



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.04 p.m. – 6.12 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 20th June 2023

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<i>The House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.</i>	51

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.04 p.m.

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

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

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Tuesday, 20th June 2023.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the last meeting of Parliament, which was held on 18th, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th May 2023.

5

Mr Speaker: May I sign the Minutes as correct?

Members: Aye.

Mr Speaker signed the Minutes.

PAPERS TO BE LAID

10 **Clerk:** (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be laid. The Hon. the Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):
Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the GBC Report and Annual Accounts 2020 and 2021.

15

Mr Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING AND SPORT

Q479/2023

**Europa Sports Complex –
Ball-stop netting**

Clerk: (vii) Report of Committees; (viii) Answers to Oral Questions.
Question 479/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

20 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, further to the answer provided to Question 333/2023, has the Minister for Sport now checked for himself that the ball-stop nettings at the Europa sports grounds are fully, properly fitted and in a safely acceptable working order?

25 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

30 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, I can confirm that I visited the Europa Sports Complex and checked out the nets. The nets are clearly in need of repair. The current motorised system has not handled the extreme weather conditions at Europa Point very well and we will therefore be looking into adopting an alternative system that will be able to sustain the intense weather conditions whilst at the same time remaining sensitive to the environmental needs posed by wildlife in the area, in particular migratory birds.

35 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you. I am extremely grateful to the Minister for having checked it. Other than, perhaps, the unusual – or not so unusual rain in June, because it coincides with one of our neighbour's annual fairs and it would be a break with tradition if it did not rain ... Knowing that that the cricket season is coming into full bloom now, those cricket balls, I can personally testify, are quite hard when you are hit by them, and I think both sides of the House will concur that the safety of the park users, especially in the children's play area, is paramount. If I can ever be of any assistance to the Minister ... I know we attend lots of functions, but sometimes we are there at different times. We can mutually keep ourselves updated to ensure the safety of the general public is, above all, what we strive for.

45 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his kind words on that. We are looking at systems where we can have individual nets going up. Also, as the hon. Member might have noticed, we have cordoned off some parts of the playing area just in case there is a ball flying over the nets, because it is one of those things ... apparently, there are only two or three players in Gibraltar capable of passing the ball over the net. This one of the things that we will have to live with and we will mitigate and look at it and make it as safe as is possible.

50 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q480/2023
Europa Sports Complex –
Management agreement

Clerk: Question 480/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

55 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Is Government now able to provide this House with details in respect of the management agreement for the Europa Sports Complex?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

60 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the Europa Sports Park (ESP) Management Agreement is an agreement involving four parties: the Government of Gibraltar, the Gibraltar Rugby Association, the Gibraltar Squash Association and the Gibraltar Cricket Association. The three sport associations will be managing ESP under a company named Europa Sports Park Management Ltd, composed of a member from each of the associations and three non-executive directors nominated by Government.

65 The Government of Gibraltar will be providing Europa Sports Park Management Ltd (ESPM)
with an annual grant to facilitate the running of the complex. Additionally, ESPM will be allowed
to commercially exploit the use of the facility, for example via revenue received by opening the
gym, hire of meeting rooms, sports halls and other services. Incoming revenue will be offset from
70 the annual grant every financial year and continue until the running of the complex becomes cost
neutral. Note that approved sport associations and schools are exempt from paying for the use of
the facilities. These associations will be paying a licence fee for the use of their respective office
space and members' area at the complex, and thus contributing towards the running costs.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am extremely grateful, Mr Speaker, for that update. Something that crossed
75 my mind and I would like the Minister to confirm or otherwise: in the same way that we have the
Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority, of which Sports Ministers become chairmen, is the Sports
Minister or any particular representative of his Ministry involved in the management setup, or
committee or whatever? The Minister has said that some people are appointed by the Minister,
and maybe he has one of those places reserved for the Minister himself, or perhaps for the Chief
80 Executive of the Sports Authority or someone like that. Could he shed some light on that?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker. We have been negotiating, as the hon. Member knows, for
a very long time, and we had many permutations on how to make the composition of the trust –
because this is a trust that has been created. Ultimately we came to the view that each sport will
85 have one representative. That means the three sports that are considered to be their home, but
their home is defined by them having a place there and then being able to contribute as well. So
they are contributing by rent. The three sports are actually contributing. There are other
associations that are there, it is their home, but they are not able to contribute, so they are not in
the trust. One example of that is the darts. They have a place there and because of the lack of
90 funds that they have, they are not able to be part of it, but if any other day they become able to
pay, they will do so. But they are there.

The composition is one from each association and the Government, because we are the owners
of the asset. We thought that we should have at least equitable numbers, but when a decision ...
And I am not the chairman, by the way. They will run the company. They are all directors of the
95 company that I have just said is set up. Obviously, I can have meetings with them, I can call them
in and see how progress is because they are the trust for the Government. So that is exactly how
it is going to be run, and the three I have appointed are people who I believe have sporting
connections and commercial connections.

100 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. The appointment of these individuals, is it
publicly available information that I can tap into somewhere? If it is not, perhaps the Minister can
provide that information to me.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, I will ask the hon. Member to allow me two or three more weeks.
105 I will say why: because we are convening a first meeting, where we are going to discuss issues,
and after that meeting, when it is set up, we will go public on all the members that have been
appointed.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Roy Clinton.
110

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Mr Speaker.
I would be grateful if the Minister could elaborate a little bit more on the structure. Could he,
for example, give us the name of the trust? Who settled this trust? Is it a registered charity? And
is it this trust that owns this company that is being set up? I would be grateful for some information
115 as to the structure.

And then secondly, is it that the trust's objective is to promote solely sporting activities at the venue, or is it that there will be other events outside the sporting arena that will be allowed at the venue?

120 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I have just explained most of how this is going to be run. Yes, I have. I said this is a company with trustees, of which there are two types – there are executive members and non-executive members. Three executive members are the rugby, the cricket and the squash. Those are three executive members of the company and they will run the place, as the hon. Member says, not only for sporting events but any other event – for example, annual
125 dinners that there might be from any entity that might want to use the facility, music festivals, whatever. The hon. Member knows all the activities that we have had in the multi-purpose hall already – like a boxing bout, although that is sporting; Archbishop Miles was ordained there; we have had the Chief Minister giving awards there. There are infinite events that the place can be used for, and that is how it is going to be run. That company, those trustees, will now go out to
130 tender to see who manages, for them, the whole of the complex.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, if I understand the Minister correctly, there is no trust separate to the company. Is that correct? And is this company registered as a charity?

135 **Hon. S E Linares:** First question, yes; second, no.

Clerk: Next question.

Q481/2023
Lathbury Barracks Sports Complex –
Indoor swimming pool

Clerk: Question 481/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

140 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Sport now provide full details of availability for public use of the indoor swimming pool and its related facilities at Lathbury Barracks Sports Complex?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

145 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the GSLA is finalising the recruitment of the lifeguards it will add to the current team so that public swim time can be offered.

150 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, would the Minister confirm if this will be happening imminently or is something that they need to work on and will not kick in until the end of what, in sporting terms, we call the summer season and we move on to the winter type of training? It is a question of what will happen during the school holiday periods, despite all those activities of the stay and play that are organised for the children and so on. There are families who want to do things together with their children and they may wish to know if the facility will be available for the
155 general public.

Hon. S E Linares: Well, yes, Mr Speaker, I have just said it will be available for the general public. The general public are still using the pool down where the GASA area is, so there is not any inconvenience to anybody because it is always there. But soon – and I think the GSLA are already ...

160 If I remember correctly, all the posts have come out already, so they are in the recruitment stage of getting lifeguards.

I must add that it is difficult to get lifeguards, especially now, because most of them are on the beaches and they are working around, and anybody who might want to work in the Lathbury might be on a beach. But we are opening it up to everyone who is able to do it, and as I understand it, the posts are already out, so it should be imminent. It usually takes about a month for recruitment – interview, going through the whole process. You give a time and date, then they come to the interviews, and then after that ... I think I mentioned to the hon. Member that what we are going to have is a full timetable of the whole usage, because GASA will have slots for them to do their own training, but as anybody would know and anybody who has gone to the swimming pool up there ... you can have, on one side, GASA doing their own training and you can have the public swimming on the other side, the other part of the pool. So the capacity is massive, and that is where the GSLA, once it has its lifeguards – because you cannot have the public coming in without the lifeguards there, so once we have the lifeguards the public will have quite a lot of slots to be able to go and enjoy the magnificent pool that we have built.

175 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q482/2023
GSLA facilities –
Fees paid by users

Clerk: Question 482/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

180 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Sport provide a detailed breakdown in respect of all fees paid by users of any facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the financial year 2022-23, indicating the purpose of their usage – for example, sporting, cultural or other types of events?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

185 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, the breakdown in respect of all fees paid by users of any facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the financial year 2022-23 is as follows: sporting commercial/fitness, £2,150; cultural/music, £13,430.33; non-sporting events, 190 £1,250; and GFA events, £4,649.40.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, in previous questions we have had, the Minister has explained that the use of some of these facilities – broadly speaking, we talk about community use ... those that have been allocated to entities who then have a charge to participants. I think that is probably one of those that falls into the fitness one – if someone wants to become a personal trainer, fitness 195 and so on. But when he is talking about the cultural events, can he enlighten us as to what exactly are the types of cultural event that fall under that category that raised or gave back to Government, because Government has obviously incurred expenditure of £13,430?

200 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, usually it is either, like it says, cultural or music, so it could be a small music festival – somebody brings a band wants to use the Muga area. The thing is that traditionally the GSLA never used to charge anybody for the use of the venues, and what we have realised is that there are many private entities that come to the sports complex, do the whole of the event, and then we pick up a lot of the bill. Why? Because there is overtime for people who

205 have to work, there is the cleaning, there is the wear and tear, there are breakages ... The Government was paying for that. So we put in a regime, which is very simple, a cost analysis on how much we would pay for the overtime of, say, minimum people. We charge that to the organisers.

