am correct, I do not have the report here with me, I normally do, but I would have the report here on this occasion – I think it was done by the *Gibraltar Chronicle* – about our own a local investigation into the incident. My question was really more directed at that. Does he have any information in relation to that? Can he say whether my understanding is correct that a locally produced investigation will be/is being carried out?

2210 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, I have no such report of an investigation of that sort being carried out, but now that he has mentioned and he says that he has seen it and so I will look into it and let him have information. Anyway, as I say, the one that carries out an investigation is the flag state and that is what is happening, like I said.

2215 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Simply to add to it simply to assist, I am pretty sure that in order to then I think because there this incident, which was a very serious incident, occurred within our waters, I think the decision must have been taken by the Port Authority that it would be of benefit to all of us to establish what the causes are so that there is a prevention of this type of thing happening again, which could result, as indeed it did result, for the seamen on board, but it could also result in some danger for people of this community.

2220

Q633/2020
Business licences –
Application delays

Clerk: Question 633, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2225 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Business state whether he is aware of the reported delays that are being experienced by applicants for business licences and if so what measures are being undertaken to address these?

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

2230 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the vast majority of business licence applications (that are not subject to referral to the Business Licensing Authority) are processed within a week of OFT receiving application form 2a, accompanied by all the necessary documentation and information.

2235 There are a minority of applications which have experienced some delay, particularly where the OFT has put an application on hold while it waits for the applicant to provide complete information. Until all necessary documentation and information requested is provided the application cannot be processed.

2240 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Again, Mr Speaker, this was really drawn from complaints that I have received in relation to this particular issue, and I hear what he says that they apparently only happen in the minority of cases, I think he said. But is there a way of, does he have a way of establishing, getting statistics in relation to this? For example, does how long applications take from beginning to end? I think he said within a week it is normally the case, but does he have hard statistics, which will give us the numbers in relation to the process and how long it takes? So this would enable him to be able to monitor progress, particularly when the new legislation is passed. I am sure he will be keen to establish and have that type of information available to him.

2245

Hon. V Daryanani: This information is not available to me. It is not on the on the Order Paper. I will have to find out whether we do monitor that. But I can tell you that my understanding is and it is something that I get complaints sometimes when people cannot have their licences issued and we deal with them immediately and sort them out. They are a very small minority of cases, extremely small. But on his point of the statistics, I will find out if we have them and if we can get them.

Q634/2020
Coach parking –
Overnight reductions

Clerk: Question number 634, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism state whether it intends to continue charging coach operators 50% of the usual cost for overnight parking?

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

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

2260

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, this is this is an area of tourist activity which has come to a halt as a result of the lockdown restrictions in connection with the pandemic. Does he not think that it would be perhaps a fairer decision from the Government to lower it as far as possible? I would even suggest that it be lowered to 0%.

2265

In other words, there should not be a charge because these companies are receiving absolutely no income whatsoever and have not done so since the restrictions were put in place. So the answer is in the negative, he says no, but I would encourage him to at least consider it. I would ask him to please consider lowering the fee to nothing if possible or to as low as the Government feels that it can lower it.

2270

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I was handling of the negotiations of all these matters which relate to BEAT payments and reductions of Government rent, and we agreed to what was sought from us from the operators, which was a 50% reduction. So it is really quite remarkable that it appears that the hon. Member wants us to go further in providing a reduction than the operators had proposed to us that they needed.

2275

Hon. D J Bossino: So, presumably, just to clarify the answer to the question is no, that it will remain at 50%. But I detect in the Hon. the Chief Minister's reply perhaps a glimmer of hope for those who have made representations to me that it may be possible that the Government would consider the possibility of reducing it further, which was really the question that I asked. But I do not, with all due respect to the Government, the two Members who are answering on this issue, they have answered that specific question.

2280

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member can rest assured that if representations are made to us about this, then we will consider those representations. We considered positively the representations that were made to us seeking the reduction to 50%. Nobody has made a representation to us, as far as I am aware, or to the hon. Member, as far as he is aware, that there should be a further reduction.

2285

It is really quite remarkable, Mr Speaker, that we should hear about this need from the hon. Gentleman and not from the entities involved, that I can count on the fingers of one hand, because

2290

there are not more than five licence-holders in respect of these vehicles. We would of course consider, and all the other representations we are considering from entities in this and other sectors, in respect of the difficulties that they are experiencing in trading.

2295 But they certainly will not get any joy, because the hon. Member is making representations. They should make representations to us, and it would be nothing more than an absolute and complete waste of time to make representations to members of the Opposition and not to members of the Government, because of course, the rent will not be waived until the representations are made to us. The only thing that making representations to the hon. Members opposite will do is delay the effect of the representations having any potential effect.

2300

Mr Speaker: Next question please.

Q635/2020

**Room occupancy rates –
Arrivals and tourist arrivals**

Clerk: Question 635, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2305 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Apologies, Mr Clerk. Can the Minister for Tourism provide details of the room occupancy rates for each of the months of 2019 and 2020 to date for all arrivals and tourist arrivals, respectively, in the same way as they are presented in tables 3.03 and 3.04 of the Hotel Occupancy Survey 2018?

2310 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, hotel occupancy statistics are published once a year in the annual report. The draft Hotel Occupancy Report for 2019 is still being checked by the Statistics Office. Figures for 2020 have not yet been processed.

2315

2320 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I really was not expecting that reply, Mr Speaker. Can he give me at least an indication as to when he thinks that at least the 2019 figures will be available, and will he commit to provide them to me when they are, rather than wait until the relevant survey is formally laid on the table of this House? In fact, the same would apply in relation to in relation to 2020, because obviously there is a full calendar year as well. I thought it would have helped and assisted me in relation to the next question that I have in the in the Order Paper.

2325 **Hon. V Daryanani:** The report for 2018-19 is pretty much ready so we will be able to publish it very soon and obviously 2020 will come after that.

2330 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Just by way of confirmation, sorry, I suggested that he provide me with that information once it is available. He has not answered that particular point, but presumably, if he simply confirms that this information will be made, will be uploaded onto the Government website, perhaps if he advises me that it is uploaded, and I will check one about whenever it is appropriate for me to do so.

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I will let him know what it has done.

Q636/2020
Hotel rooms –
Reason for shortage

Clerk: Question 636, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2335 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Has the Minister for Tourism made enquiries as to why Gibraltar was unable to provide enough hotel rooms for EasyJet passengers in respect of a flight which was reported to have been due to leave Gibraltar on Monday, 24th August 2020 but was delayed overnight?

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

2340

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I imagine the reason was that there were no hotel rooms available because of our success in filling hotel rooms in times when COVID is not raging.

2345 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, that sort of marginally political statement that he has made there, which is very much his style. But I just really want to get to the bottom of it. The explanation, which has been given in the context of the media reports that I have seen, actually did say that it is said that, I can quote – this quote is attributed to the EasyJet spokesman who said:

We tried to provide as many hotel rooms in Gibraltar as possible. However, due to a shortage of rooms, it was not possible to provide these for all customers, so we offered accommodation in Spain for those who wanted it

2350 I just wanted to drill down a bit. Initially. I thought that explanation was rather bizarre, to be honest, given that at least anecdotally, I am told, that we would not have experienced an upturn in tourist arrivals during this period in August. Now, the information that we do have in relation to hotel occupancy, the averages are pretty much the same. You go from 2013 up to the information, which is available in public, up to 2019, the totals for each year around about there is an average of about in the mid-60s in terms of percentage occupancy.

2355 If you take, for example, the month of August. It is more or less the same. It slightly increases in 2017 and 2018, where you have a figure of mid to high 70s, but in the previous years it is in the 60, low 60s mark. So, can he offer an explanation, assuming that once he provides the figures for 2020, we do not see 100%, can he provide an explanation as to why it is that this is the reasoning that was given by the EasyJet spokesman was that, at the end of the day if there were hotel rooms available, it is a pity that Gibraltar was unable to accommodate them and, as I understand it, many of these – I say many, I do not know how many – but at least some let us say of these passengers were given accommodation and accommodated nearby in the hinterland in Spain.

2360 **Hon V. Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, he has asked not one supplementary but five in one. But anyway ... (*Interjection*) Yes you have. But I will ask a very simple question why would a hotel not want to sell rooms if they had them available? On the point of 100%, when the hotel occupancy report comes out, it does not need to show that August was 100% full, because it can be full on one night and not be full on another night. So it was obviously full on the night of 24th August. That is why there were no there were no further rooms available on that night and they had to move to Spain.

