



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.03 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Monday, 26th June 2023**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3.03 p.m.*

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

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

## Questions for Oral Answer

### JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND PUBLIC STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

**Q520/2023**

**Vaping products –**

**Policy re displaying in shops, pharmacies and vending machines**

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Monday, 26th June 2021.

Order of Proceedings: Answers to Oral Questions continued. Question 520/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, in light of the restrictions on the display, access to and marketing of tobacco products, can the Government state its policy on the displaying of vaping products in shops, pharmacies and vending machines?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality, Public Standards and Regulations.

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**Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, the Government is alive to the concerns that exist regarding the use and sale of vapes, particularly in relation to their consumption by children. As a result, in December 2022 I presented to this House legislation that makes it unlawful to sell to children and makes it a legal requirement for traders of electronic cigarettes to prominently display a notice stating that it is illegal to sell a vaping product to, or to procure a vaping product for, anyone under the age of 18.

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It is now an offence to sell to or procure vaping products for persons under 18, and police officers have powers to confiscate in the same way as this law restricts the sale of tobacco and alcohol to under-18s. Additionally, so important is this that the Office of Fair Trading includes checking compliance as part of their regular site visits.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q521/2023**

**Royal Gibraltar Police –**

**Number of officers resident in Spain**

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**Clerk:** Question 521/2023. The Hon. D A Feetham.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, how many members of the Royal Gibraltar Police Force are resident in Spain?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality, Public Standards and Regulations.

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**Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, I am advised by the Royal Gibraltar Police not to make this information public for operational and security reasons. I will, nevertheless, inform the hon. Gentleman in confidence behind the Speaker's Chair.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware whether there has been a downturn in the number of Gibraltar residents, Gibraltar belongers, wishing to take up jobs within the Royal Gibraltar Police?

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, no.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, is the no because she has not made inquiries and this is the first time that she hears any such suggestion, or is it because she has made inquiries and the answer is that there is no downturn in demand for people within Gibraltar wanting to become police officers?

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, the no is to the fact that I am not aware that there has been a downturn in the number of police officers.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** And is she aware as to whether there are vacancies in the Royal Gibraltar Police that have not been taken up? Is she aware of that?

**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, I am aware that there are currently vacancies for which they are being recruited. There was a very recent recruitment drive, and as soon as that process is complete the training process will commence. So I am aware that there are vacancies and these vacancies are already in the process of being filled.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** Does the Minister know how many vacancies there are? If she has that figure ... And just so that I understand her, what she is essentially saying is that there are no unfilled vacancies, or rather that the vacancies that there are are in the process of being filled and there are no unfilled vacancies as a layperson would understand it.

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, there are vacancies and they are unfilled. However, they are being recruited for. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands it that way. The way that the Royal Gibraltar Police recruits is that it must recruit in batches because of the way that police officers are trained. So, insofar as vacancies that arise, those are all being recruited for.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** But are these historical vacancies that were not filled in the past and now there is a new process to try to fill them? Or is this just part of the normal process of vacancies arising and those vacancies being filled without necessarily meaning that there are historic vacancies that have not been filled?

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**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, there are not, to my understanding, any historic vacancies in the Royal Gibraltar Police. There are vacancies and recruitment is undertaken by the RGP usually twice a year because of the way that they need to train. It is not like any other position, where you recruit and engage people on a one-to-one basis every time a vacancy arises. There is a capacity for the training school that the RGP provides and therefore recruitment is undertaken

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80 in batches. But there is no issue of historic vacancies; these are all live vacancies. As I understand it, there has already been a wave of recruitment this year because there was a passing-out parade not that long ago.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady has not come back on the number of vacancies, if she has that figure. I think that she was going to be responding to that.

85 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, it is not a figure that I have to hand.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q522-23/2023**  
**Importation or supply of drugs –**  
**Arrests and convictions since January 2023**

**Clerk:** Question 522/2023. The Hon. D A Feetham.

90 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, how many arrests have been made since January 2023 for the importation or supply of drugs?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality, Public Standards and Regulations.

95 **Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 523.

**Clerk:** Question 523/2023. The Hon. D A Feetham.

100 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, how many convictions have there been since January 2023 relating to the importation or supply of drugs?