210 But going back to the hon. Member's question, there could be – I do not know whether you would call it cultural – a beer festival, for example. They come, they want to sell the beers, and we charge them for that – again, for the same reason, because I do not think it is fair for the taxpayer to pay, via the GSLA, a fee, and then the private entity takes all the profit. The idea is just a charge on the venue, so that it covers the cost of the venue, and we do put on a surcharge of a small percentage, which is not quite profit but is usually for wear and tear, which is very difficult to analyse – how much wear and tear is.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful for those examples of what could fall under cultural, but it then raised ... In the example he has given me, I thought those perhaps would have fallen under the non-sports category, which was over £1,000. I thought a beer festival was a bit ... Yes, if you stretch your imagination, it could be cultural. But non-sports then – does the Minister have an example? I am trying to distinguish, even if we try to be generous in what we call cultural, but non-sporting is what?

225 **Hon. S E Linares:** Well, anybody who wants to use any of the premises for anything else, like lectures, for example. We have some lecture rooms upstairs. A private entity might want to give a lecture, and then they are charged. Some of them do not come to the Victoria, they might go somewhere else, but some do. So it is using the venue for any other ... I am trying to think which ones we have had recently. Most of them are sporting, but then again, could you categorise the Damex tournament, which is a sporting event but it is very much a commercial entity doing the whole sporting event. Later, I will try and pick up from the GSLA which have been the entities that have paid, and then we can ascertain whether it is cultural or leisure, because it is a very grey area, as in what is sport, leisure and culture, as the hon. Member might know. For example, is going to Morocco on 4x4 leisure, or is that a sport? Backgammon is now considered a sport, but is it leisure or is it a sport? There is a very big argument as to what is considered to be leisure activity and sporting activity.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. I will not take up any more of your time because the Minister has committed himself to providing the information.

240 Just to help the Minister, so that we do not have so much coming and flowing, if he looks back on previous years when he has provided me some similar information, he has been able to provide subsections and it gives us an indication, under cultural, of how many separate entities – was it just one or two entities using it or a wide range? It is just sort of homework I know he is going to pass on to his chief executive, but it helps to get to the final answer much quicker, and I await his answer, when possible.

245 **Hon. S E Linares:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I will do, and just one more: the Harley Davidsons do the rally and then come into the Victoria Stadium, and they might be charged for using the space. But yes, I will do.

250 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q483/2023
Chilton Court –
Youth club/social centre

Clerk: Question 483/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide an update in respect of the progress made to date relating to the development of a youth club/social centre at Chilton Court?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, the position remains the same as set out in my answer to Questions 531 and 532/2022.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, the reason why I ask this question is, having gone down to the area of Chilton Court myself, I have not physically seen anything happening. If nothing has started because we are in the planning stages or obtaining permissions and so on, does the Minister have a rough idea of a commencement date when physically one can see some bricks and mortar starting to appear and raise people's morale, especially those who are the potential future users of these facilities?

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Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, what I can tell the hon. Member, to be helpful, is that we are going through the planning stage and therefore there are things that we are looking at. I can tell the hon. Member that once we start works, there will be an issue with people parking their cars and we are looking to see an alternative. Another issue might well be how many units you do or do not do underneath, which has gone through the DPC. You will not see any bricks and mortar per se, but I am hopeful that very soon there will be physical movements in Chilton Court.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q484/2023
9 Hargrave's Parade –
Plans for future use

Clerk: Question 484/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What plans does the Government have in respect of 9 Hargrave's Parade?

280

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, at present Government has no plans for 9 Hargrave's Parade beyond its continued residential use.

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Hon. D J Bossino: In that context, is he able to say whether the information that we have received on this side of the House that ... it may be that the ultimate aim is to continue providing residential facilities there, but that there is a plan to demolish the area and build again?

290 **Hon. S E Linares:** None at all.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q485/2023
Europa Sports Complex –
Cause of water ingress in sports hall

Clerk: Question 485/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

295 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What caused the water ingress at the Europa Sports Hall?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

300 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):**
Mr Speaker, there was a fire on a section of the Europa Sports Complex roof on 18th April 2023, with the fire causing damage to the waterproof membrane. The extent of the heavy rain on 13th May was such that the temporary provision to cover the damaged section proved ineffective. Works undertaken have resolved the issue.

305 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, is it correct that this was caused by the solar panelling on the roof?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker, it was two solar panels that caught fire.

310 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And the costs which have been incurred, presumably by the Government, are those going to be sought to be recovered from the company that set up the solar panels? And may I ask him which company it was?

315 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, it was a GJBS subcontractor, and the fire is being covered, all the costs, by the insurance.

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask which company set up the solar panels? Is it a subcontractor of JBS? May I ask the Minister for the identity of that company?

320 **Hon. S E Linares:** EV Systems Ltd, I think it is.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, just a bit more granular in relation to this: which insurance cover is covering this? Is it EV Systems Ltd as the party responsible?

325 **Hon. S E Linares:** No, it is a general insurance.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can he be more specific as to what he means by general insurance? Who is the beneficiary of that insurance cover?

330 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, I need notice of that question. That is not the question, and therefore I do not know ... where the hon. Member is usually leads to in questioning. No, I do not have that information.

335 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, given that the fire was caused by the solar panelling, is it not appropriate for the Government to be suing that company? And if he agrees with me, can he tell me why that is not the case?

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, I do not answer those questions. Again, these are hypothetical questions and I am not answering.

340 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q486/2023

**Lathbury Sports Complex –
Cause of flooding in underground parking area**

Clerk: Question 486/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

345 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What caused the flooding at the underground parking area at the Lathbury Sports Complex?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

350 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, there has not been any flooding of the underground parking area at the Lathbury Sports Complex.

355 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I personally went there when I saw there was a fair amount of water at the complex. This was towards the end of the weekend when the Relay for Life was taking place and so on. Perhaps we have different interpretations of what is meant by flooding. It was not a replica of the biblical event of Noah's Ark, but it was certainly an event where one's shoes would have got pretty well soaked and it would have required a change of shoes, socks and even the bottom part of the trousers. So there was some water ingress there. We are trying to establish what caused it, because it was not a particularly rainy weekend, so something must have given rise to it. Maybe it was an overflow of some other system, or whatever.

365 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, what I have prepared here, because we knew that these questions were going to be asked ... There was a puddle over one of the manholes in the parking area. This has been solved in the short term. The reason why it happened is being investigated. It is quite minor and has zero effect on the use of the sporting complex.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, if the matter is being investigated, how is he sure that the cause of it is minor?

370 **Hon. S E Linares:** Because the professionals are telling me it is minor.

Hon. D J Bossino: Are the professional telling him, then, what the cause of it is?

375 **Hon. S E Linares:** I have just stated it was a blockage of the manhole, so the manhole was blocked. Now they are ascertaining why it was blocked, and that is part of the investigation.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q487-88/2023
Medical A+ housing list –
Number and breakdown of people on list

Clerk: Question 487/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how many people were on the Medical A+ housing list on 8th June 2023?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, there are currently 113 applicants on the Medical A+ list. The breakdown is as follows, unless the hon. Member wants me to pass him the whole list so that I do not have to go through it. It is just 1RKB, the year ... I will pass it on to him straightaway, if he wants, so that I do not need to read it out – to be helpful.

Mr Speaker: Could we get the usher to come in?

Before the hon. Member the Leader of the Opposition asks his supplementary, I think I need to ask the Hon. Minister to reply fully, in the sense that he needed to say, in answer to his question, that he would be answering together with Question 488.

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker. I will go back, then, to Question 489. I have written here 'I will answer this question with Question 490', for the record.

Mr Speaker: No, you need to refer to Question 487 and you will answer together with Question 488.

Clerk: Question 488/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, of the persons on the Medical A+ list at 8th June 2023, how long have those persons been classified as A+, providing a breakdown of dates or time on the A+ list in respect of each?

Answer to Questions 487-88/2023

RKB LIST	2012	2013	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1RKB			3	6	6	7	22	6
2RKB			5	2	3	5	8	8
3RKB		1		1	2	3	7	3
4RKB	1		1	1		3	2	1
5RKB					1	2	2	
6RKB							1	

Hon. K Azopardi: If I may – because the Hon. Minister has now given me the schedule, helpfully, and I assume the schedule will be written into the *Hansard* anyway – can I just ask, because there are reasons for this question ... Let me start here. The Minister knows the statistics that are placed on the government website, on the Medical and Social A list. I have for some time

been quite perplexed by the tables. I think I now understand it, because the Minister will be aware that ... For example, if I were to just describe one of the tables in this way – that the table for 2022 refers to applicants placed on the various medical housing lists, A-plus, A, B and C, by various months. I have never really understood why there were relatively small numbers, because it implied that those were the numbers of people on the Medical A+ list, but in fact I think I now understand, given his answer, that what this provides to the public is information as to the monthly placement of new persons on those priority lists. If that is correct and if there is a running total for A+, A, B and C medical lists which is different – and plainly it is different because at 8th June 2023 there are 113 people on the list – would the Minister agree that it would be helpful for those statistics of the running total of people on the various medical lists to also be published on the website?

Hon. S E Linares: Yes, Mr Speaker, I do not see why not; it should not be an issue. But I must say that this is about the Medical A+, A, B, and C ... I can tell the hon. Member that I am not very convinced and happy about it. Why should we have four lists of medicals? I would rather have one list of anybody who is on the medical ... We are reviewing all these things, and it is not a political jibe at the hon. Member's side, but it was when the GSD was in government that these lists were divided and re-divided into many little different parts. I think it makes no sense and it is a very difficult process because if you are on a list, for example, for one 1RKB, of which we have very little, why do you put a couple on a 1RKB as opposed to a 2RKB? What makes that difference? I am talking about the 1RKB and the 2RKB. The medical is even more pressing, why a person is on Medical C. Is that person ever going to get a house on Medical C when they have to go to the B, the A and the A+? And even on the A+ there are numbers ... It is to do, as well, with the gravity of the person's illnesses and all that, which should update them. It is one of those things that we are reviewing, but I do not have any problem with what the hon. Member has just said.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful, and certainly my question was about the provision of the public information of the running total. What the hon. Member raises is a different point, on which I can only agree that of course there is always cause for reviewing. Whether or not there should be four lists or there should be two lists is a matter for him. He is in government now and it is for him to decide whether or not these lists work in the way that they are there.