2370 But let me add, this is not the responsibility of the Government. This is the responsibility of the airline. When the airline has a technical issue or operational issue, it is their responsibility to find a hotel rooms for their passengers. In the quote that he has read out it shows that that is what they have said, they are the ones who look for their hotel rooms for their passengers.

2375

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, all I am asking him to do, and that was the question – which is has he made enquiries – all I am asking him to do is to take an interest on this. He should have put in an inquiry as a result of what happened here. This should not have happened. There should have been ... (*Interjection*) This is an assumption which he is making, Mr Speaker; what I am asking him to do is to make enquiries, to call up the hotel managers and find out what in fact happened on that particular day.

The other specific question I have asked him and this is why I do not understand how it is when, on average, we have occupancy rates on a monthly basis, even the month of August, at 60% that we did not have 30% or 40% available rooms on that day. Or is he saying, miraculously on that day, on 24th August, or whatever it was, all the Gibraltar hotels were brimming with tourists? I just simply cannot accept that, Mr Speaker. I would ask him to make the proper adequate enquiries, but no doubt the Chief Minister will now answer for him, as he normally does because he is acting as his counsel more than anything else.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No Mr Speaker, I am acting as what he wants to be, the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. I am acting as the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Cabinet, which is what he would like to be. What I am doing, Mr Speaker, is ensuring that some of the things that he is saying which are unsustainable are illustrated as being unsustainable.

I want to tell him what it is that he said is unsustainable, which is the premise of his long-winded questions and statements, which would not be allowed in any other Parliament. First of all, the average occupancy over a month is irrelevant in the context of a day in which Gibraltar may be full, once you try to add 140 people to the number of hotel rooms available.

So on a day in August, which is the day that he is talking, about 24th August or 4th August, when Gibraltar might not be full, as he is saying, Mr Speaker, you need to find at short notice 140 rooms such as what an Airbus can carry. If Gibraltar on that day had 80 available rooms and 80 were taken up, 60 will still have to be put in El Campo de Gibraltar and the hon. Gentleman will say, this is remarkable, there were 80 empty rooms. 'Yes, but we needed 140,' EasyJet might say.

That is why his average is irrelevant. The hon. Gentleman and has said that on every month of the year the average is 60% occupancy. Those are his words. He said them a moment ago. Mr Speaker, in January, Gibraltar is often brimming and full. Every hotel in Gibraltar is full. Every guest house or Gibraltar is full. Every Airbnb in Gibraltar is full and every hotel around us is full because of the magnificent work of Mr Brian Callaghan, in bringing a Chess Festival to Gibraltar.

Yet he tells us that the average shows that we are 60% full, but there will be days in January 100% full, even though the average might still be 60%. I am not challenging that, because on 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th January we might be 60% or 30% full, which might balance out.

So Mr Speaker, what I am doing is not acting as the advocate of the Hon. the Minister for Tourism. He does not need me to act as his counsel, Mr Speaker. What I am doing is acting as the ready reckoner of reality and of accuracy for him, so that he realises that housing 140 people on one day in August at short notice in Gibraltar may not be possible because the Government has done enough work, the operators have done enough work, the airline operators, the hotel operators *etc.* to attract sufficient people to Gibraltar that you might not be able to find 140 hotel rooms or 120 or 100. There might be couples in the context of the flight. Or some people might not need those rooms in Gibraltar.

Now, Mr Speaker he may or may not like my answer. I imagine he will not like my answer. But it will not stop me, Mr Speaker, from telling him that we believe that the assumptions that he has made in putting his question are what are deviating him from the reality of what happened on that day and the sorts of issues that an airline faces and hotel operators face when dealing with these issues *ad hoc*.

Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, I have to get up to explain these things to him because otherwise, Mr Speaker, the House will be stuck having to deal with these issues. Now, having asked more than two or three supplementaries in respect of this matter, and given that he is not even the

Leader of the Opposition, let alone the Leader of the House or the Chief Minister, I assume he will leave it there.

2430

Mr Speaker: We need to move on. Next question please.

Q637/2020

**Gibraltar-Malaga helicopter service –
Start date**

Clerk: Question 637, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2435

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I am not the Leader of the Opposition, I am not the Leader of the House, but he needs to also acknowledge that I think the recommendation (*Interjection*) of the Speaker was that answers should be kept as short as possible and to the point which is not something that the hon. Member is doing. (*Interjection*) Sit down, sit down!

2440

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): You are not the Speaker, either! (*Interjections*)

2445

Mr Speaker: Right, as from this moment, I am going to ask all Members to keep their preambles as short as possible, the answers as short as possible; to try not to insinuate things which do not exist, and to try and cool down the tone in the House because it is getting out of hand again. I think you are both to blame to a certain degree. (*Interjection*) Your friendship was re-established yesterday, let us now continue along that line to re-re-establish the friendship. Please, let us settle down, let us lower the tone. (*Interjection*)

2450

Hon. D J Bossino: Exactly. I would agree with that. We do not need to kiss and make-up Speaker. Sorry, have we called the question? Just by way – this is not a political point, this is a procedural preamble – I am just addressing a procedural point and the Chief Minister needs to relax. He can rest assured that it is not a political point, it is not a jibe or anything like that.

2455

The question I am going to be asking is the question which I originally filed. Then we were given the opportunity, I think, to amend those questions, because of the delay, in order to make the relevant as to time. That is in fact what I did. That question, although it was the amended question, is the one that actually appears on the Order Paper, as the Minister will see for himself. But I understand that the answer, which he has prepared for the question, is to the original un-amended version.

2460

So, I have been asked to read out that one and then the offer has been made that I ask the questions that I had in the amended question by way of supplementaries.

2465

Mr Speaker: That is absolutely correct. Because of an admin error on the part of the office, in the office, we cancelled the original question, replaced it with the amended question, but somehow in the general scheme of things the original question was answered, or was produced to the Government for answer. But I take the point and he will be allowed to ask those supplementaries.

2470

Hon. D J Bossino: So, the question is can the Minister for Aviation provide further details regarding the proposed new helicopter service between Gibraltar and Malaga to include when it is expected to connect?

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

2475 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the service was due to start on Friday, 30th October 2020. However, due to the restrictions on movement put in place by the regional government of Andalucía just after that time and the subsequent restrictions both in Spain and Gibraltar because of the pandemic, services have not yet started. There is currently no new date for the launch of these services.

2480 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am grateful to the Minister for the reply. The individual – Mr Barranco, I think it is – who is taking this initiative forward said that he was working with Malaga Airport to help Gibraltarians transfer from one terminal to another internally to catch the next flight. I know that it is an unfair question, given that it has not, excuse the pun, taken off for reasons, which are extraneous to anything that we have done, but does he know whether he has during the course of this lull managed to secure this service through Malaga Airport?

2485 **Hon. V Daryanani:** I am not aware of any arrangements that Helity have with Malaga Airport, so I am really not in a position to give him an answer on that.

2490 **Hon. D J Bossino:** This is going to be, I am afraid, a repeat question in relation to the other question I have got on the Order Paper. I would ask him to state whether any financial incentives have been provided by the Government, whether direct or indirect, for the securing of this particular service.

Hon. V Daryanani: We have not provided any financial assistance, Mr Speaker.

Q638-41/2020
Air services to Gibraltar –
Financial incentives

2495 **Clerk:** Question 638, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism please state whether the Government has provided any financial incentives in connection with the Wizz Air flights which have commenced to Gibraltar and, if so, what these are?

2500 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 639 to 641

2505 **Clerk:** Question 639, Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism please state whether the Government has provided any direct or indirect financial incentives or assistance to Eastern Airways and, if so, what these are?

2510 **Clerk:** Question 640, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2515 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism please state what is the financial cost to the Government of the agreement it entered into with British Airways to secure its services to and from Gibraltar airport during the UK lockdown period, which ended in December?

Clerk: Question 641, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2520 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism state how many airlines have expressed an interest in commencing flights since the Framework Agreement was entered into?

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

2525 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, in keeping with the position taken by successive governments, including the GSD, the Government is not prepared to disclose any commercial agreements that may be in place when attracting new airline services and carriers to Gibraltar, simply because the Government is in constant dialogue with many airlines and would not want to discuss what are commercially sensitive issues.

2530 The detail in respect of the BA flights has been provided privately to his colleagues Mr Azopardi and Mr Clinton.

I am in constant touch with new airlines with intentions of attracting them to Gibraltar. I can confirm that I have already had conversations with a few of these as to the effects that the Framework Agreement will have on movement in and out of Gibraltar. I can also confirm that the news has been received with great enthusiasm and with a view to market potential increasing as a result of the potential fluid movement in the Schengen area.