**Clerk:** Answer the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations.

105 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, since January 2023 I am informed by the Royal Gibraltar Police that 19 people have been arrested for the offences of importation or supply of controlled drugs. Five have been convicted.

110 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, does she have a breakdown between importation and supply in relation to Question 522?

**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, I think I have the information, but it is not presented to me in that way. I will, however, calculate it and give it to the hon. Gentleman before the Parliament session is over.

115 **Hon. D A Feetham:** If she can do the same in relation to Question 523, I would appreciate it.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**TRANSPORT**

**Q534/2023**

**Registered vehicles –**

**Total number and hybrid/electric numbers**

**Clerk:** Question 534/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government update this House as to the number of registered vehicles in Gibraltar and, of that number, how many are hybrid and electric?

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

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**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, there are 49,230 registered vehicles in Gibraltar. Of those, 1,805 are hybrid and 250 are electric.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, insofar as the Government's target to decrease the number of petrol- and diesel-powered vehicles, can the Government give an assessment as to how that is going insofar as the take-up of hybrid and electric vehicles?

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**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, other than the statistics provided, there is very little more that can be said – 1,805 vehicles on our roads are hybrid and 250 are electric. These vehicles do receive some benefits. People who choose to buy them will do. Remember the total number of registered vehicles in Gibraltar includes commercial vehicles and every single vehicle in Gibraltar, but other than the statistics provided there is a very little more I can say in that respect.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q535/2023**

**Redibikes –**

**Whether new scheme to be introduced**

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**Clerk:** Question 535/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government confirm whether it will be rolling out a new Redibike initiative?

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

**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, at present the Government is not actively considering the rollout of a government-subsidised bicycle rental scheme.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, obviously this Government and particularly this Transport Minister's views on cycling and encouraging it are well known to the public at large. I was just wondering whether there are any public-private partnerships that are being considered insofar as the rollout of initiatives like this.

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**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, no. At the moment there is no initiative that is being looked at that involves the sharing of bicycles. As you mentioned, my views on cycles ... We must remember we have tried and tested, between us, two different schemes in Gibraltar – one was the Gibibike

160 scheme, one was the Redibike scheme – and my personal opinion is that we are not ready for such schemes because we do not have the infrastructure to provide safe passage to people who want to use these bikes in that capacity. Those people who feel safe will no doubt buy their own, but at this stage in time for the Government to consider rolling out this sort of scheme I think would be premature in that respect.

165 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Doesn't the Minister think that that approach might be slightly inconsistent with his passion and certainly the drive that he has in pushing a generation of our people on to bicycles? Clearly the infrastructure is changing. He is rolling out cycle lanes across Gibraltar, and that is true across social media and the mainstream media. Isn't there any serious consideration given to a facility that can be used by tourists and indeed people alike to use bicycles? Clearly he is driving one policy and he will need to have that form of resource to enable people to use them.

170 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, yes, the hon. Member is absolutely right – eventually, when we have that infrastructure which will allow such a scheme to grow roots, absolutely I think it goes hand in hand. Every city that is worth anything in terms of its transport structure includes bicycle rental schemes. I think it is the way forward. But for us, remember the software for many of these schemes very quickly becomes outdated. If we are not truly ready to provide the option – and I do not think we are at the moment ... Although you know how keen I am in terms of rolling out infrastructure, at the moment we have just rolled out a very small section of infrastructure. Once you cycle out of Bayside Road, you are in the arena with the gladiators. There is no safe passage in that respect. So for us to even think that we will be able to encourage people to use this sort of shared scheme at the moment is the wrong presumption; I think it would be nonsensical and a waste of time. But the moment that the Government feels we have enough infrastructure to be able to provide the scheme, absolutely I think it is something Gibraltar should have and it is something I would then actively recommend that it does have.

185 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Just to pick up one answer to those questions, he currently believes that any initiative will not secure safe passage around Gibraltar insofar as those particular individuals. Could he explain that in a bit more detail? Currently there are many people on bikes coming in from Spain and we are trying to encourage people to take up cycling as a different mode of transportation for green reasons. He mentioned something about safe passage. Can he elaborate on that particular point?