But can I just ask this, because now that it is clear to me that there are many more people than I thought were on the Medical A+ list, and I see from his breakdown that ... Medical A+ is the highest medical priority that can be ascribed in the current system on housing allocation, and I am aware from other cases of people who come to see me that they are deemed to be top priority, if I can put it that way, in a medical sense. So these are people who really have a very strong medical case for allocation of housing, and yet I can see from the breakdown that there are many people who have been classified Medical A+ for some years now. Just going back to 2018, which is five years ago, there are nine people on the list. If I go back to 2019, there are another 10 people, and so on. What steps more precisely is the department taking, so that those people who have been prioritised Medical A+ can be allocated housing? Given the numbers of houses that are being allocated on an annual basis, it seems to me that there is a real drag, and if you have 113 applicants the Government itself has classified as being urgent for allocation, steps need to be taken, but I am not sure steps are being taken in that expeditious way if people are on the list for so many years after the time that they have been deemed to be priority.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, there are many things that happen on the way with the Medical A+. I will just give the hon. Member, since he mentioned 2018 and the number in 2018 ... I can tell the hon. Member that from the 389 people in 2018, there have been people who have been offered houses. They are on the Medical A+, they have issues, a house has been offered to them, but then they come back because they are not living beside their mother or beside their father or for other reasons. It is no longer medical. They say, 'I am not going to that house.' So for

us it becomes a burden to see what is the house that we are going to give that person. That person is probably still there. I have the whole list here. Five of them have refused, of the nine. The other four might have already been given a house or at least are ... Medical A+ houses are specific as well. You have to prepare OT, you have to make sure that there are two or three lifts going up because if there is only one and it breaks down, the person cannot go up to their house. We usually give them a house on the ground floor with ramps. So there are many issues why it takes time. They might be classified Medical A+, but although it is Medical A+, we offer them a house that is probably OT'd and all that, and they refuse to go there. You cannot force anybody to go to that house, and they keep staying on the list and they are ... honestly, not that they are happy where they are, but they seem to want to stay in that house and live as they are there, with carers or doctors going regularly to see them.

So it is not a question of us not trying to help them. We try to help them as much as we can within the parameters. Like I say, the OT is the most important, where every house that a person has as Medical A we have to individually ... It might not be the toilet that they need, it might be the bedroom and the bed where they sleep. So all these things, you have to tick all the boxes specific to the problem that the person has in that Medical A+.

Hon. K Azopardi: I appreciate there may be instances like that, but I have also heard of cases, because people come to see me and speak to me about these things, where they have been offered housing which the people who have accompanied them to see the house, from the Housing Ministry themselves, then verify is not fit for purpose given the person's medical condition. So there are also cases like that, and I am not sure that his generalisation can really speak to the 113 applicants on the Medical A+ list, some of whom have been there for many years. It really does call for greater urgency from the Government to deal with cases which it, itself, has deemed to be priority.

Can I ask him this? He may or may not have this information, but does he have in front of him how many Medical A+ cases were provided housing last year? Does he have that information?

Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker. The list here I do not think will answer the question the hon. Member wants, but I can definitely get it for him and find out from the officials how many exactly we have given as Medical A+. From the list I have here, it seems as if it is earmarked. For example, somebody living in the private sector – so it is not government-to-government – who needs a 2RKB and is in the Medical A+, needing surgery and all that, they have an earmark. That means that they have already identified a house which ... And the hon. Member is also right – sometimes we go to the houses and they are not ready, and it is a problem. We go there and we see, and the doctor says, 'This not adequate.' We have to go back and look for another house and prepare another house. So, yes, that is legitimate as well. But here, for example, I have one that is coming from the private sector, needs a 2RKB, needs to be furnished and prepared, but it is an earmark, and that means that ... Just for the hon. Member, to give him more information, it is supposed to be ready within two weeks from now, that specific one, but obviously there are many more.

Hon. K Azopardi: Obviously I would be grateful for any information the hon. Member can give me and if he can write to me with the information, but to be clear, what I am asking is of the persons allocated housing last year, how many were Medical A+? That is what I am asking. I am not asking about people who may not have been allocated housing or who may be earmarked housing. That is a different question. I am asking specifically, of the people who have been allocated housing in 2022, how many were A+? That is the question that I would like some information on, and the reason I would like it – and this is the supplementary question – is there were 109 people who were allocated housing in 2022. If there are over 100 people on the medical list and presumably there is a similar number on social lists – it is a question that we would need to ask, of course – and then, of course, there are lots of other people on the regular lists, does the Minister agree with me that at that rate of allocation of housing we are really not going to break

down the problem for many years? How does he think at least the people on the medical and social lists can be helped?

Hon. S E Linares: I think we have already gone through that argument, and I do not intend to go through that argument again, Mr Speaker. We have said that with all the affordable homes that we are selling there are a great number of people who will be vacating their houses in the government ... and therefore we will be in a position to allocate those houses very soon. But also the hon. Member must consider that the housing list ... It is not just that there are people waiting for houses – and that is where I go back to the lists, because if somebody is living in a 2RKB and wants a 3RKB because they have one more child, there are others who are in a 4RKB and might want to move to a 2RKB. It does not mean that the 4RKB person really needs a house; they are living comfortably but they want to downgrade.

These are the issues that we are analysing when it comes to looking at lists. It is all very well to say there are 3,000 people waiting for a house. No, that is not correct. There are not so many. Some of them are from a three to a three and they are on the list, and it is classified as that person wants a house. What they want to do is move to where their family is or move because there is more light, or move because they like the area. There are many reasons. It does not mean that the person is in a chaotic state wanting a house. That is why I am doing a review of the lists because I think ... And others have just come on to the housing list that we all consider ... which is they want to buy a house and they go and apply, they get the 150 points normal, they are on the pre-list and we consider them as part of the 3,000 who want a house, and all they want to do is buy.

So looking at the lists is confusing. It is not only confusing, it does not really give the right picture of how many people need homes. That is why we are convinced that once we sell the houses and the affordable homes, we will have a stock where we could then alleviate all this changing about, because again, changing about takes time and we do change – I have explained this before – where somebody wants to move from a three to a three, to a two and a four, and we swap them around, we have to wait for the first one to move out for the second one to move in, and it takes a lot of time. Many times we try to do it as is. That is another way we do it, because then the person who wants to go quickly from one estate to the other ... We say, 'You can either wait for us to fix it or you fix it,' so it is 'as is', we call it, and this makes it quicker because then they go into the house, they can fix the house as they want to – which they usually do anyway, because sometimes we put up all the ... and then they break it all off and start all over again. It makes it quicker to move around.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, if I may, with all due respect, the Hon. Minister is widening it beyond the question that I asked. He is talking now about exchanges and people on the ordinary list and so on and so forth. I was talking about the context. There may be other people on the ordinary list. The fact is that the total number of houses that were allocated last year is 109. I am talking specifically about the medical A+ list. The medical A+ list has 113 people on it. Some people have been on the list ... one of them since 2012, one of them from 2015, others for many years. Presumably not all of those fall into this category of people who do not really need a house and just want to swap here or there. They have been graded by the Government itself as being top priority because of their medical conditions. Those people facing a rate of allocation of housing that is below the number of people on the Medical A+ list, let alone below the total number of people on the housing list, let alone below the total number of people on the social list, will look with concern at the rate of allocation and the argument that somehow this is going to be resolved by the affordable housing projects that are eight years or six years behind schedule.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, I do not agree with his last statement, but I have already offered to the hon. Member that I will give him the information, and I will leave it at that for now.

Q489-90/2023

**Private security on housing estates –
Number where deployed; details of agreements and cost**

Clerk: Question 489/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, at how many housing estates or districts has private security been deployed?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport (Hon. S E Linares): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 490.

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Clerk: Question 490/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what are the terms of agreements entered into with companies or entities for the provision of security in housing estates or districts, how many agreements have been reached, with whom, and what is the cost of services provided by these entities in 2022 and in 2023 up to 8th June 2023?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment, Housing and Sport.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, OSG Security has been contracted to provide security services at Glacis, Laguna and Varyl Begg Estates since 3rd November 2022. The cost of these service for 2022 was £64,657.50 and for 2023 until 8th June is £182,070.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government help me in understanding what is the length of time that the Government envisages these security arrangements will be in place for? Are the agreements, for example, for a specific period or are they being rolled over from time to time to see how things are needed etc? Can the Minister help with that?

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Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, exactly the last part that he says: as and when needed. We thought it was needed now, so we have implemented it now and we will have it there in place until we think it is no longer needed.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Can I understand also, in terms of the actual security, is this providing security on a 24-hour basis? If not, what is the nature of the security? And is the Government solely considering that security is required in those estates for a specific period, or is it that they are intending these as pilot projects to roll out to any other district should it be necessary?

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Hon. S E Linares: No, Mr Speaker, it will not be rolled out. It is not a pilot scheme, it is a specific issue that we were having in these three estates. It is not on a 24-hour basis for all of them, it is as and when needed, so some of them are just rolling in, looking around, and the company, for example, which is OSG, will target ... If there are issues in one estate, they will put more officers in one estate or they will separate them, or they will be monitoring the situation as needed.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, it has been going on now for six or seven months in those areas he has mentioned. Presumably these security arrangements were put in place as a response to concerns on, presumably, antisocial behaviour. Is the Government satisfied that these arrangements are working well or that they are addressing the issues for which they were put in place?

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615 **Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, both. We are addressing the issues and we have realised that by putting in security the issues have subsided slightly and will subside, but we are also taking measures, which take time, to try to see if we can look for at least a medium long-term solution.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Q491/2023

**69-70 Catalan Bay Village –
Progress re development of derelict property**

620 **Clerk:** Question 491/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Why has there been no progress in the development of the derelict property with address at 69-70 Catalan Bay Village?