2535 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think if I could deal with the last question last question first, when I asked how many airlines have expressed an interest. He says a few of these. Can he say exactly how many and who they are?

Hon. V Daryanani: No, Mr Speaker.

2545 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, why is that the case? I can understand why he may not be able to disclose to this House who they are – I do not see why not – but certainly I think I would be grateful to hear from him a precise number of those, because what I want to test is his claim that a few airlines have had expressed an interest following the entry into Framework Agreement.

2550 The interview that he gave the GBC directly pegged the greater interest in Gibraltar from airlines to the Framework Agreement, and that is what I am trying to establish whether that is in fact the case specifically or not. This is what he said on GBC, that there is a lot of a lot of interest in Gibraltar, especially now so far as airlines is concerned, with the possibility of Gibraltar forming part of the Schengen zone and I want to understand how many there are.

2555 That is a simple question and, by way of further supplementary, I simply want to know why it is that airlines expressing an interest because we have the possibility of entering into the Schengen zone.

Hon. V Daryanani: Four airlines are interested, Mr Speaker.

2560 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Thank you. It took some time to get that answer from the Minister. *(Interjection)* Yes, it did, Mr Speaker. I asked how many and I asked who and I said, being generous to the hon. Member, that he may not be in a position to state who. But I insisted on how many, because initially he said 'few' and I think he said, when I asked how many he said, no, he was not willing to reply to the question. Eventually, we have got the answer.

2565 But the second part of the question, that I asked in my supplementary related to Schengen. Why does he think, why is it, what are these airline companies telling him that makes Gibraltar more attractive because we are going to be in Schengen? Why is it not the case that this service cannot be provided now, before any possibility of an entry into Schengen? That is the question I asked, which he has not answered.

2570 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, we do not think he asked how many or why, until now. He asked who. We said we cannot say who. Then he said, okay, you cannot say who, how many? So we immediately said four. Now he has asked why and we are happy to tell him why. (*Interjection*) No, because you asked a question that you are going to get an answer to, so I would have thought you would be happy to get the answer.

2575 Now, Mr Speaker, let me explain to hon. Gentleman why these airlines potentially find Gibraltar more attractive after the New Year's Eve Agreement and with the prospect of a UK-EU treaty. In 1984, Spain negotiated its entry into the European Economic Community, as it then was. They entered in 1986. An airport agreement was signed in December 1987, which was rejected by the people of Gibraltar, because it made Gibraltar not have the rights that we would have had as a British regional airport since the designation of those airports in 1982.

2580 As a result of a motion in this House, the whole of the House rejected the airport agreement. Airlines therefore flying to Gibraltar would have the difficulty that they would not be dealt with as a British regional airport for the purposes of arrivals of aircraft of a particular size.

2585 That resulted in a stalemate for many years until the Cordoba Agreement of 2006, which opened up the possibility of airlines flying to Gibraltar from the European Union, with Gibraltar as a British regional airport. In 2011, months before we were elected, the Partido Popular, which is a Spanish political party, was elected to government in Spain, and the role of foreign secretary was given to a man called José Manuel García-Margallo. He immediately undid the Cordoba arrangements before we were elected.

2590 As a result, Mr Speaker, there were a number of directives on what was known as air liberalisation, which then became known as air services, which would no longer be able to apply to Gibraltar because they are known-as Cordoba suspension clause was not included in those measures.

2595 The Spanish Government under the then Partido Popular would not permit licences to fly to Gibraltar because they would find ways to stop them from flying. As a result of all of that, Mr Speaker, it was not possible for airlines from Spain, in particular, to fly to Gibraltar and any airline that purported to fly to Gibraltar from any other part of the Schengen zone was told by Spain that if they did so, they would find that the best slots at Barajas Airport would suddenly become 5 a.m. in the morning and not the more attractive slots.

2600 All of this history is known to most people in Gibraltar, Mr Speaker. The Spanish Government changed after a motion of censure where the socialists took power in Spain. As a result of that, the negotiations we had begun under the Partido Popular administration, then with Snr Dastis in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, resulted in an opportunity to reach an agreement which we reached for Gibraltar to be included in the Withdrawal Agreement arrangement and the transitional period and, more latterly, the New Year's Eve Framework Agreement, that provides the opportunity for the UK-EU treaty, where Gibraltar will have, hopefully, an arrangement if the treaty is acceptable, which will provide for fluidity of people between Gibraltar and the Schengen zone.

2605 That will mean that flights arriving at Gibraltar will be able to be dealt with in a way that does not result in the problems that were experienced in the context of the 1987/Airport Agreement in the context of the Cordoba Agreement, etc.

2610 All of that history being known to most people and to many of these airlines – and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman needs it explained to him – has meant that those airlines that see the possibility of Gibraltar Airport, having potential for them are now interested in pursuing the possibility of flying to Gibraltar. There are already four such airlines that the Government is in contact with for those reasons.

2615 Mr Speaker, we hope that we will be able to bring home a treaty, and we hope that those airlines that we are talking to will already start the process of wanting to fly to Gibraltar, and I hope you will agree that this would be a very good thing if we can achieve it for Gibraltar and for its region.

2620 Our remit is Gibraltar and its people, and we think that this would be good for Gibraltar and its people, and we will continue to pursue this line of opportunity, and I will hope that he will accept

from me that it seems a little intemperate of him to be disappointed that we have given him a number, which is in the plural, which is more than one and which, hopefully will result in a successful filing of applications to fly from different destinations within the Schengen zone to Gibraltar, in short order.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, we have had a long lecture by way of reply from the hon. Member, in breach of your recommendation once again. But Mr Speaker, I am grateful, nevertheless, for the reply that he has given and of course, I would be the first to welcome the announcement by the hon. Minister opposite should more airlines come to this place, but simply by way of correction of the hon. Member, he says that I did not ask how many. That is actually the question that I had in the Order Paper. So, I was justified in making the remark that I made that I had to almost prise that information out of him. His reply was a few airlines but I actually specifically asked for the precise number.

But I move on. Mr Speaker, when he says that he, in relation to the financial incentives in connection with the arrival of Wizz Air flights and Eastern Airways, I think his reply, he has bunched these questions together, but his reply was that he in practice I think he says of previous Governments, he is not willing to disclose the commercial arrangements.

Can he, without going into the specifics of it, without being granular in his reply because he says he cannot, can he at least answer whether financial incentives have been provided, whether a direct or indirect, without going into the detail of that?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, state aid rules do not allow us to provide any of this information, the financial incentive also, of course. So there is no information because we cannot be providing financial assistance due to state aid rules.

Hon. D J Bossino: Fine, but his initial answer, the question as in the Order Paper, is very clearly set out, like when I when asked about the number of airlines. His answer was that I cannot disclose because they are commercially sensitive. Do I take it now that he is telling us that no financial incentives, whether direct or indirect, have been provided, because he cannot because of state aid rules?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, state aid rules provide that financial incentives cannot be provided to any sector in order to ensure that industry players operate in one way or another incentivised by government payments. So therefore the Government is not doing anything in the context of providing financial assistance in breach of state aid rules.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I would like to ask by way of confirmation, please, because I am not an expert on state aid rules, I am afraid. I am not sighted in relation to that. I know the hon. Member for long enough and well enough to know when he is being very specific in his reply.

Is he able to confirm, as I understand it, the financial incentives which have been provided in the past, were basically three-fold and it was either by way of participating in advertising budget, by way of lowering passenger tax by way of either reducing, or exempting the airline from landing charges? Any of those three incentives, which I would consider to be indirect incentives in the sense, other than the first one I mentioned, that the Government may put some money in any of those three incentives – have they been provided in relation to these two particular airlines? I would add actually the helicopter service as well because he answered in the negative.

(Interjections)

Mr Speaker: This is really getting out of hand and I am not going to permit it from either side. I think the hon. Member needs to answer *(Interjection)* ... we are then going to move on.

2675 **Hon. V Daryanani:** I have told the hon. Member that in keeping with the position taken by successive Governments, including the GSD, we are not prepared to disclose any commercial agreements. Mr Speaker, it would be detrimental for Gibraltar if we were to do so. The Government is in constant negotiations with airlines and everyone has their own requirements and, like I say, would be detrimental to disclose this across the floor.

2680 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q642-3/2020
Gibraltar Tourist Board –
New CEO appointment

Clerk: Question 642, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2685 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism state which company has been appointed to recruit the new CEO of the Gibraltar Tourist Board with details of the fees charged by the company?

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

2690 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 643.

Clerk: Question 643, the Hon D. J. Bossino.