190 **Hon. P J Balban:** Yes, Mr Speaker, yesterday we had no infrastructure, today we have some infrastructure, but in Gibraltar there are many kilometres of road for such a small place and we have only made safe Bayside Road and the approach to the Frontier. That is all we have. That is where children, parents and cross-Frontier workers can cycle safely in a completely segregated fashion without coming across a car. That makes cycling safe and that makes the uptake more appealing and more attractive to people who potentially want to take up cycling as a way to commute and get to work. That is my reference. So, at the moment, although that stretch of road is extremely safe for cyclists, the moment you arrive at Ocean Spa Plaza you are on the road with the traffic. No parent, I believe, who is scared to allow their child to cycle on our roads will allow their child to cycle to school at the moment, but as we roll out that infrastructure, which is being rolled out as we speak, there will come a point, very soon, whereby children living in certain estates will be able to cycle to school in a totally segregated fashion, which will hopefully give confidence to them and their parents to allow this to go on.

205 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker, for your leave to ask one further question. So it is the Government's intention – let's just get this clear – once the Active Travel Strategy is completely implemented insofar as cycle lanes, to introduce a publicly funded bicycle facility?

210 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, no. First of all, it is going to take ... There may be potential. We  
do not need to have a full network throughout the whole of Gibraltar, or the whole cycling strategy  
does not have to be in effect for us to be able to consider these things. Government is not  
215 considering and will not consider at this moment in time, based on its research and what is going  
on, being able to have that sort of scheme available at the moment. If someone were to see this  
opportunity as a commercial opportunity and were to say, 'We are willing to invest because we  
think the time is right,' then Government, I am sure, would consider that because I think it is  
something that there can be. But us, just like yourselves across the House, having to set up a  
publicly funded scheme when the time is not right now, I think would not be sensible.

220 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q536/2023**  
**Bicycles –**  
**Number imported in last two years**

**Clerk:** Question 536/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state how many bicycles have been imported into  
Gibraltar over the last two years?

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

**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, 4,816 bicycles have been imported into  
Gibraltar over the last two years. The hon. Member may wish to note that this figure has been  
230 provided by HM Customs and is specifically indicative of commercial imports by local suppliers.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** And just to be clear, it is not suggested that there are 4,816 bicycles on our  
streets?

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**Hon. P J Balban:** No, but there are four thousand ... I would say there are a lot more than that.  
There are more than 4,816 bicycles in our jurisdiction. Whether they are on the street at any given  
point ... I would hope that people would buy a bicycle to use it on the street. If people decide to  
buy a bicycle as a decoration at home and leave it there, I accept that as well. I cannot tell you  
whether they are all on the street. But remember, this does not stop people from buying their  
240 own bikes and importing them themselves, so this figure is just a rough guide of importations.

**Q537/2023**  
**Cycle lane use –**  
**Monitoring method**

**Clerk:** Question 537/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state how it is monitoring cycle lane use?

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

**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, a new automated bicycle and PLETs counter has been installed at the newly opened cycle lane at Bayside Road by the Victoria Stadium. This counter captures all cycle and PLET traffic in both directions using this new road infrastructure. The counter reading at 10.15 a.m. on Saturday, 10th June stood at 12,721, being exactly one week from the date the cycle lane counter was commissioned.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Does this counter only pick up bicycles, or does it also pick up other modes of transport, for example e-scooters?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, before I answer that question I would just like to update ... This question was replied to about two weeks ago. The count at week 3 was almost 39,500, so in fact we have gone over 40,000 trips on that bicycle lane already in the period of three weeks. We were scratching 40,000 in three weeks and that includes bicycles and e-scooters. It includes both. I am sure we can actually differentiate, but the machine itself, the actual counter, will only tell us transits. It does not pick up pedestrians, it does not pick up pedestrians with suitcases, it does not pick up joggers. I have actually been there – I am a bit of a stickler; I cannot sit at home. I have been there and tried it for myself. Before I put my foot in it and say something which is not right, I would rather find out for myself, so I had the privilege of witnessing a road runner running on one of the tracks and I was keenly waiting to see whether it clicked. It did not. I do not know what the parameters are, it is a radar, but it does not pick up joggers, as far as I saw, and it does not pick up pedestrians, whether they are walking on the pavement or whether they are walking on the bicycle lane. I need to be a bit more specific. The system will do, but it will not be displayed on the monitor that we have. The monitor will pick up many things, but the counter will display just e-scooters and bicycles.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Just one further question on that, and I think it links quite nicely to the previous question, where we discussed safety. There is clearly a volume of traffic coming into Gibraltar on bicycles, over 10,000 a week, and one of the concerns that the Minister raised in relation to the previous question was about safety and infrastructure and having the perfect infrastructure, or better infrastructure, to allow for our children to safely use bicycles. Isn't the Minister concerned generally about the volume of bicycles coming across the border and the lack of infrastructure and the issues with safety generally? And what is he doing in order to assist and give more comfort to people and encourage people to cycle in that context?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I am not concerned about the volumes of bicycles and e-scooters coming through the Frontier or circulating in Gibraltar. What I am very concerned about is the number of vehicles. Vehicles make the roads unsafe, not the bicycle, so my concern is those vehicles that can cause the most damage. So I am not concerned in that respect.