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

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, this is a private development. The sale of the property was completed on 18th March 2022. The development obtained full planning permission on 5th January 2023.

630 **Hon. D J Bossino:** But was that not originally – if I may, Mr Speaker – government-owned land that was given out to the private developer by way of a tender? Is that not the case? That is the information that I had, and that is why I asked the question as to why there had not been any progress since the tender was granted. In fact, I was told that the tender was granted back in 2016. It seems that that information is correct, but I just set out the question in these terms to give him
635 an opportunity to comment on that information.

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Thank you, Mr Speaker.
I am looking through the list here. The property has gone through a lengthy process. It has been to planning two times, for example. My information is that there were also issues relating to
640 the boundary which delayed the final completion until the boundary had been firmly established, and that in addition to that, there was also an attempt by the successful tenderer and the plot next door to sell the property and be able to have a larger development as a result. So the boundary issues, the potential sale and the fact that it has been to planning more than once accounts for the time taken between the original expression of interest and the final completion
645 of the sale.

Hon. D J Bossino: In terms of the price tag, is the hon. Member able to state how much it received by way of payments as a result of, presumably, the initial tender process? And did the Government, when the matter went to ...? I think he mentioned a second tender process in 2022.
650 Did the price increase as a result of the passage of time?

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Mr Speaker, I am happy to supply that information, but I do not have it here with me. It was a private development. Once the sale was made and the planning permission was granted ... Obviously the Government does not keep an eye on it in that way, but I would be happy
655 to find out the original tender price and supply the hon. Member with that information.

Hon. D J Bossino: And finally, Mr Speaker, in relation to the heritage aspects, does the Government have any concerns in relation to that? It is a very old building. I am not an expert, but I understand it is one of the oldest buildings, if not the oldest remaining standing building in that area. Does the Government have any concerns and has it placed any conditions in order to maintain the inherent heritage value of that particular structure?

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Mr Speaker, I am not aware on my feet of the conditions that may have been attached to the tender, but I do know that it has been through the Development and Planning Commission two times and that that includes the Heritage Trust as part of the panel, so I would assume that in that context they would have taken care to ensure that whatever heritage value it may have has been adequately preserved. But it is not something which I am aware of and I can answer him directly.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q492/2023

**Road to the Lines redevelopment –
Update re commencement**

Clerk: Question 492/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide an update as to when the Road to the Lines scheme will commence at long last.

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

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, it has indeed taken over 30 years to arrive at a credible proposal for the redevelopment of Road to the Lines at no cost to the taxpayer. In March, the Government and the proposed developer agreed all the terms and conditions and an MoU was issued to them for their execution. In May, the Government received a number of proposed changes to the draft agreement from the developer and those are now under consideration.

Hon. D J Bossino: May he say who the proposed developer, as he puts it, is?

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Mr Speaker, the proposed developer is an individual, and his name is Mr O'Connor.

Hon. D J Bossino: I understand that there is still ... 'a bit of work in progress' is the way I would put it. Is he able to provide any detail at this stage by way of a snapshot as to where we are in terms of what the development is likely to comprise?

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Mr Speaker, the last EoI for the site came out in February last year and it closed in March of last year. Between that time and the production of a draft MoU, there have been a number of very detailed and intense negotiations between the Government and the developer through our land property agents, Land Property Services Ltd. I obviously cannot go into the detail of the discussion because there is not an MoU in place at the moment, there is only a draft, but with the developer directly we did arrive at an agreement which was put down in writing as a draft MoU. Then the developer obviously went to his legal adviser for advice on that and a number of changes have been proposed, which, as I said, we are now looking at and the

matter is under consideration. I will be free to give more information once there is a signature on the document.

705 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Finally, Mr Speaker, is he able to provide information in relation to Mr O'Connor? What is his background? I have never heard of that name. I think the sentiment is shared on this side of the House. Surely he is not entering into contractual relations with the Government on a personal basis, but through an entity; and if that is the case, is he able to state which entity it is?

710 **Hon. Dr J J Garcia:** Mr Speaker, I do not want to give too much information. Obviously, this is an individual, but he has a track record of this kind of development in the United Kingdom. He is represented by Sir Peter Caruana, who has obviously taken on the question of giving him advice. So the Government is satisfied that this is somebody who is serious and who is able to deliver.

715 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, if I may, just to expand on the answer he gave in relation to the identity of this individual, may I ask for his full name?

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Mr Speaker, Mr Lee O'Connor.

720 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EDUCATION

Q493/2023

Pupils suspended from school since January 2023 – Numbers and reasons

Clerk: Question 493/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

725 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details in respect of the number of pupils, together with generic reasons, who have been suspended from school since January 2023, indicating the school sector where the pupil is enrolled?

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

730 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, 35 students have been suspended from school since January 2023 and they are all from secondary school. The main reasons are being verbally and physically aggressive to other students and members of staff, teasing and being significantly unkind to others, and disruption and significant non-compliance.

735 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, thanks for that answer. The answer said 35 pupils. Perhaps the way I had phrased the question ... Does that refer to only 35 incidents occurring, or more incidents because unfortunately some pupils tend to be repeat offenders, if one wants to use that general word? I do not know if the Minister has been provided with that information.

740 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the information I have is that it is 35 students. There is a process, so there may have been more instances and the first one may have led to a warning or engagement with parents or whatever, but the information I have is that it is 35 students. If that

is not correct and it is 35 instances, I would have thought that I would have been told. In any case, if I am corrected, I will, as ever, let the hon. Member know.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful for the generic reasons. Does the Minister have any details? There are instances of perhaps physical aggression towards others. Have any of these resulted in the matter having been referred to, for example, the police authority and so on, or has it all been able to be dealt with and contained just within the school and its system, whatever falls under exclusively the control of the Director of Education?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, there are instances in which the Police will be informed. Often they come by way of support, perhaps talking to the parents, and rarely does this escalate to possible arrests. I do have recollection of one instance where this may have happened, but I am not certain that that is since January this year. I have no recent memory or recollection of any case which was taken further by the Police, but there may have been attendance by the Police if the head teacher felt that it was serious enough to have some kind of police presence in order to both show the pupil the seriousness of the incident and also to perhaps ensure that the parents know that the instance has been serious. But I have no direct information as to anything escalating further, certainly in the period that covers this question.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q494/2023
Wellbeing Support team –
Access by teachers/instructors

Clerk: Question 494/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide a breakdown for the year 2023 showing the number of teachers/instructors who have accessed the services provided by the Wellbeing Support team, indicating the school sector in which these teachers/instructors are employed?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the figures for seeing people in one to ones, with an average of three sessions per person, are: primary, 21 teachers; and secondary, 11 teachers.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, does the Minister have any concerns as such? When we look at figures that he has given us in answer to other questions relating to periods prior to 2023, my first analysis is that the number of teachers/instructors having to access the service does not seem to be declining. I do not know if the Minister has any information. The numbers are not declining. Does the Minister have perhaps any ...? In one of his footnotes, the reasons why ... I suppose these figures are up to the end of May, or whatever, so in five months, one and a half terms' worth, they could sound a bit too big. I am asking the Minister for Education. Perhaps I am looking into it and over reacting. The number of teachers/instructors, being 32, seems to be a high-ish number, but I await his explanation or enlightenment.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the thing is that it is difficult to apportion this to any cause because they will be seeing members of the Wellbeing Support team for reasons which may be very private and very personal and not at all related to the workplace. If there are concerns related

790 to the workplace, normally that would be dealt with as well through the senior leadership teams in the school, but out of a staff of close on 500 – over 400 – you would expect there would be some who have some kind of issue.

795 We are, of course, aware of the increasing incidence of mental health issues throughout the community. Some apportion it to COVID, some to long COVID, others to the increasing complexity of life in the 21st century. I do not read anything into it, but I do not *not* read anything into it; I am pretty neutral. I am just glad that these teachers are able to have the support of the Wellbeing Team and I am told that they do an excellent job.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q495/2023

**St Mary's, Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor's Meadow Schools –
Schooling during move to new premises**

Clerk: Question 495/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

800 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government explain why no alternative schooling programmes are being offered to pupils of St Mary's, Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor's Meadow Schools during the 10 school days these schools will be closed due to moving into their new premises?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the schools will be closed for pupils for six days this term and one day next term, not for 10 days.

810 On most of the occasions that this Government has opened new schools — and it has built many — it has been necessary to provide a number of days for the staff to complete the move and to prepare the classrooms and specialist rooms for the start of term. On this occasion the closure will be less than it has been on others. No alternative arrangements have been provided in past years.

815 Clearly the Government and the Department of Education, as well as the schools, understand that this will be difficult for some families, even though these families appreciate the importance of this time and welcome the brand new schools. However, as has been announced already, the GSLA will be commencing its programme of summer activities to coincide with this period in order to assist families in this position.

820 I would like to sincerely thank my friend and colleague the Hon. Steven Linares for making these very welcome arrangements. Thank you, Steven.

825 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful for the answer, Mr Speaker. For your benefit, the deadline for filing these questions was actually before the GSLA made the announcement that they were going to do that, so it has avoided the need for any follow-up supplementary questions where I would have asked the Minister had he considered working alongside our other hon. Member.

All I can say is I wish all the best to the GSLA in having taken this on, and I wish all the best to parents and grandparents who, like myself, are often called upon for free, gratis and for-nothing services.

Q496/2023

**Hassan Centenary Terraces –
School catchment areas**

830 **Clerk:** Question 496/2023. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of the school catchment areas residents of Hassan Centenary Terraces will fall under as from September 2023?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, to date, no pupils enrolled have provided Hassan Centenary Terraces as their residential address on our official records. Parents are required to provide documentary evidence that they reside at the stated address and this is clearly not possible until families move into their new homes. We have also not had any new enrolments with this prospective address. Enrolment forms require parents to provide the current residential address of the child, so Hassan Centenary Terraces is anticipated as an address once families move into their new abode.

840 We have, however, received a number of transfer requests for pupils currently enrolled in our schools, or who will be joining our schools in September, whose parents or carers have cited an upcoming move to Hassan Centenary Terraces as a reason for their school transfer request. All of these transfer requests have been facilitated.