2695 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism provide details of the expected earnings of the new CEO of the Gibraltar Tourist Board to include details of any financial or other assistance outside of direct earnings, such as housing, car use or other benefits?

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

2700 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to provide details of the expected earnings as these have yet to be defined and will be commensurate with the candidates that may be shortlisted. The recruitment company is called Odgers Berndtson and the fee to be charged is presently being negotiated.

2705 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, I think I have four questions anyway. I think he has answered the second question first, so I will start with that one. He says that he has not yet decided what the expected earnings are going to be. Can he – surely – have an idea of at least the bracket that, one, he is looking at in order to attract the particular individual who is going to be doing all these wonderful things? For example, the press release said very specifically that he wants a strong
2710 candidate, well placed in tourism, transport and maritime sector with the contacts and the initiative. He also wants him, or she or he to focus in particular on the development of commercial air services and the growth of their cruise ship business. In addition, the CEO will be tasked with the development of the port and maritime related business.

2715 This is a huge, wide berth; this is a huge responsibility. Surely he must have an idea of what price tag people, an individual, of this experience is going to be seeing as an attractive option, and also he must have an idea of the price tag that he is willing to pay for it. So at least can he provide me, can he provide this House with that figure, at least the brackets, Mr Speaker?

2720 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, it is not in the interests of Gibraltar's negotiating position that I disclose this. Of course, I have an idea. I have thought this through very well, but I am telling him that I am not in a position to answer his question because, like I say, it is detrimental to Gibraltar. It seems he does not want Gibraltar to succeed.

2725 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I find that answer, quite frankly, remarkable, when he ought to be at least telling us is what brief and what remit has been given to this, as he describes it, this prestigious company. He must have given them a remit. I do not see why that will affect the Government's negotiating position. It will come to a point when I assume the position is going to be advertised. As I understand it, it is going to be advertised in the UK and Gibraltar, so why is he not able now to tell us what the price tag is?

2730 It is a very simple question. I think it is unfair of the Minister to hide behind, I do not know, I cannot remember the exact wording he used, the negotiating position of the Government and not provide a specific answer to what is a very simple and specific question.

2735 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the salary will be commensurate to the experience of the candidate. I do not see why he cannot wait for a couple of weeks, for two, three weeks when he will see the advert and we will be in a position to discuss. Like I said, it hinders our negotiating position and I am not prepared to do that. It brings up the price of the CEO, if we keep on discussing figures. I do not know. You do not understand it because you are not in Government. That is why the hon. Member does not understand it.

2740

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, can he tell us at least what the current CEO earns on an annual basis? We could not find it in the book. Perhaps if he could be so kind. This is an obvious supplementary, surely, that he would have prepared for. Can he not answer that question?

2745 **Hon. V Daryanani:** The answer to that is no. It is in the book, Mr Speaker. It is in the book, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: This is the final, final one.

2750 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I at least ask this. If it is in the book and we cannot find it but of course we will try again, can the Minister confirm, given that he has said, I think publicly, in his press release and in his interview, that the appointment will be cost neutral, that it will be the same kind of salary? Or is he saying that it will be for a different kind of salary?

2755 **Hon. V Daryanani:** The salary, as I said, will be commensurate to the experience of the candidate and it will be cost neutral to the Government.

2760 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I just say on this that it is obviously in the public interest – Mr Speaker, you did say that in issues of public interest, I think you would exercise a bit more latitude. Can I just explore this in one question? Cost neutral to the Government – if it is going to be cost neutral to the Government, meaning cost neutral to the taxpayer of Gibraltar, ultimately, this is it, so by that surely the only conclusion for anyone listening to the debate is that cost neutral to the taxpayer means that the taxpayers are not going to pay more money for having a London-based CEO and in which case surely the conclusion would be right, would it not, that the person is going to be paid the same kind of money by the taxpayer? Is that right or wrong?

2765

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Well, Mr Speaker, that is as wrong as is most of what we have heard from the hon. Members opposite. I will tell him why, because the sort of linear thinking that the hon. Gentleman is expounding really does not disclose any understanding of how public

2770 finances work, so let me explain to the hon. Gentleman what cost neutrality may mean in respect of this.

If you have somebody who is based in Gibraltar who travels to London twice a month, and the cost of that travel to London involves air tickets, let us give a very easy example, £100 per ticket return times two flights – and that is cheap, obviously, because these people at those grades tend to travel club, etc. – and you multiply that by two, that is £200, and you multiply that by 12, that is £2,400; you add hotels, let us say that they stay and it costs £100, again twice a month, that is £4,800.

2780 Let us say, Mr Speaker, that the person who is employed in Gibraltar is going to be paid £50,000 – I am using round figures so that the hon. Gentleman understands my thinking – £50,000, plus the £4,800 at the cost of travel and hotels involved to get to London would amount to £54,800.

If the person who is in London does not need to travel to Gibraltar more than once a month, £2,400 spent, spends the same £100 in Gibraltar. Let us say that that cost is therefore £2,400 in a year paying the person in London £52,400, although it is £2,400 more than the person was paid in Gibraltar, is cost neutrality.

2785 That is what cost neutrality is about. Cost neutrality is not about same salary; it is about cost neutrality. What the Government believes, Mr Speaker is that we can achieve cost neutrality and potentially actually a saving for the taxpayer, which is what we are looking to achieve, in trying to achieve efficiency, in trying to ensure that we get the same service but at a more efficient rate and in a way that we believe is the right way to do it and that, Mr Speaker, is the way that we would consider cost neutrality.

2790 It is not a zero sum game, saying if you pay a penny more than you paid to the guy in Gibraltar, then you have not achieved cost-neutrality. We may pay less or we may pay a little more, but we will achieve cost neutrality, because that is what we are setting out to do. I think that to simply say that the way to run Gibraltar is to continue to do the same thing all of the time, to continue simply to seek to stand still, is to lack vision and to not have the desire to take Gibraltar where it needs to go.

2800 I commend the Hon. the Minister for Tourism and Transport for having come up with a plan that we think will not just be cost neutral, it will be positive for Gibraltar for the promotion of its tourist product at this difficult time in particular, to go further in the reach of the Gibraltar product. Mr Speaker, he has not just persuaded each and every one of us individually who are here; he has also persuaded the Minister for Efficiency, Sir Joe Bossano, who has responsibility for financial stability, that his plan is a good one that will be great value for money for Gibraltar and will be cost neutral.

2805 So, Mr Speaker, frankly, we think we are doing the right thing. We think that cost neutrality needs to be explained with the sophistication that it incurs and not the sort of linear zero sum attempt that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has attempted to do today. I can see why he is trying to do it. We are never going to let them get away with it, Mr Speaker, and the interests of Gibraltar will always be first for us, even Mr Speaker, if it means that we cannot share information now about something that will be public very shortly.

2810 **A Member:** He has not answered.

Mr Speaker: I know. But we have aired the subject at length, we need now to move on. I am sure there will be opportunities down the line for you to ask further questions in due course.

2815 **Hon. K Azopardi:** The hon. Member did ask a number of questions, not just on the specific salary. The problem is that, of course, if we do not get clarity, the hon. Member cannot ask a supplementary. Can I just come back on this issue, because surely the answer to the question that I asked ... and I asked a very simple question, is it going to be cost neutral here? We have a fairly sort of long, rambling answer. What the Hon. Chief Minister has just said, in effect, is it is not going to be cost neutral.

2825 It is cost neutral with a new gospel invented by the hon. Member on his feet on the alleged pretext it is some kind of financial sophistication, because people on this side of the House do not understand public finances, when we cannot even find the salary in the book that he says exists. The reality is that some of the expenses that he has even talked about may not actually be incurred, it is all going to be loaded into a hypothesis to up the salary of someone who has been chosen or at least the parameters are being demarcated by a prestigious firm, which will probably be charging a hefty fee. How can that be cost neutral to the taxpayer of Gibraltar? No one listening to this out there believes that.

2830

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am not going to write new gospels on anything, I am not going to write them on costs. I am not going to write them on expenditure or revenue. I am simply going to stick to what are the established principles that we would apply in Government or indeed in any business.

2835

If the hon. Gentleman wants to get up in a populist attempt to try and pretend that somehow the taxpayer is going to be negatively affected by something that is a positive development, which will help us to further promote Gibraltar, so be it. Look, Mr Speaker, we are able to make statements of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has made, pretending that cost neutrality can only mean that a person is paid exactly the same or otherwise there is not cost neutrality. Of course he can say that Mr Speaker, but in the end most people understand how a business is run will know that he is simply trying to get the populist support that he is so keen to try and enlist.