Remember, we cannot roll out infrastructure all at once. I wish we could. If we could have bicycle lanes falling from the sky, I would love that because then we would ... I think we have to be patient, and I think that is something we have to realise. We have only done one small section of Gibraltar, a very small part, and really a bicycle in its own right is nothing. It is not a network. What we have to provide is a network and we have to start joining the dots. At the moment, in principle, it is possible for someone living at Beach View Terraces to cycle in a segregated fashion, without seeing a car on the way, to the sports stadium, to Victoria Stadium, to the Tercentenary Hall to practise their sport and go back home in a totally safe manner. That is the first step. I think that is a very positive step. As we roll out the infrastructure further, it will be possible for someone to go to the beach, someone who lives, for example, in Portland House or someone who lives in Tradewinds, or eventually somebody who lives in Water Gardens, Varyl Begg etc. So, over time we will see the extent of the network increase, which will give people more options, and then it will become truly meaningful. At the moment, it is a tiny step in the right direction but it is going



to take time, obviously, so it is a question of just being patient. I am the most impatient person you can imagine. I cannot wait to see the next phase and the next phase finished.

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**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Member has spoken about the placement of one counter – I think that is right – and in the context of the rollout of the cycle lanes that have been laid out and so on can I just ask him is he considering the placement of these cycle counters in other parts of Gibraltar that may not have cycle lanes laid out, in terms of perhaps assisting in the planning of the layout of this infrastructure so that you realise what kind of volumes there are in different parts of Gibraltar? Or is it that you can only place these counters if there is already a cycle lane in operation? Does it require there to be a cycle lane, or is it something that generically could be placed by the side of a road and will only pick up cycles?

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**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, in traffic engineering, there are such counters which can be set up. I believe something was set up because of the tunnel to see how many cars, bicycles and pedestrians came through the Frontier and walked across the runway every day before the tunnel was open. They do exist, but remember the type of counter we have works best in an area where bicycles come one after the other. For example, the day we actually cycled – I will not say it was the official opening, it wasn't, it was just an inaugural cycle – most of those trips were not captured because the bicycles came in a clump, so they moved as one massive vehicle-type thing and the counter failed to clock the 250 or 280 or 300. So if you set one of these counters up on a road where you have cars in both directions, bicycles maybe clumped together in traffic and it will be impossible to give you very accurate data.

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There are things that we can do in terms of traffic modelling. In fact, those little black boxes that we have seen around the area, we normally set those up in different areas where we are looking at options at roundabouts or where we want to maybe consider making a road one way or changing the flow of traffic. You use these counters to gauge flow in different areas, but these ones specifically work best in a place where bicycles come one after the other.

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**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q538/2023

#### Cycle lane from Sundial to Waterport roundabouts – Total cost to date

**Clerk:** Question 538/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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**Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the total cost to date of the design, construction, painting, marketing and commissioning of the new cycle path from the Sundial roundabout to Waterport roundabout?

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

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**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, the Ministry has to date spent an approximate figure of £14,000 on consultancy design fees from January 2022 up until the end of May 2023 on the first and second phases, which include Bayside Road and Glacis Road. This cost also covers a complete independent safety audit of these phases. The majority of the design work, preparation of documentation, marketing etc. has been carried out by the Ministry's technical office in house, to reduce expenditure. The contractor has not yet provided a final invoice to the Government for the work done on cycle lanes, which I know has the full support of both sides of the House.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Is the Minister able to give a ballpark figure? I assume that once this plan was rolled out they must have known at some point roughly how much this stretch would have cost the taxpayer. Is he able to help me with that? I am not going to hold him to it, but it would be helpful to have a rough amount.