845 It is anticipated that pupils with an address at Hassan Centenary Terraces will be allocated Notre Dame and St Anne's Schools as their lower and upper primary schools.

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

Yes, it makes sense that the Minister is saying no one has a utilities bill yet, but if the timetables are proved to provide the fruition they are meant to, as from July people will be signing up for water and electricity and the rates bills will certainly start to come in for that area. The Minister has clarified that those families who are already anticipating that ... those requests have so far been successful and have been able to be met, so it is a question of first come, first served because as and when some may be able to move in quite quickly, others may require a bit more time to move into their houses.

860 I wish the Department of Education the best of luck because they might receive requests ... Having worked in that Department, I know what it is like. Parents can say, 'At the end of the autumn term can my child, as from January, move to this school?' and it provides not only physical logistical problems but the educational programmes ... If I can be of any assistance to the Minister I certainly will, and I hope there are enough spaces left in those schools to cater for the students who will reside in that area.

865 **Mr Speaker:** I must remind the hon. Member that he needs to ask a question.

Hon. E J Reyes: Sorry. Will the Minister ensure this House that he will keep on monitoring the requests, so that they will take stock and, if need be, plan ahead for further schools for that area in the future as demands increase?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, the Department is anticipating that there will be requests and is confident that they will be able to meet most of them.

875 Do remember that there will be cases in which, because they are young families moving to these homes, they will have the extended family network, and sometimes families prefer to have their children close to their grandparents, so perhaps there will not be as many requests as we would expect, but this will sort itself out as people settle into their new homes.

Q497-99/2023

Vaping –

Policy re children, consultation with schools and measures in place; disposal/recycling

Clerk: Question 497/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

880 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state its policy on vaping use by children aged 11 to 17?

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

885 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 498 and 499.

Clerk: Question 498/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

890 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm what communication it has had with schools in relation to vaping issues, and if it has, could the Government inform the House what has been determined and what measures have been put in place to discourage children from vaping?

895 **Clerk:** Question 499/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government state its policy on the disposal/recycling of single-use plastic vapes given the restrictions in the past on plastic bags, plastic cutlery and straws?

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

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the Government banned vaping by children in December last year and is considering banning the importation of disposable plastic vapes.

905 Schools strive to foster an awareness in pupils of both civic pride and healthy living. Schools also continually reinforce the importance of our choices and of the impact these have on those with whom we interact. Schools are keen to ensure their environments are welcoming, clean and safe for all of their pupils. Educating our young people is key to promoting healthier mindsets and behaviours. In addition to the ongoing curriculum focus on developing healthy lifelong habits, schools continue to discourage children from vaping through assemblies, small focus groups and, where appropriate and necessary, communication with parents. The Department of Education
910 continues to work closely with colleagues in Public Health Gibraltar.

In recent months, a pupil survey on vaping has been conducted across secondary schools, in collaboration with the University. The data are currently being analysed and the results of the survey will be publicly available in the next month. The survey has been supported by educational
915 talks, which are ongoing, which are delivered by public health officers directly in the schools, in which the teenagers are directly involved, and by providing useful learning tools to our teachers.

Vaping-focused professional development courses were offered to all school staff in the Education: 2023 CPD event at the end of March.

920 Additionally, the extra CCTV cameras which have been installed in both secondary schools to focus on the communal areas in the vicinity of the toilet block entrances have resulted in a decrease in the number of reports about vaping by pupils. When pupils are found vaping, schools will meet with parents and pupils to reinforce the school's values of civic pride and healthy living, and apply age and context-appropriate consequences in an effort to work constructively towards promoting appropriate behaviour.

925 This topic has been covered in other multi-agency meetings, such as the Child Protection Committee, and there is clear, strong legislation in place demonstrating the Government's determination to continue to tackle the issue of vaping in teenagers with all available resources.

930 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, there is quite a bit to unpack there, but in relation to Question 497, the Government's policy on vaping, the Minister said that they were currently considering an outright ban of the importation of vapes in Gibraltar. Clearly there is a public health issue with that very suggestion because, as he knows, the Director of Public Health has said at general meetings of the public that in fact vaping for those addicted to nicotine and smoking is actually very helpful. That said, people taking up vaping for the first time is actually ... We do not
935 know the long-term effects generally vaping can have on older people. I just wondered, in relation to the outright ban, what considerations are currently before the Government insofar as that is concerned.

940 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, as the Director of Public Health has said, vaping is better than smoking for people who are wanting to give up smoking, but very much worse than not smoking and not vaping for young children. The consideration we are giving and the legislation that is being drafted is for prohibiting the importation of single-use disposable vapes, not vaping as a whole. These are the ones that are more accessible to children. They are the colourful, fun-looking ones and the ones that also end up not being recycled, and therefore they are the ones
945 we are targeting now and not vapes as a whole.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that clarification. That is an important clarification, of course, given last month Prof. Sir Christopher Whitty had written in *The Times* – I think he may be aware of that article, and indeed it was released on the UK government's website
950 – where he went into some detail as to the shameful practices of those companies that are selling these colourful fruity-flavoured vapes. I appreciate those are the ones that I think the Government wishes to attack, but what consideration ...? The main purpose of this report in the United Kingdom, which we have all been looking at, is that the government is attacking the marketing of these specific devices. What steps is the Government taking in relation to the marketing of those?
955 I can appreciate the ones that the children are attracted to – the colourful ones, the fruity-flavour ones. Generally speaking, these devices have a lot of marketing around them that attract people and attract addiction, which of course Prof. Whitty has characterised as shameful, generally speaking. I wonder what initiatives the Government has in place insofar as the marketing of these specific devices is concerned.

960 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I assume the hon. Member means marketing the ones that we are not thinking of making illegal.

965 **Hon. E J Phillips:** *[Inaudible]*

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: The ones that we will be allowed to import. Yes. Well, this is like discouraging smoking and it is something that is being addressed by the Public Health team. I do not have details of the campaign that they are preparing, but as and when they develop it, I am sure they will pick it up from the media, and I would be happy to answer questions in future on that specifically.
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Hon. E J Phillips: A few more questions, if I may, Mr Speaker. Insofar as illegal vapes, of course those can be very dangerous. They contain, he may well know, nickel and lead, which would damage not only young lungs but the brains of children. I assume that is all part of the same package of protection and measures that the Government will introduce in terms of legislation to
975 prevent those illegal vapes finding their way on to our streets. That is the first question.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, sir. The fact that the legislation is being drafted means that there is quite an extensive exercise being carried out in order to pick out all these dangers so that we can deal with them in one go.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Just one final question. In relation to the data that has been collected from the secondary schools, there is a clear trend in European countries and, indeed, the United Kingdom, where vaping has gone up to, I think, 9% from 6%, as far as I understand from the report ... Just from his cursory examination – I know there is still analysis being done on the figures, so I am not going to hold him to it – are we seeing a similar trend in use by our students at schools?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I held a meeting with the Public Health team last Friday and there was a very superficial discussion on the results. I did not see the results myself, but sadly I believe the percentage is higher here than what we have seen in some of those other studies. Whether the methodology was the same or not is something that is part of the data analysis, but if we just take the figures on their own I believe that they are higher than the ones that the hon. Member has described, which is concerning and is something that clearly flavours the way we deal with it.

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Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for the answer. I know that sometimes the Minister has given standard responses to our questions, and obviously we do not want to start a debate on a subject as important as this, but that is an alarming disclosure by the Government that we seem to have a very significant problem with our young people using vapes. It would be very helpful to know if there are any other measures that the schools can deploy to try to weed this out of our secondary schools.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I have covered everything that I have to say on that. Clearly, I have mentioned that I believe, from recollection of my meeting on Friday, that it is higher, but I cannot now confirm how much higher and whether I may have got it wrong. I think I have got it right and I think it is. I was alarmed when I heard, but I would not like this to pre-empt the fact that we are going to be releasing all the stats within the next few weeks and clearly we will all have an opportunity to comment then.

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Mr Speaker: One final supplementary from the Hon. Roy Clinton.

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

If I may ask the Minister, I noticed in his response that he mentioned that one of the measures that the schools have taken is putting CCTV outside the toilets. I have heard anecdotally that in the comprehensives there is a particularly bad problem with vaping in the toilets. I wonder whether the Minister has considered something as simple as the airlines do, where they have smoke detectors within the toilets.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: It is not something that we have considered. We are trying to resolve the problem in this way, but it is certainly something that can be looked at. How sensitive smoke detectors are to vapes I do not know, Mr Speaker, I am not an expert, but certainly it is something that we can look into.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q500/2023
Littering fines –
Number since 1st January 2023

Clerk: Question 500/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Government confirm the number of littering fines imposed between 1st January 2023 to the date of this question?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the litter wardens have placed 51 fines since 1st January 2023.

Q501/2023
Barbary macaques –
Population number

Clerk: Question 501/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Now for potentially his favourite question. Can the Government state Gibraltar's macaque population?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, approximately 215.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have a split by pack number?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Not here, Mr Speaker. I can provide that, but I do not have that information here.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, insofar as the numbers, does he have any further information in the prepared answer relating to that number being significantly lower than previous years? My understanding is that we had a total Barbary macaque population of over 300. I was wondering what are the reasons for that figure being at 215, if I am right on that.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the population, if it was 300, is a long time ago. More recent figures are published in our statistical reports. They have been above 200 for quite some time. They are now lower, and that is largely as a result of a successful campaign to sterilise key females surgically. It is done by the vet under anaesthesia; essentially, the tubes are cut. They carry on behaving normally and keep their role within the pack, but they cannot have any young. So the birth rate has dropped significantly, and when then you consider the natural wastage – unfortunately, one of the main causes of death is roadkill – that has meant that the population is stabilising. Now, whereas we used to have packs having eight, nine, 10 births per pack, we are down to perhaps two or three a year and that has stabilised the population.

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one further question on this. Is the Minister at all concerned about the population, given the sterilisation processes that are engaged here? Without digging up some of

1065 the old history of our community insofar as the relevance of the Barbary macaque, are there any concerns that the population might dwindle further?