2840

This is not about bumping up anybody's salary. The salary may be the same or less than the salary that is paid now because the hon. Minister has told him it is going to be commensurate to the experience of the person who we take on. So, the salary is not yet determined, but we are going to deliver cost neutrality in the context of all of the costs that we incur today, if we continue running this in the way that it is run today.

2845

So, Mr Speaker, you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. We have tried to explain the logic behind this to hon. Members. It seems to me that they only want to question, question and question. They just do not want to see the logic of the plan that the Hon. the Minister for Tourism has got.

2850

I supported him, the Cabinet support him. We think it is a good idea and therefore we believe that this is in the interests of Gibraltar, Mr Speaker. That is what we are here to do, to pursue the interests of Gibraltar. We are not pursuing our own interests, we are not pursuing our partisan interests. We are pursuing the interests of Gibraltar, such as we think is the right way to pursue them.

2855

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q644/2020
Cruise calls –
Return to Gibraltar

Clerk: Question number 644, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2860

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism provide an update as to when cruises are likely to commence calls to Gibraltar?

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

2865 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the major companies are still in the process of planning their itineraries. I have been in touch with all those that visit Gibraltar, and we await more news.

The Government is committed to the resumption of cruise ships visiting Gibraltar but will do so when it is safe. The safety and security of our people comes first. I hope to make an announcement on this very soon.

2870

Hon. D J Bossino: Just one supplementary, Mr Speaker, relax! I think he mentioned the cruise line companies, is he expecting the ones that ordinarily visited the port here to resume visits here? Is that his expectation? I look forward to his announcement, as he says very shortly, but I just wanted to ask that that specific question.

2875

Hon. V Daryanani: Yes, very much so.

Hon. K Azopardi: Can I just ask him this specifically? In his discussions with the local operators that engage with cruise operators and so on, has he been told, for example, that cruisers have recommenced certain routes and that we are awaiting a decision in Gibraltar or is it generally cruisers have not started again? So, local trade is not being affected by the inability to arrive at Gibraltar Port?

2880

Hon. V Daryanani: I think there are a few issues. There are some companies that have started cruising within Britain, as in the British Isles, and they are calling it a staycation. They are not visiting the Mediterranean yet because they feel that they cannot come to Gibraltar because there are no other ports they feel that are safe enough yet.

2885

There have been certain cruise companies that have started in Israel because they see that as a safe destination and they are cruising between Israel, Greece, in that area. So it is not that we are not getting people Gibraltar simply because they do not want to come to Gibraltar. It is that they are waiting to see how they can come to the Mediterranean. I am trying to see whether we can get them to Gibraltar before that, obviously, using our excellent roll-out of the vaccine.

2890

Hon. D J Bossino: I was actually suggesting the contrary, it is not that they do not want to come to Gibraltar. I was asking whether there are no cruise liners doing Mediterranean kind of business for which they would dock at Gibraltar, or is it that they want to come here, but we are not quite ready yet?

2895

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I think we would be ready. It is just that they are not coming to the Mediterranean. We would be ready.

2900

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q645/2020
Gibraltar economy –
‘Back better than it was’

2905 **Clerk:** Question 645, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Tourism state on what basis he says that the Gibraltar economy will be ‘back better than it was’?

2910 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I believe the hon. Gentleman is asking this question in relation to an interview that I gave to GBC on several subjects on 25th January. I am glad to hear that he follows me on TV.

2915 My statement is based on a belief that I have, and that I am sure we all share, of optimism for the future. Recently we have faced one of the most challenging periods in our history. Our economy has taken a beating, yet we are proving as a Government that we are not only helping to support our business community in the current situation, but that we do not stop working behind the scenes to ensure a prosperous future. This not only concerns my areas of responsibility but also those of all my colleagues in Government.

2920 Before this pandemic started and specifically in terms of tourism, there was an indication of growth. This would undoubtedly have continued had this pandemic not come along to challenge us. One of the things this pandemic has done is certainly to have helped Gibraltar gain more awareness, due to the enhancement of our tourism virtual assets and our media and online marketing campaigns, both in Spain and Gibraltar over the last year.

2925 At times, when we have been the only destination in Europe that British tourists have been able to visit without the need to quarantine, this has brought much attention to Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has only to see the wonderful coverage we received late last year in the UK media as a testament to this.

2930 Additionally, Mr Speaker, the excellent job being done by the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in the EU negotiations, with our full support in Government in each of our areas of Ministerial responsibility, is positively affecting all areas of our economy. In particular, the potential for a mobility deal has created great expectation and opportunity. This really is creating a positive vibe. *(Interjection)* Do you want to have an answer to the question or not?

2935 I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that the airline industry and cruise industry hold Gibraltar in very high regard, particularly for our proactive approach, not only is more routine but certainly in times of need. For example, our willingness to continue to handle cruise ships, in terms of provisions and crew changes under strict protocols has been very well received by the industry and will no doubt help us in the future to have an even better relationship with the cruise lines.

2940 The resilience of Gibraltar International Airport during these times and its ability to generate traffic, even with a very reduced schedule, has been noted. It must also be apparent that this Government is delivering air services to Gibraltar in an unprecedented manner, and I will continue to work towards delivering more services to Gibraltar.

2945 Our excellent roll out of the vaccine is also another reason to be optimistic and to think that we will be 'back to better than it was'. I would like to take this opportunity to put on record my gratitude to all the GHA staff who have worked tremendously hard and have been successful in inoculating our community.

2950 So, this is why, Mr Speaker, I have a right to think that the economy will be 'back better than it was' as the Government is working at full throttle and continues to strive for economic prosperity. Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will, no doubt, not want to talk our economy down. That would not be good for Gibraltar.

2955 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I have a supplementary. What we are being given now and treated to is nothing other than a salesman's pitch, a party political broadcast, which is what he normally tries to do, not in keeping with the recommendation, again, of the Speaker. He obviously came with that prepared reply but he has done it before when I have asked that I suppose he considers to be an open question to give this a really long reply to extol the virtues that he has brought to the Government Benches as the Minister for Tourism.

2960 He has done better than all his predecessors, not only from my party but also from his own Government. He so fantastic and so brilliant. But there is nothing other than political fluff is what we have heard right now. There is nothing – nothing – of what he said and I congratulate him in respect of certain things that he has done. Of course I do. The arrival of Eastern Airways and Wizz Air, of course that is good.

2965 But I have asked him a specific question. The thing is he is prone to coming up with these
sweeping statements. It is true that I listen to him. It is my responsibility. That is what we get paid
for and he is right. I shadow him and I shadow some of his responsibilities. But he has come
without – and I asked the question – what empirical evidence other than a wish, and I think and
the excellent job that his colleague has done as the Chief Minister, that he thinks it is going to be
better than it was? What hard facts, empirical evidence, does he have to support the economic
analysis that he gave to the people of Gibraltar on I think it was 25th January in the GBC interview
2970 and he has just given us now?

Mr Speaker: Right, that is the question.

2975 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, what the hon. Member sees in the public domain is only the
tip of the iceberg of the work that this Government does. Being in government is a serious matter.
It brings huge responsibility. Being in opposition, they like to oppose. Oppose for the sake of
opposing, whether it is good for Gibraltar or not.

It is important that we are optimistic. We know the work that we do. We have been working
extremely hard to make sure that this economy comes back to what it was before and better.
2980 What I am not going to do is give the hon. Member a blow-by-blow account of what I do when I
get to my office and the type of people that I speak with – some very, very senior people in the
world of business – in trying to attract new business to Gibraltar. But Mr Speaker, he wants me
not to be optimistic. I think it is important that we are optimistic and we shall have a track record,
our economy has a track record of working, of being successful, and we are not going to stop now.
2985

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, optimism is, of course, good and I welcome positivity and
optimism, but how does he reconcile that with the statement of the Minister for Economic
Sustainability, whatever his new title is, who on 14th January said the Gibraltar economy will not
return to 2018-19 levels this side of the next election? Presumably, his prediction of the economy
2990 coming back better is well beyond that, presumably? Otherwise he is irreconcilable with a fellow
Minister who is in charge of what appears to be the post-Brexit plan.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No, Mr Speaker, the positions are not irreconcilable. The
positions are actually entirely reconcilable because, Mr Speaker, what the Hon. Mr Daryanani is
2995 saying is that although we have had to go to a stop in respect of most economic activity, we are
going to take off better than most and better than we were, Mr Speaker.

That does not mean that we are going to be at the levels at which we were when we stopped.
Of course it does not mean that. It means that we are going to start our route more energetic than
we were, pushing harder than we were because there is pent-up demand in this economy. We
3000 have great entrepreneurs in this economy and there is great interest from outside this economy
in what we are doing in this economy.