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, it is not possible to have that figure because as we start building infrastructure there are a lot of hidden costs, so for us to hazard a guess as to what bicycle infrastructure will cost would be impossible. Hidden costs will include things that you find underneath the ground when you start digging – cabling, ducting etc. – and these things sometimes can cause differences in cost either way. Sometimes you think there are lots of ducts, which then there are not, or sometimes you touch the surface and you realise that you cannot proceed unless you move certain things. So it is impossible to give anything like an accurate reply.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** So just to be clear, the Hon. Minister for Transport cannot provide the community with a rough average of how much it has cost so far to construct this stretch of cycle lane. The Government is responsible for spending the people's money wisely and should plan for the costs of a particular stretch. Is he truly unhelpful in that regard?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** No, Mr Speaker, the Minister has been asked for an invoice amount for the amount that we have paid, not for what the estimate might have been. The Minister obviously does not have here the estimate that we were working against. We would not start a project, because we are careful with the people's money, without having an estimate against which we would work. That is not the question that the hon. Gentleman asked. He just does not seem to realise that he is asking for a figure of money paid and now he has changed it to ask the Minister what was the estimate provided for the works, which is not a figure that I know the Minister has.

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

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
Can the Minister advise the House where in the Improvement Development Fund estimates he expects this expenditure to fall? Obviously he cannot undertake expenditure for a project for which he does not have an estimate.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the debate on the Estimates will be on 10th July. We can debate all of those issues then and identify which part of the expenditure relates to this project and many other projects which the Minister will be leading on, which will form the part of his contribution to the House, and I will be making some reference to them too.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, with respect to the Chief Minister I do not think this needs to wait for the Budget debate, which is about the Appropriation Bill for next year. I am asking the Minister this year where was this expenditure budgeted. Surely he must know. Does he not know?  
**(A Member:** This year.) This year.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not think the hon. Gentleman understands that the year we are in, that is to say this year, is the financial year the estimates of which we will be debating on 10th July, and therefore he has signed an undertaking not to disclose any information about that Book and he has signed an undertaking not to disclose any figures about that. That debate for *this* year, as he has said – he has said this year; this year means the current year – is the debate we start on 10th July. I do not understand how it is he has got it so wrong, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am referring to last year's Estimates Book.

395 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Ah, you said this year.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Well, this year, as in this year ended. Perhaps I should clarify that for your purposes. Unless, of course, the Minister is saying that the money he spent was not budgeted in the last Estimates Book.

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Mr Speaker, that is the opposite of what we have said. What we have said is that we will identify the expenditure in the Budget debate, which starts on 10th July. As the hon. Gentleman will know, or at least should know, this is the expenditure that has cut across two financial years. If what he wants to do is to have a debate on the Estimates Book during Question Time, then I am afraid the Government believes that that is outside the Rules.

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**Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I think the Chief Minister is stretching a point here. I have simply asked the Minister where in last year's Estimates Book ... As the Chief Minister just said and admitted, this is across financial years, in which case some of that expenditure will have been in last year's Estimates Book. Where, in last year's Estimates Book, in the Improvement Development Fund does the Minister expect this expenditure to fall?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, first of all, I do not think it is a supplementary that arises from the question. Second, I am very grateful that the hon. Gentleman has clarified his question. That is to say, in GSD speak, he has changed it from this year to last year. The answer in respect of last year is very simple: under the STTP line.

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**Mr Speaker:** This is going to be the final supplementary.

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**Hon. K Azopardi:** That is fine. Mr Speaker, the question asks about costs. The Hon. Minister has indicated that the cost has not been invoiced and the Chief Minister indicated in answer to my hon. colleague Mr Phillips that, being careful with the people's money, they would have done an estimate. Can he tell us what that estimate of cost was?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the specific answer I gave to that a few moments ago.

**Q539/2023**  
**Upper Town escalator –**  
**Schedule for repair**

**Clerk:** Question 539/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. E J Phillips:** Please state when the escalator at the Upper Town will be repaired.