1070 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Mr Speaker. The aim – and I have been working in this line since long before I was ever dreaming of being a Minister, if ever I dreamt of being a Minister – has always been just under 200, between 180 and 200. We are almost there. No, I am not worried, because even though this type of sterilisation is not reversible, not all females in every pack are ever sterilised and there will always be some that will have young. If there was a noticeable decline in population which was alarming – say they dropped to below 170 – we would stop sterilising, and then as new females came into the right age, they would carry on reproducing.

1075 I think we have – or the team, not me anymore. The team has, I think, a good handle on the situation and I am confident that it is stable but it is not at risk. So we will not have to do a Winston Churchill and bring them over from Chefchaouen.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q502/2023
Bathing water –
Method of testing

1080 **Clerk:** Question 502/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm how it tests the quality of our bathing waters?

1085 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

1090 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the Environment (Quality of Bathing Water) Regulations require the monitoring of two microbiological indicators of faecal contamination: e-coli and intestinal enterococci. The choice of these indicators reflects recognition that faecal material, for instance due to sewage contamination, is the primary health threat to bathers. Acceptable levels for intestinal enterococci are 185 cfu/l or less and 500 cfu/l or less for e-coli. Any analysis results higher than these result in the water quality being deemed low water quality. The frequency of sampling is monthly outside of the bathing season, November to March, and every two weeks, recently increased to weekly, during the bathing season, April to October.

1095 The Environmental Agency uploads sample results for all beaches and other bathing areas as soon as results are received from the Public Health Analyst. Results are made entirely available to the public on the Environmental Agency website. Following the OS35 incident, extra samples were carried out for heavy metals and hydrocarbons.

1100 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful to the Minister for the answer. I know the Minister and I had a fairly volatile debate on television in relation to some of these aspects and he did pull out the chart that described and characterised all of our waters as being good, and I think we have improved at Western Beach anyway. Is there any advantage to testing the water column in Gibraltar, in terms of depth? My understanding is that that would be a clearer testing process to ascertain the real quality of those waters.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, there is ample sampling of the water column for all sorts of contaminants, but that is done outside, at sea, to look at the quality of our waters in general. Again, those results are published and I have seen no cause for concern in them.

These are specifically waters on our beaches, which is where people will swim, so I think there is no need, for the purpose of our beaches, to test the water column, because that would not be a reflection of the state of the water that you are going to be swimming in. We are following the protocols as set out in the EU directive, so I am satisfied that this would pick up any contamination, as it has done in the past. We have used the same methodology for many years, and to quote the chart, which I should have brought, to show everybody how beautiful our waters are now, so I missed a trick there ... As I showed on that chart on television, the water quality has now improved tremendously, so that all our waters are excellent except for Western Beach, which is good, which is much better than it has been in the past, and we all know that is for reasons outside our direct control.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q503 and 506/2023

Illegal fishing –

Number of prosecutions; repair of enforcement vessels

Clerk: Question 503/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many prosecutions have been conducted as from 1st January 2015 in relation to illegal fishing in our waters?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 506.

Mr Speaker: Question 506 will be asked by the Hon. Mr Phillips on behalf of the Hon. Daniel Feetham.

Clerk: Question 506/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips on behalf of the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, in the light of the answer to Question 384/2023, have the Environmental Agency vessels now been repaired so that the laws on the prohibition of fishing with nets in BGTW which this Government introduced can be enforced?

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

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the Environmental Agency does not have any vessels, but I am sure the hon. Member meant the Department of the Environment's Environmental Protection and Research Unit, now known as EPRU. I can confirm that one vessel has been repaired and is now operational, namely the RHIB *Razorbill*.

In answer to the other question, a total of 40 individuals have been reported since 2015 in relation to illegal fishing under the Nature Protection Act 1991, the Marine Protection Regulations 2014 and the Tuna Preservation Regulations 2014, altogether. This is broken down into seven under the Nature Protection Act 1991 and 33 under the Marine Protection Regulations and the Tuna Preservation Regulations 2014.

1155 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Does the Hon. Minister have any information about the breakdown between the seven and the 30? It is 7/34, right? Thirty-three, so a further breakdown of the 33. Are they mainly tuna contraventions?

1160 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I have some notes here. Seven individuals have been or are in the process of being reported for offences under the Nature Protection Act, of which four specifically relate to fishing with nets. Of these, one has a warrant of arrest pending for failing to appear at the Magistrates Court, one was fined £1,800 by the Magistrates Court, one was deemed not guilty by the Magistrates Court, and one is presently in process. There were three specifically for having illegally collected protected species, namely Mediterranean ribbed limpets and spider crabs. Of the 33 individuals, they range from fishing without a permit to catching undersized fish.

1165 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have the nationality of those individuals that have been prosecuted for contravening our laws?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I do, Mr Speaker. Let me say that the vast majority are not local.

1170 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, from our analysis, I think that amounts to approximately five prosecutions for every year for the last eight in relation to this particular question, and that is split across Nature Protection Act contraventions and marine and tuna contraventions. What does the Hon. Minister have to say about that? Five a year for the last eight – does he feel that is woeful?

1175 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, it is a vast improvement on anything that ever happened before because there was never a flavour for protecting our marine life until this Government came into office. I do not have to tell the hon. Member – who, although he dismissively defined me as ‘a professor of birds and bees’ I think he said, I respectfully referred to him as a lawyer – precisely because he is a lawyer, he should be aware that the number of prosecutions and successful prosecutions is not necessarily directly related to the amount of enforcement.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I accept that end note that he has placed on that, and I am sure that there are many instances where vessels have been warned by our law enforcement agencies. I do not deny that has happened. Of course, more recently there have been significant concerns about the level of resources that we have. He talks in his answer about the *Razorbill* that has been recently repaired. I am not too sure of the name of the other vessel, but it is obviously out of service. Does he not agree with me that having two important vessels out at sea enforcing our laws is the right approach, and if they do need to be resourced and tooled up even more in terms of the powers that can be provided to them, they should be, because our laws should be respected by locals and indeed foreigners?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Member has to remember – perhaps he has forgotten, but I do not think he was here when we started – that this unit has been created by us from absolutely nothing, and therefore all the resources that we have, no matter how small they may be, are thanks to us. I must add that yes, clearly it is unfortunate that both ... The other vessel, by the way, is the *Storm Petrel*, and that is no longer in commission, but as I also said publicly, the *Osprey* will be arriving soon.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Just one final question, for all those individuals in our community who are concerned about this particular activity and breaches of our laws, particularly those relating to nature protection, marine and tuna: is he satisfied, therefore, with the last eight years in terms of the work being done in relation to the protection of our environment and any prosecutions they have had? Is he satisfied with the number?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker. The hon. Member is indeed calling for the implementation of GSLP Liberal Government policy as opposed to the GSD policy, which was to do absolutely nothing. So he is encouraging us to carry out our policies. I now assume that he is clearly supporting the GSLP Liberal Government in this. (*Interjection*)

I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the current level of enforcement of our marine laws is better than it has ever been, and it is more effective than people even want to imagine. The fact that there have not been that number of prosecutions and that number of fines does not mean that the instances of contravention of our marine laws, now that we have them, has not decreased tremendously in recent years. Evidence of that is the fact that marine life has responded and now we have a large number of marine species living happily in our waters, which was not the case before. As I am a professor of birds and bees, I can mention grey herons, which are now regularly in our waters, fishing throughout the year, particularly in winter; great cormorants; and the population of the green cormorant, which is a very rare species only found in Gibraltar and not for many miles around the Iberian coast, has increased and is greater than ever before. We have even had an otter resident in our harbour for over a period of a year. Those facts speak for themselves, as does this professor of birds and bees.

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for the indulgence. Just one question. He bases his analysis on the work that the EPRU may do at sea in relation to warning vessels about breaches of our laws, for example. He talks about that and talks about the number of prosecutions, and I can probably take from the answer that he is generally satisfied with the work that we are doing in our community. But none of the officers who are out at sea are trained to prepare dockets for prosecution; neither are they trained insofar as the handing out of fixed penalty notices to locals or foreigners who contravene our laws. How does he reconcile the two? You have to resource and train individuals to enforce the law, but they do not have the requisite training or skills to do that.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member is clearly directly criticising the ability of public officers to carry out their duties, and I suppose that reflects those who clearly also have conversations with him.

I am satisfied with the commitment of these staff. They have received extensive on-the-job training in things like rescuing, citations, safety at sea and all other sorts of training that is provided to a large range of law enforcement officers. I am satisfied that they perform their duties and therefore I take exception, as the Minister responsible for them, that this hon. Member has criticised their ability as public officers.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q504-05/2023

Ammunition jetty –

Plans and whether wave energy project abandoned

Clerk: Question 504/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it has now abandoned the wave energy project?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 505.

Clerk: Question 505/2023. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what plans it has for the ammunition jetty?

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

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, at present there are no plans for the ammunition jetty.

The Government has not abandoned wave energy as a potential renewable energy option for Gibraltar. Unfortunately, this specific pilot project did not yield the result we had hoped for.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister says it was a third party from a sedentary position. *(Interjection)* Well, in fact, it had government support. There was a huge fanfare around wave energy that the hon. Gentlemen across the floor supported. Of course, we would all support something that does that. *(Interjections)* Let's get to the question, then. *(Interjections)* Mr Isola is sat down, as always, shouting from afar, uttering something that we do not want to hear.

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But anyway, Mr Speaker, the question was in relation to abandoning the wave energy project. If anyone walks past the ammunition jetty, it has clearly been left to rot. It is actually quite a beautiful view of our Rock and our ammunition jetty, which should be repaired or at least developed, so what is the Government going to do about that – leave it to rot further?

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the ammunition jetty has nothing to do with the Ministry for the Environment. It is part of the general set of land assets of the Government of Gibraltar. The hon. Gentleman will, I assume, know the history of the ammunition jetty and why it was built. We no longer have a need for the ammunition jetty. In other words, the hon. Gentleman knows why the ammunition jetty was built. He knows that the volatility of explosives today is different. He knows that there is a blast circle around the Z berth down at the dockyard at the South Mole, and he knows that blast circle, because of the new volatility, which is relevant to explosives today, not at the time of the Bedenham is not what it used to be. It is unlikely to blast the windows in the city and therefore we do not need an ammunition jetty on the Eastside.