Mr Speaker, the Minister with responsibility for Financial Stability – and, as Mr Bossino said
before, it is their job to shadow us, so I am surprised the Leader of the Opposition does not know
the title of the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano in this respect – is saying, what he is saying, is that the
3005 economy will not be at the levels at which it was until after the next election, because it has to
start again almost from scratch. Almost from scratch.

Mr Speaker, the statements are not in any way irreconcilable; they are the statement of
members of the team working together on exactly the same page and understanding what it is
that we need to do to ensure the economic stability of Gibraltar, the financial stability of Gibraltar
3010 and the fact that people have elected us to ensure that we deliver against that both this side and
I am very confident also, Mr Speaker, the next side of the General Election.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Damon Bossino.

3015 **Hon. D J Bossino:** A very short supplementary, Mr Speaker. From what he said, I do not think he has added anything to the information that I am seeking him to reply to. Will he accept that is what he has treated us in this House today, and that is what he treated viewers on 25th January was a baseless, careless and, quite frankly, sweeping statement, which he cannot back up and all it is, is a desire for a better world in a few years' time? Will he not accept that?

3020 **Hon. V Daryanani:** no Mr Speaker. I disagree with him entirely and I think by making statements like the one he has made today, it is detrimental to Gibraltar.

Several Members: Hear, hear.

Q515/2020
Rental homes currently unoccupied –
Reasons not yet allocated –
Supplementary to original answer

3025 **Mr Speaker:** Before we continue, is just that a Minister Linares wanted to say something in regard to an attachment, which he wants to give.

3030 **Minister for Housing, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Yes, Mr Speaker, just there as a matter of good order, Mr Reyes has asked me to give him – I have already spoken to him that we would put it in *Hansard* – the fact that he wanted a list of why, in relation to Question 515, when he asked me to provide details of how many rental homes are currently unoccupied, and he wanted to know the reasons why. I am just passing on a schedule to him and to the Members opposite, so that we have it in *Hansard*. That is all. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Schedule to Question No: 515/2021

RKB	Status
1RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
1RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
1RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
2RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
2RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
2RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
2RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
2RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
2RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	IN REFURBISHMENT
3RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
3RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
3RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority

3RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
3RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
3RKB	Stock, ready for Allocation
3RKB	Stock, ready for Allocation
4RKB	Stock, awaiting visit of Housing Authority
4RKB	Stock, ready for Allocation

3035

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q646/2020

**Royal Gibraltar Post Office –
Electric vehicles lease arrangement**

Clerk: Question 646, the Hon. R M Clinton.

3040

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, further to Press Release 879/2020, whereby the Government announced the replacement of all Royal Gibraltar Post Office vehicles to brand new 13 electric vehicles, can the Government advise the implicit financing cost of the seven-year lease arrangement entered into with Bassadone Motors, what was the alternative cost of outright purchase and who will maintain these vehicles and at what cost?

3045

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, the total cost of 13 vehicles per month is £5,167, which would be £434,028 in total for the seven years. This monthly premium includes service, maintenance, running and replacement costs, amongst other features. This will also provide the Government the option to extend the arrangement with brand new vehicles after the seven years, or alternatively purchase the existing fleet at their depreciated market value.

3050

In what is fast developing technology the Government feels this is the most prudent and viable way in which to significantly deliver on its Green Go Electric Commitment without requiring any huge upfront capital outlay. The alternative cost would have been £341,473 to solely purchase the 13 vehicles.

3055

Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Minister, but I think half of his answer was already in his press release. I did not catch the implicit financing costs that I specifically asked for in the leasing arrangement. As he will no doubt be aware, leases have an inbuilt financing cost, otherwise the leasing company would never really make any money on it. So could he please advise me if he has the information? He should have the information because I did ask for it. What is the implicit financing costs and the lease arrangement, and if he could confirm the cost he gave me, I could not quite catch him, as he read it off, £34,000? I did not quite catch what he said, I presume that is per vehicle, if he could just clarify that for me?

3060

3065

Hon. V Daryanani: The cost of the 13 vehicles if we had purchased them outright would have been £341,473. That would have been the cost if we had purchased them outright, the 13 vehicles. Yes, exactly so. Over seven years insofar as the lease is concerned, we were paying £434,020, so the difference is approximately £100,000 and that covers service, maintenance – *(Interjection)* £92,555 – which covers the service, maintenance, the running replacement costs and everything else involved.

3070

3075 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, so effectively the cost, in addition, we could have bought these £92,000 cheaper outright. Again, I have not heard from the Minister the implicit financing cost. If he could give me that information?

3080 **Hon. V Daryanani:** There is no finance cost, as you call it. There is not. The cost is that. That is the total cost, £434,000. So the £92,000, the £95,000 that we are talking about, that includes everything. We have not done a finance deal, we have done a lease deal. There is a difference, because if you do financing, that means you are purchasing it because you can purchase it and then finance it. But we have not purchased the vans, we have leased them. At the end of the seven years, we will find ourselves in a situation where we can say, well, seven years have gone, we do not like these anymore and we want new ones and they will replace them and we carry on paying what we are paying.

3090 **Hon. R M Clinton:** So, Mr Speaker effectively, what you are suggesting is that there is no financing costs in this arrangement. Mr Speaker, I am conscious that I have another, wider question on the Order Paper about the advert that appeared in December 2016, for the replacement of entire vehicle fleet, so I will not delve too much in that area. But £92,555, over seven years, that is obviously £13,000 a year, so effectively we are talking about £1,100 a month on a maintenance which may or may not be required. Is that what the Minister is telling us is that there is no implicit financing costs in the ways he is seeing this arrangement, but there is obviously an inbuilt cost of maintenance and repair?

3100 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, it is all rolled up. It is maintenance. It is the replacement, let us say if the car breaks down, they will replace that car for you. I think what is even more important is the technology that is so quickly changing that it is, like I say, after seven years, with the technology having advanced, we will be in a position to give back those cars and bring in new ones and have the latest technology for the Government.

3105 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, in case it is of assistance to the Hon. Mr Clinton, it works up to £84 per car per month. All the maintenance, all the rolled-up financing costs, the cost is £84 per car per month.

Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his division and his mathematics, but he just said, including financing. Is that a slip of the tongue or not?

3110 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No Mr Speaker, it is not a slip of the tongue. What we are telling him is it or rolled up cost. There is no breakdown of finance costs or maintenance costs. There is a rolled-up cost, which he has been told by the Minister is the difference between the outright purchase cost and the cost of the lease.

3115 That difference is £92,555 over seven years in respect of the 13 vehicles, which breaks down to £84 per vehicle per month, for all of the element of costs that may be involved, whether that is financing in the way that the lease company has worked out what it needs to provide for, whether that is maintenance or any of the other costs, the replacement of vehicles etc. that might be occasioned to the company granting the lease over the period of the seven years. That is all rolled up. For the Government it is one fee, which includes all of that, £84 per month per vehicle.

3120 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his answer, but of course it is very hard for me from this side of the House to work out the elements of this £92,000, which the lease company would deem to be a financing costs, which, of course, as the Chief Minister has alluded to, they would have had to enter into that kind of thinking otherwise they would not be in the business of leasing.

3125 Mr Speaker, can the Minister, just moving on slightly on the point, give an indication of what the arrangement would be on the expiry of the seven-year lease? Is there an agreed peppercorn

payment to be made if the vehicle is not going to be replaced, in which case you move to a purchase position?

3130 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, there is no agreement in place because I think when the seven years expire, we will be in a position to take a decision whether we want to actually buy those vehicles. If that happens, then we will buy them on a value that is a lot lower than what the original cost will be. If we feel that the technology is no longer good and is and there are other cars on the market that are better for the service that we want to provide. We will continue the leasing
3135 arrangement and have the, replaced, as simple as that.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, please. Hon. Lady Member.

3140 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Thank you. Mr Speaker, these arrangements that I know with a person leasing, often when the lease is finished, you get some kind of, not capital back, but some kind of credit to re-lease. Does this arrangement include the possibility that you do not actually start from zero when you lease again, you actually have some of the value left to re-invest as such in a new lease and you do not have to start from scratch?

3145 **Hon. V Daryanani:** No, there are no such fleet deals that are on offer. There is no company that provides it.

Hon. Chief Minister: In those sorts of deals you have to pay back a final payment with a car and that is then carried forward.
3150

Hon. V Daryanani: It is a very simple deal. We have gone round here in circles and the difference of outright purchase and the lease is £90,000, £92,000. That includes absolutely everything. When the time comes after seven years, we will be free to purchase them at a much lower price and if we do not want to purchase of them, as I say, we can have them replaced with
3155 new vehicles and continue paying the lease.