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

**Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, I am informed by our managing agents, namely Gibraltar Parking Management Services Ltd, that the technical advice is that there are several issues which must be resolved before the escalator can be recommissioned. As we have stated in the past, there are a number of issues that result in these long-term breakages. Our managing agents have advised us and have provided proposals that include long-term solutions, which the Government are presently considering and we hope to be in a better position to provide the community with an update within the next few weeks.

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440 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is he able to states what those, as he put it, several issues are?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker there were issues with vandalism of the escalator, there were issues with misuse of the emergency stop button which forced the escalator to stop and have to be restarted all the time, and there were issues with falling leaves on the escalator which affected  
445 the working mechanism, just to mention a few of the different issues. Another issue is that in Gibraltar generally it is very dry. There is very little rain, but when it does rain it rains very hard. Those are the issues that compounded with all the issues we have had with the escalator and these are the ones that now are being looked at to be able to find a solution that actually works.

450 **Hon. D J Bossino:** He is saying that he will be able to make an announcement in a couple of weeks. Will that announcement include when the works are likely to be completed, so we have a properly running escalator once and for all?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, the whole purpose of doing this is to try to fix the escalator, so  
455 as soon as we are in a position to know exactly what needs to be done to make sure that this escalator works as trouble free as possible, I think the next step would be to commence works as quickly as possible to try to fix the problem.

460 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And may I ask, Mr Speaker, whether he has an estimate, dare I say, of the costs of these works at this stage? And secondly, does he have an idea as to when he thinks those works are likely to be completed?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, it is impossible for me to provide an estimate of cost because we  
465 are still looking at the different issues that make up the full picture so we can provide an escalator that works totally. We are going to address the misuse of the button, we are going to address the vandalism, we are going to address the water and we are going to address the leaves. Until we have all the mechanisms in place and know exactly what has to be done to be able to fix and address these things, then I will not have an estimate of those costs. As to when, immediately.

470 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, can I just ask, following on, how long this escalator  
475 has actually been broken, in order to understand the three things, mainly, that he talks about – vandalism, misuse of emergency stop button and falling leaves? Did all that happen together? From what I understand, the escalators have been broken for years, so at what point did these issues all conflate to have this escalator broken for so long and deem that these were the reasons for it?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I cannot agree that the escalator has been broken for years,  
480 although it may seem that way. The escalator has been put to work constantly. The truth of the matter is that it has been stopped a lot of the time, it has been put back to work, it has lasted a short while and then it has been stopped again. There is also another issue we have had, which I will also share with the other side, which is the noise these escalators make – very little noise, but at three o'clock in the morning, apparently, it was not noise that people wanted to hear and it  
485 also led to some issues as to why the escalator stopped working. That is really the thing. I cannot agree, but the people who live up there have found that the escalator has not been working for a sufficient amount of time because every time we need to call in the maintenance team or even restart the escalator it can take hours or it can take days.

490 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, one disaster after another as far as this project is concerned. In the light of that, may I ask him whether it is the policy of his Government to ...? Is it still committed to this particular project?

495 **Hon. P J Balban:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question.

**Q540/2023**  
**Priority parking for over-70s –**  
**Whether Government will consider**

**Clerk:** Question 540/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

500 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, would Government be willing to consider introducing a scheme which would give priority of parking in certain areas to persons over 70?

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

505 **Minister for Transport (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, there are plans under consideration at this moment in time to allow for priority parking in certain areas to persons over 70. More details will be announced in due course. The hon. Member should note, however, that there are already concessions in place in Midtown car park by way of three hours' free parking to existing Gibraltar ID card holders. There is also a 50% discount to all Gibraltar ID card holders over the age of 65. As for the Residential Parking Scheme zones 1 to 4, persons over 60 years of age  
510 may purchase their first permit at a 50% discount.

Upon consulting with my team and relevant officials, I am informed that we have not, to date, received requests seeking concessions of this nature.

515 **Hon. K Azopardi:** That last remark is by the by because in your opening remark you did say that plans are under consideration, so can I ask, in terms of the rollout of that, what kind of timescale should we be expecting? Is there a plan devised for the rollout of these?

**Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, we are hoping to be in a position to announce this by the end of the year.

**Adjournment**

520 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Chief Minister.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to Monday, 3rd July at 3 p.m.

525 **Mr Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Monday, 3rd July at 3 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Monday, 3rd July at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Monday, 3rd July at 3 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 3.45 p.m.*