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We have not, as the Hon. Minister said to him, abandoned either the ammunition jetty nor the wave-to-energy project, because it was not ours to abandon. It was something that was proposed to the Government as an experiment that somebody wanted to do here. All we needed to do was say yes or no. If we said yes, we supported it. If we said no, we did not support it. If we had said no, the Opposition would have said, 'This is terrible, this is an opportunity to try wave power and you have not supported the opportunity, at no cost to the taxpayer, to see whether it works or not.' We said yes. So they were waiting for us to say, when the time came, whether the company wanted to continue or not, whether we supported them not continuing their experiment, or not, to say, 'Ah, you have abandoned the project.' This is the classic damned if you do, damned if you do not.

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We believe it was right to support an Israeli entity wanting to use Gibraltar as a test bed for this technology. We believe it is right to attract that opportunity, and if you want to attract that opportunity, what you cannot do is when they tell you they have finished the experiment, fine them, require them to carry on etc. So we have not abandoned anything. The experiment is over. The results are very interesting. They will continue to benefit the opportunities for this sort of technology going forward.

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What was being done at the ammunition jetty before this experiment? Nothing, because we were no longer using it to munition our fleet of war-going ships. We have no plans for the fleet of war-going ships for which we are responsible. We have no need for the ammunition jetty. To repair a jetty on that side of Gibraltar would cost – and he should hold on to Mr Clinton's hand whilst I say this – millions of pounds, for no commercial purpose whatsoever.

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1300 So I am very sorry to say that we have neither abandoned that project nor abandoned the
ammunition jetty. We have continued to see the ammunition jetty develop as it was when it was
handed over to us in their time, or in our time, or in anybody else's time. But what I would say is
that the ammunition jetty is part of the history of Gibraltar. It is part of the crumbling history of
1305 Gibraltar. Part of the history of Gibraltar has to crumble. It is natural because otherwise it is not
the history of Gibraltar. Otherwise, what we would have is a new ammunition jetty, because we
have to literally rebuild it from scratch. The foundations have completely gone. It was not built for
a thousand years. We were not the thousand-year Reich. It was built for when it was needed, and
it is no longer needed, but the history of Gibraltar includes that this is the place where James Bond
1310 was born, that Operation Goldeneye was the operation to protect Gibraltar from the invasion of
the Nazis, and that *Thunderball* is based on the Italians coming to attack Gibraltar. 007 is part of
the history of Gibraltar, but we cannot spend millions repairing the ammunition jetty, and we have
not abandoned that project.

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one question in relation to the wave energy project. Given the fact that
1315 the Government has not abandoned it – or at least the individuals concerned, the company
concerned that was investigating, the Israeli company – what steps are being taken to reintroduce
the project elsewhere in Gibraltar?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, this is not our project. As the Chief Minister has said and
1320 repeated several times, it is not our project. In fact, we did not abandon it. I suppose you could
say it abandoned us. I repeat what the Chief Minister said. They finished the experiment, they got
the conclusions they wanted, they are trying that technology elsewhere with more or less success,
depending on a number of factors, but the experiment finished and we were very happy to be a
part of it.

1325 Wave power, unfortunately, at the moment has not got the technological advancement that
the whole world would like, and this was part of a process of achieving it. If part of this helped
them in improving the output and one day they can come back and provide wave energy here –
clearly not on the ammunition jetty – then fine, but it is not our project, it never was our project.
We have said this many times. I have answered many questions on this and I have always
1330 explained it was not a government project, it was a private pilot project which the Government
was very keen to support and correctly did so.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q507/2023
Eastern Beach –
Provision of beach for summer season

Clerk: Question 507/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.
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Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Government satisfied that it will deliver a beach at Eastern Beach,
instead of a construction site, in time for summer season 2023?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.
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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, yes, sir, it did.

1345 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, is he telling the House that it is no longer a construction site? It certainly does not look like that when one visits the area. Is he able to therefore state that a completion certificate and a certificate of fitness have been issued?

1350 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I do not know what he wants a certificate of fitness for. It is not for me to ask him questions, but it is an answer that I certainly cannot give. He should clarify what certificate of fitness he is referring to. The beach is a beach – El Mar de Levante, in case the hon. Member is not clear.

1355 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The hon. Member is playing games. It is obvious that there is heavy construction going on at Eastern Beach. There are stores on the promenade. I would have thought that would have been obvious to him. The question arose from that, if that helps him by way of assistance.

1360 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman should understand that a certificate of fitness is relevant to the structure, not to the area around the structure, and the beach is the area around the structure. So if what he is saying is have certificates of fitness been issued in respect of the stores that have been built, well, the stores that have been built, as far as I am concerned, are not yet complete; the construction has paused now. There is no need for a certificate of fitness for the beach by any stretch of the imagination.

1365 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** May I add, Mr Speaker, if the hon. Member wanted to know whether a certificate of fitness had been issued, he should have asked that question specifically, and then the appropriate Minister would have had a prepared answer. The answer I have given refers to the beach, not a store which may or may not require a certificate of fitness. That would have to be another question.

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Mr Speaker: Would the hon. Member wish to clarify and ask a supplementary?

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I have already clarified. The hon. Member knows where I was coming from. It was obvious why I was asking the question.

1375 The beach is a veritable construction site. By any stretch of the imagination, it cannot be seen to be considered a usable beach, certainly some parts of it. Now that he knows where I was coming from, is he able to answer the question that I posed?

1380 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I answered the question already. I said yes, sir, it did.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q508/2023
Construction site dust –
Measures to control

Clerk: Question 508/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1385 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What measures are in place to control the emission of dust at construction sites?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Environment (Control of Dust) Regulations seek to prevent, reduce or control dust emissions from the following activities or operations: dismantling or demolition of buildings; construction works and excavations; refurbishment works; mining, road building and all other engineering works; processing or stockpiling of solid bulk materials, including sand, grit, gravel, rock, dirt, sawdust and ash; operation of machines, equipment or vehicles; operation and use of unpaved land for any purpose whatsoever; and any agricultural or horticultural activity or process.

Any person undertaking any of the above activities or operations must apply for a certificate of approval from the Environmental Agency. A dust control plan must accompany the application and it is recommended that the dust control plan incorporates the recommendations contained in the 'Dust – Best Practice Guide' produced by the Department of the Environment and Climate Change.

The dust control plan details the types of activities the company proposes to carry out and describes the methods which will be used to prevent or reduce dust emissions as far as is reasonably practicable. This document is submitted to the Environmental Agency and if approved, the company receives a certificate of approval to operate. It is an offence to undertake such activity or operation without a valid certificate of approval.

Examples of typical dust mitigation measures include: adequate wheel washing facilities on site entrance and exit; frequent wetting down of vehicle driving routes with a bowser; frequent dampening of stockpiles; all material delivered must be damp on arrival, for example at Victoria Keys; contractors are to be advised to wet down the material prior to loading their trucks and not just to hose down the surface; all trucks entering a site must be covered and secured with a suitable tarpaulin or dust cover; dampening of material prior to being crushed – where there is crushing, clearly; and equipment with integrated water suppression.

Environmental health officers proactively visit construction sites around Gibraltar to monitor compliance with dust control plans. Environmental health officers may issue a prohibition notice on an activity or operation when they are not satisfied that the dust control plan is being implemented, resulting in dust emissions. The notice will state the matters that need to be addressed and the timeframe to comply with the notice. In 2022 one prohibition notice was issued and in 2023 one company was cautioned for not properly implementing their dust control plan.

Plumes of dust and concerns regarding dust from construction and other such activities can and should be reported to the Environmental Agency for investigation.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, this question arises from complaints that I have received in relation to a particular construction site, but it is widespread around Gibraltar given the amount of construction that is going on. Is he satisfied that the measures which are in place – and that is what the question was – are being properly enforced? He talks about only one notice being issued in 2022. Would he not have expected the number to have been higher? Does he have a comment in relation to that, or does he think that all the construction companies are very well behaved in this area?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, once again, the fact that only one prohibition notice was issued does not mean that there was no engagement with people who may have been in contravention or may not have satisfied the Environmental Agency. There will be a proactive approach, as I mentioned in my answer. They will visit the site, they will give advice, they will ask them to improve their performance – on repeated infractions, clearly the next step will be taken – and they are free to take whatever step they wish to take against any generator of dust. Therefore, I am satisfied with the professionalism of the environmental health officers dealing with these situations. That the answer to that, Mr Speaker, is yes.

1440 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, can he tell the House how many environmental health officers he has available to his department to deploy in order to enforce this, and is he satisfied with that number?

1445 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I do not have that figure off the top of my head, so the answer is no. They have, I think, a sizeable number, they cover a lot of area – and they are not constantly knocking on my door asking for more resources and that must say something. I have every confidence in their ability to perform all the duties that Gibraltar relies upon them to perform.

1450 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, the issue was not their ability but the number and the ability, therefore, to enforce.

Is he able to provide any information before 2022? He has provided information in relation to the notice issued in 2022 and he mentioned something in relation to this year. Is able to provide information prior to that year?

1455 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I will, if I am asked, and I can certainly look up the information without having to wait for a question if the hon. Member would be so kind as to remind me.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q509/2023
Governor's Parade –
Rubbish collection point

1460 **Clerk:** Question 509/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the construction of a rubbish collection point at Governor's Parade the Government's idea of renovation of this area?

1465 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, no, sir, it is a positive response to the calls by businesses on Main Street for larger refuse stores, so that they are better able to dispose of their rubbish without cluttering the street.

1470 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And I am sure that is the case, Mr Speaker, but weren't other options considered? It is quite a big area, and I think once constructed it will prove a source of defacement, I would say, of the area, such a large rubbish collection point. Were other options not available to the Government? For example, I understand that there is a large underground area in that square.