Hon. K Azopardi: I just have one quick question, really just rolling up. So I understand what the Minister has just said in the context of answers he has given to Mr Clinton. In assessing whether there was such a good deal, have they done an exercise on the historic maintenance cost to compare whether it was a good deal, and if so, what is it?
3160

I understand the answer the Minister has just given me. He said that at the end of the seven years ... if the Minister does not listen to the question it will be more difficult for him to answer. *(Interjection)* The Minister has a crystal ball as well! I might as well just sit down then and let him answer the question that he thinks I am going to ask him.

3165 If, at the end of the seven years, he has just said well, we will have the option to buy it at a lower price. So, is he saying that actually there is an in-built schedule of agreed prices in this deal, or is it just the sort of loose statement that actually, what you end up with at the seven-year deal is basically a termination and a renegotiation?

3170 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Yes, I guess what has been agreed is that we will, we will revisit the situation after seven years, and we will then, the Government will then decide on how they want to proceed. I think it is very important that we take into account that the cars, the vans, that we have actually replaced are 17 year-old vans. These are petrol-guzzling vans. As the Hon. Mr Phillips said *(Interjection)* – exactly – and there were some there some of these vans, as I said, 17 years old,
3175 parts not available and we were having to look for parts which were costing £500 each time that we went to the garage.

I think this is an excellent investment for the taxpayer above all. It also ticks the green box. For the value, which is £90,000 over seven years, I think we have managed to achieve a fantastic deal, an excellent deal for the taxpayer.

3180

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q647/2020
Queensway parking –
Plans for new spaces

Clerk: Question 647, the Hon. K Azopardi.

3185

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, has the Government got any plans to create any new parking areas in Queensway or increase the numbers of available parkings there?

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

3190

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, there are no immediate plans to create additional parking spaces in Queensway. Queensway is already well catered for with a total of 190 Pay & Display parking spaces at Ragged Staff, ex-Queens Cinema site, Grand Parade, and Coaling Island.

3195

Additionally, Midtown Car Park has capacity of 390 spaces, of which three hours are free of charge for residents. Lastly, there are also 37 Residential Zone 2 parkings opposite Queensway Quay that allow for free parking during restricted hours of the day. Having said that, the Government is always looking at other possibilities.

3200

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, given that the hon. Member has just rattled off a number of parking areas and so on, I asked whether you have plans to create new parking areas, not what the existing parking areas are. In answer to my question, you have said no, because there are sufficient parking spaces which provide adequate parking in effect, that is what you have said.

3205

So is the Minister not aware – presumably, he is – that the Government have a project to convert the ex-Romney Huts site, which is currently used for parking, into a green area. Now that will include, therefore, a loss of significant parking on Queensway, so are there plans to re-provide those parkings elsewhere?

3210

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the hon. Member's Question is about Victoria Keys, sorry about Queensway, but the question that he has asked about Romney Huts car park and our manifesto commitment is one that is linked to Victoria Keys. In other words, we said, we would seek to relocate those parking spaces to the Victoria Keys underground parking spaces when those were ready and in that way we would be providing more parking. That parking would not be at Queensway, it would be at Victoria Keys, but that is how we set out that we would deal with it. His question, however, was about Queensway.

3215

3220

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am sorry I am entitled to ask whatever supplementary I want. I have not asked about Victoria Keys. In my supplementary, I am giving the illustration, that in terms of adequacy we are going to lose parkings there. Now, if the Chief Minister is going to reopen that debate to Victoria Keys, I have no idea whether the Government are still going to pursue those arrangements to allow the Victoria Keys development to proceed in the current economic climate. There is a question mark, I assume, but I have not asked for that.

3225 What I do know is that the Government have repeated their commitment on the ex-Romney site, which is in Queensway, so that will entail a loss of parkings. Now, my supplementary is simple, are those parkings going to be re-provided within Queensway? If the answer to that is no because the hon. Chief Minister says it will come whenever Victoria Keys comes. Well, there will be a loss of parking in Queensway. Are there any other areas which the Government is considering for parking?

3230 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do think this afternoon, when I came into the door of the Parliament, I must have come down the rabbit hole, because I really find it very difficult to follow the logic of the hon. Member. So I am not complaining that his question is about something slightly different to his main question. He can ask not whatever supplementary question he likes; he can ask whatever supplementary question you permit him to put. I have no complaint about his
3235 supplementary question. What I am saying, Mr Speaker, is that his question, his original question, is are you going to create more parking in Queensway? The hon. Minister has given him an answer.

His supplementary is, 'Ah, but you are going to remove some parking from Queensway, aren't you, because you are going to get rid of the Romney Huts car park?' And our answer has been yes and we are going to replace those parking places, not at Queensway – that is the answer he
3240 wanted – but at the Victoria Keys underground parking when it is ready. His retort is, 'Ah, so then you are going to get rid of some parkings at Queensway', and the responses are, yes, we are going to do that because we are going to relocate those parkings to the parkings that will be provided at Victoria Keys.

It is not complicated, Mr Speaker. I know that what he wants to do with this particular question
3245 is to raise the flag that he is now the champion of parking in Queensway. Well, Mr Speaker, we will be the champions of a huge parking at Victoria Keys.

Mr Speaker: Next question, please.

3250

Q648/2020
Line Wall Road –
Data collected and costs incurred

Clerk: Question 648, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

3255 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Now that Government has reverted Line Wall Road back to the two-way system, can Government provide details to this House on the following: (1) any and all data collected; (2) who/what company was contracted to analyse the data; (3) the cost incurred of the plans drafted/preliminary works/any other costs incurred on the LWR closure; (4) what
3260 consultation will Government take on from here and with whom; (5) by when Government will make a decision on future plans or strategy for Line Wall Road?

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

3265 **Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, the Government is of the view that it has no obligation to publish the data collected. This data will be used internally by Government officials or for other projects in the future. The company contracted to analyse this data was Ramboll. The Government is not in a position at this moment in time to disclose the cost of this project as we have other ongoing projects of similar nature. Therefore, unveiling this information will be detrimental to competitive rates and costings of
3270 these.

The Government will continue consulting with relevant stakeholders. We are committed to involving as many people as possible in the decision making. Following on from the Chief Minister's New Year Message, we have completely stopped this project.

3275 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister expand on why he believes that anybody who is interested in green ways into the future, transport or whatever, would think that there is no obligation or the state does not owe people the data that they collect, the data that people have effectively paid for? This is a transparency issue, which I think the Government should explain.

3280 To say that to divulge the cost is detrimental, again, I believe that the Government has a duty to divulge the cost, and I would be surprised for them to say that it is detrimental. I would think that it will not this be reflected in the Budget, anyway? This is information that belongs to the public, not that belongs to the Government.

3285 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, first of all this kind of data has not been provided, is not provided, it is not a done thing, because it is very difficult data to actually bring to the House. But if she wishes I am happy to provide access to it. *(Interjection)* Exactly, the reason why we cannot bring it to the House is because it is not in publishable form.

3290 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** If I remember correctly, just now, the Minister said that there are no future plans or strategy for Line Wall Road at present. But did he not talk earlier about bicycle provisions? Is that not a strategy that would flow through Line Wall Road? Why are they saying that there is nothing in Line Wall Road on the one hand, but then there are plans for bicycle lanes on the other?

3295 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, it may flow through Line Wall Road, it or may not flow through Line Wall Road. It does not mean that we have a bicycle strategy that it has to go through Line Wall Road. Because remember, when you put bicycle lanes you have to close roads. It is very difficult in Gibraltar to do certain things with the roads are very narrow. We need to follow guidelines, they have to be of a certain size. So, all these things have to be taken into account and, like I said, that does not mean that the cycle lanes have to be on Line Wall Road.

3300 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I accept that. It we take that into consideration, and we accept that there are no plans for Line Wall Road, then can we have a confirmation from the Minister that bicycle lanes are being looked at some stage of planning for other roads?

Hon. V Daryanani: Yes, Mr Speaker, bicycle lanes are definitely being looked at.

Q649/2020
Electric vehicles –
Possible subsidies

Clerk: Question 649, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

3310 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Can the Minister confirm if, after giving huge incentives to purchase diesel and petrol vehicles, it will announce significant subsidies for electric vehicles, in particular for commercial vehicles at a time when businesses are largely tightening their belts?

3315 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port.

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, the Government is always looking at options to incentivise the purchase of electric vehicles for private and commercial use. An announcement will be made during the lifetime of this Parliament.

3320 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, would the Minister understand that people who are looking forward to incentives and to a greener, brighter way of a transport plan might feel cheated by simply an announcement in the lifetime of this Parliament, because this Government came in with a manifesto of Green Gibraltar and what we are looking at now is at the very best an announcement in the lifetime of this Parliament? What does an announcement actually achieve?

3325 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the announcement will give details of the actual incentive. But let me just give a little bit of background to come to incentivising businesses to go electric. Shortly after I became Minister for Transport, I engaged with the Chamber of Commerce, with the Federation of Small Businesses and with all the motor, the food delivery companies and I told them that I would like to proposed that they all go green with their deliveries and that and that we should have a situation where people, businesses should replace their petrol vehicles.

3330 They understood the Government's vision on a Green Gibraltar and I was happy to discuss the incentive package for them, but then COVID hit. I find it very difficult, I have not done so since that day, because I find it very difficult to actually approach businesses who are going through difficult times and to tell them now to get them into another expense, which would be the replacement of their vehicles. It is something that I want to move on, again, and I will do so, and then that will include the announcement of the package of incentives that the Government will offer.

3340 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, when the Minister said that he does not want to make it harder for companies. The whole point of an incentive is to make it easier for people and actually encourage them with incentives. Those incentives are not there to make it harder and in the same way as the Government saw fit to put to a 0% import duty on diesel and unleaded petrol vehicles, they could be doing a similar incentive for electric vehicles.

3345 So, at this point anyway, what I would like to ask is whether the Government is looking to increase the charge points in Gibraltar, of which there are very few, and that is certainly not incentivising companies to switch to electric, and whether they are also looking to switch to biofuels with the switch of setting the new filters needed, offsetting against the taxes, corporate or personal tax?

3350 **Hon. V Daryanani:** What I meant was that, even if we give them incentives at this moment, they might not be interested in the actual incentive because we cannot buy cars for them, we cannot give them the cars for free.

3355 You say the import duty, the import duty on electric vehicles is zero at the moment and we actually have a cashback, so there is an incentive in place. So, if a business wants to buy an electric vehicle and compare in comparison to a petrol vehicle, they would pay zero tax, zero import duty, plus on top of that, they will get £2,000 cashback. So there is already an incentive in place.

3360 What I want to do, what the Government would like to do, is, as we move forward as things as the economy improves and as businesses stand on their own two feet, we can offer them an even better incentive so that they can purchase their car. Whatever it is, they are still going to have to pay for their car, whether today or tomorrow. So they need to pay for the car, with an incentive with a cashback, perhaps even an increased cashback. But at the moment I do not think it is fair that we ask them to replace their vehicle fleet.

3365 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Mahon:** Mr Speaker, regretfully the Minister was talking whilst I was asking a question, which I do not think he heard, and I will repeat it. Is the Government looking at increasing the charge points in Gibraltar, of which there are very few and we get many representations from people who would like to switch to electric and have not, and are they

looking to encourage a switch to biofuels in order to bring about a cleaner technology, with regards to transport?

3370

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I have answered a question on charging points a couple of hours ago, with the Hon. Mr Phillips.

On the issue of biofuels, it is not something we are currently looking at.

Q650/2020

**Insurance companies –
Payment of claims**

Clerk: Question 650, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

3375

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Is Government in liaison with the insurance industry locally (insurers, and intermediaries) to set out our expectations of any insurers for BI policies – where the insurer has an obligation to pay – to ensure valid claims are progressed as quickly as possible?

3380

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

Minister for Business, Tourism, Transport and the Port (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, no, sir.

3385

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, has Government not requested companies to provide information of any BI insurance that they may have in place?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, no one has brought this to my attention or has asked me for any assistance on the matter.

3390

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, if I may, by way of assistance, I am aware of them representations made through the Finance Centre Council in respect of the cost and difficulty of obtaining professional indemnity insurance, particularly for DNO firms, which have that requirement in every single firm that is licensed by the Financial Services Commission. I am not sure if that is what she is referring to, and if she is, we are engaged with the Finance Centre Council, not with any insurer in particular, to see what we can support.

3395

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: I thought that the announcement by the backbencher, Mr Gilbert Licudi was indicative that companies had a right to claim and by my understanding –

3400

Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, my friend, the hon. backbencher made a comment on the same day the Supreme Court in the UK handed down a judgment in which they allowed a claim on behalf of people who have been claiming business interruption as a result of the COVID pandemic under their existing insurance policy. The position here is as in the UK, if somebody has got that particular type of insurance within their policy then, of course, following the judgment, they would be eligible to apply. Nothing more than that.

3405

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: I would just ask one last question. Would not this have been in the BEAT questionnaire asking companies if they can claim from their insurance policies in order to perhaps have less of the shouldering of BEAT payments?

3410

3415 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, that would not have been possible physically because of course the BEAT programme commenced long before the judgment, so the position at the time of the BEAT questionnaire, the position was the court filing claim could not be made. The appeal went onto the Supreme Court who changed their position and went on side of the insured, as opposed to the insurer, and so that would not have been possible.

3420 My understanding and the information that I have is that there are very few, if any, businesses in Gibraltar that had pandemic insurance, which I believe you had to have had to be able to make a claim. There is another word for pandemic, I cannot remember what it was.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I think I can assist, and I will ask a question. It is a very long judgment of 326 paragraphs, which I have read in a professional capacity. I think what it dealt with was it analysed, I think, was about four or five different clauses and the wording was 'notifiable diseases', I think, was the wording which cut across all the clauses.

3425 The Minister is right that when the BEAT programme was put in place, it was at a time when I think that the Hon. Chief Minister, in response to the question, which was posed to him by the hon. the backbencher, Mr Licudi, said that the reason why the BEAT payments were introduced was precisely because there was a difficulty in companies being able to gain that financial assistance under the insurance cover.

3430 Given that that is no longer the case as a result not in respect of that. Obviously, it is all in the wording it all depends on the clauses of the insurance provision, but there may be companies will now as a result of the very positive guidance which has been given by Supreme Court judges in that particular judgment will be able to make a success of their claims now.

3435 Now, in that context, I wonder if the Government has considered ... I am not sure how they would do it from an administrative perspective, but I think the question is whether the Government has considered whether it can recoup the money from companies in respect of the payments that they have made in the past in relation to BEAT payments?

3440 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I think that comment the Chief Minister made at the time was that if companies had that insurance cover, which, under the Supreme Court judgment, they were eligible to claim, they should claim it.

3445 At the time that the BEAT payments were conceived and the whole structure was done with the Covid Emergency Liaison & Advisory Committee (CELAC), the intention was to provide assistance to firms that had no assistance whatsoever from anyone. I do not think we have had in our minds at that time, business interruption insurance, and so I think that the reasoning and the thinking as to what we did at the commencement of the BEAT programme was absolutely right and was irrelevant in terms of the insurance that the hon. Member is referring to.

3450 I think in terms of the future, certainly if the Government were to become aware of firms successfully claiming from their insurance firms for business interruption, those that have the wording that the hon. Member has referred to, which the Supreme Court now seeks to allow, that would be something we would consider at the time, but we are certainly not aware of any such firms that have that. We have not been informed of that, and if the hon. Member is aware of those, we would love to have that information.

3455 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Clerk: Question 651, the Hon. E J Phillips.

ADJOURNMENT

3460 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, at a gone eight o'clock in the evening and conscious that once again you have done a marathon session in the Chair, I think this would be a convenient moment to now adjourn the House to 3.30 p.m. *(Interjection)*

Mr Speaker, if you wish to continue, *(Interjection by Mr Speaker)* the Order Paper that I have, we have reached the end of one particular set of questions, and that is why I was of the view that this would of a – *(Interjection)* Sorry? No. I mean, as far as I am concerned, you have reached
3465 the end of Questions to Mr Daryanani, so we are moving on to a different Minister. I thought you did not need my crystal ball to work that out. I know that he would like a lot of what I have, Mr Speaker, and I am not going to give it away!

But, Mr Speaker, I thought, therefore this would be a convenient moment to adjourn the House to 3.30 p. m. tomorrow afternoon, when we can continue with ministerial questions. Because this
3470 Meeting as a catch-up Meeting, I afraid we will not be able to do questions to the Chief Minister tomorrow afternoon, unless we get to them in the context of the Order Paper. We will continue through the ministerial flow of questions.

Mr Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday,
3475 18th March at 3.30 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that the House do now adjourn to Thursday, 18th March at 3.30 p.m. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Thursday, 18th March at 3.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 7.40 p.m.