1475 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, other options were considered. It is very difficult to find locations for refuse cubicles. Nobody wants them on their patch and it is difficult to find places for them.

1480 Yes, indeed, there is a space underground, which I believe may have been used as an air-raid shelter in years gone by. We did explore that, but unfortunately at some stage a previous administration – and I do not know which one – in restoring that area, or providing the car park or whatever, sealed the entrances and therefore there is no easy access, we would have to dig, and there are no stairs so it would have to be a vertical approach. So it was considered and not

found practicable. It would also have been extremely expensive to open that space up. So we did consider it, but it was not practicable. But there was a great deal of pressure from the business community to improve. You see, Mr Speaker, we are trying to get the business community to work with us in improving cleanliness on Main Street, but they constantly came to us and said, 'Yes, of course we can do it, but we need more space.' This is one of the spaces being provided.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, finally, does he not agree with me that in fact this is not an issue as to whether people do not want that type of thing on their own patch, it is something which is a complete and utter eyesore? It is not going to produce particularly pleasant smells in an area which should have been the subject of urban renewal. As he himself said ... I think, in answer to one of my questions at the previous session of the House he cited Governor's Parade as an area which he said under his watch he had beautified.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, no matter what we do to review our urban space, we need to dispose of rubbish. Clearly we have improved that area, the area certainly to the north of the area that the hon. Member is referring to. If we were to, at some stage, embark on a wider beautification of the area, we would need to re-provide or incorporate these cubicles in some way.

I must point out that this went through the planning process and therefore had the approval of the Development and Planning Commission, which obviously considered the need for this kind of cubicle, because the community requires areas in which to dispose of refuse.

Hon. D J Bossino: Once this is constructed, unless I am guessing the finished product wrong, this is a significant area of the park by the Church of Scotland. This is not a few cubicles, as he has put it; this is a massive area. How does he expect that to be incorporated in the future? What is his vision in relation to that specific point?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it is in the car park. This has been built in the car parking area and there was already a refuse cubicle there. This is an enlargement of the existing refuse cubicle.

What can I say? We need to dispose of our rubbish. No matter where we decide to park – if I may use that word – a refuse cubicle, there will be questions from the Opposition and there will be an accusation that it is the wrong place. They have to go somewhere. We have to take that responsibility. We went through the planning process, the planning process approved it, and therefore it is being constructed there, and I hope that the result will be cleaner streets in the surrounding area.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q510/2023
Victualling Yard –
Proposed aquarium

Clerk: Question 510/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does the Government support the setting up of the recently announced aquarium at the Victualling Yard?

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

1530 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the proposal is an interesting one which will be subject to the planning process as well as to an environmental and regulatory screening. The Government will therefore take a view at a later stage.

1535 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is he able to share initially the Government's views in relation to the project? As I understand it, the idea is that the current creatures living there are meant to continue to live there. Does he have a view in relation to that? And does he have a view as to the management of the traffic and things like that? Those are the concerns which have been brought to my door in relation to this particular project.

1540 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I do not believe anybody lives there. Maybe the hon. Member would like to clarify what he meant by living there. *(Interjection)*

1545 Mr Speaker, this a private project. The Government is aware, but we have to wait for them to propose the detail. Keeping an aquarium of the type that they want to keep is not like keeping a goldfish in a tank. It is a complex issue. There are certain requirements, and in fact there are regulations elsewhere than in Gibraltar as to how you can keep aquaria. We would have to see whether we would need to legislate to ensure that it is properly maintained. So it is a complex process.

1550 I think it is a very interesting idea. I think if it works well, it could be a valuable addition to the tourist product, but it needs to be properly managed and we are awaiting the detail of the design and how they are going to run it. This is a private project. It will have to go through the planning process. I certainly hope that they will be able to satisfy all the requirements, but they have to satisfy those requirements.

1555 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, what I take from his answer is that the Government has a completely open mind in relation to this project. Will this result in any government contribution in terms of financing?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): We could give them a couple of goldfish.

1560 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, sir, there is no plan for Government to contribute financially to this. *(Interjections)*

Q511/2023
Devil's Tower Road –
New schools

Clerk: Question 511/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1565 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does the Government have plans to build new schools in the area of Devil's Tower Road?

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

1570 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, it is possible that Gibraltar will need another primary school within the next five to 10 years, and most likely in the north. Current trends are being studied to determine whether this will indeed be necessary or whether the projected increases can be absorbed into our new schools.

1575 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, is it something that will only impact a primary school? In other words, there will only be a need for a primary school? Will there not be a need for other schools? Can you give some information in relation to the nature of the study that he says he is conducting?

1580 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, there may not be a need. It is being assessed; it is possible that there will be. I am confident that the size of the current secondary schools, if we include the new College – which is now in process, the planning applications and so on are out ... I would have thought that we are well-catered for, for the foreseeable future, in secondary, by the size of schools that we built. But the younger school age range is increasing. Our population is increasing not just by locals but also by people moving to Gibraltar. Although we have flexibility in the new schools we have built ... For example, the new St Mary's School currently is two-form entry but it has been designed for potential three-form entry and we have some flexibility in some of the other schools. This is precisely the exercise we have to carry out before we determine that Gibraltar may need another primary school. It is possible, but it is work in progress.

1590 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, just to take him back to the question, because the sense I got in his reply is it was more wide, the Gibraltar application. My question related to Devil's Tower Road. Will the study look particularly at that area? And can I ask him to confirm whether his reply applies to that particular area or whether it is a Gibraltar-wide answer?

1595 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I think it is likely that the need would be in the northern district. We have a youngish population in the new terraces there and we have the Eastside development that will come online, so to speak, over the next few years, and we also have Chatham Views and Bob Peliza Mews, and they are all located towards the northern end of Gibraltar. Therefore, the likelihood is that the demand for school spaces will be in the northern areas. We would have to change and reallocate the catchment areas depending on where the space is, and it may be that once that has been analysed there will be a need for new primary schools, but I repeat that I am pretty confident that the secondary schools will be fit for purpose size wise – obviously for quality and so on for a long time, but size wise for much longer than the primary sector.

1605 **Hon. D J Bossino:** In relation to the primary school, is it too embryonic a stage in terms of the analysis for him to be able to identify an area that he is considering for the construction of the primary school?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, it is far too soon.

1610 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q512/2023
68 and 72 Prince Edward's Road –
External rendering works

Clerk: Question 512/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1615 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please state which company and under whose instructions have external rendering works been carried out at 68 and 72 Prince Edward's Road.

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

1620 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, necessary works to prevent a problem of considerable water ingress are being carried out by A&D Services under the instruction of Gibraltar Cultural Services, who manage cultural premises on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and the Land Management Committee.

1625 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the hon. Member satisfied as to the quality of the works which have been rendered in that area?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the works are ongoing, so I am not yet satisfied, but I am sure that I will be satisfied once they are completed.

1630 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does he have any concerns in relation to the heritage value once those works are completed?

1635 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Mr Speaker. The hon. Member may be referring to some posts about the use of Portland cement. That was an error by the contractor. Immediately that was spotted, it was changed to lime mortar on the recommendation of the Government Archaeologist.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is it the case that no long-lasting damage has been made to that building as a result of that error?

1640 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** That is the information that I have, Mr Speaker. They have been able to rectify it in time and the plan is that it should be okayed by the archaeologist.

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask the hon. Member the cost of the works?

1645 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The hon. Member may ask me, but I do not have the details. I do know, though, that there were three quotes and this was the most favourable one. I do not have the information as to what the cost is, but I can get that for him.

1650 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, can he give an indication as to when the works are likely to be completed?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, sir.

Q513/2023
Southport Gates –
Update re works and cost

Clerk: Question 513/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1655 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide progress on the works at Southport Gates with an update on costs.

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

1660 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the works carried out at Southport Gates have consisted of the dismantling and reinstallation of part of the pillar and the wall forming part of the Victorian Gate, currently

the traffic gate. The disassembly and subsequent reinstallation of the shield was also carried out, a highly complex task as the piece is moulded out of mortar. Further work will remove some tree root systems to prevent future damage. The total cost at present is £63,265 and this includes scaffolding, contractor, materials and a specialist restorer.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is that the total cost of the entire works – in other words, what has been spent to date and what is expected to be spent in totality once it is completed?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: That is the cost to date, Mr Speaker.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does he have an estimation as to how much the works, once they are complete, are likely to cost the taxpayer?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Not really, Mr Speaker, because these works ... when you start, you do not really know when you are going to finish. They are old walls. You may uncover some other faults. You may see that there is a tree root that you did not know was there, which you then have to deal with. It is very hard to predict, so I would not like to hazard a guess. I would not think it is the same amount again, because we are now seeing the end of this work, but I would not like to hazard a guess.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I asked a question – I think back in October; I do not recall when – and I think he told me at the time that the works were likely to take about three or four months. Is he able to provide an estimation, given that he has breached that estimation as things stand at the moment?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, I would very much have liked to have got the works finished and the scaffolding removed and opened the gate again, but because we identified other issues with one or two particular tree roots that we did not realise were there, it seems a pity and not really very cost effective to remove the scaffolding only to find that in a short period of time we are going to have to go back. So we took the decision, after discussing with the archaeologist and with the specialists from the National Museum, that it was best to carry on with the works probably a few months more and finish the whole of that area, and then it will be restored, hopefully, for many years to come.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is he satisfied as to the progress of the works? Clearly he will say no, that he would have loved to have had it ready and completed. I think this has been going on for about three years, but I stand to be corrected. At the end of the day, it is about five square metres of wall. If one were to refurbish the entire walls of Gibraltar ... I think we are running to 10 km. If we take this long for five square metres then how long, for goodness' sake, are we going to take for 10 km?

Is he satisfied that the progress is that the works are progressing well, in the sense that they are just encountering these heritage-sensitive issues which just need to be dealt with and were not encountered when they first envisaged and provided the hon. Member with a time estimate of the works?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I am satisfied, Mr Speaker, that the works are progressing well, meaning that they are being done well. Clearly, as the hon. Member predicted, I would have liked to have seen it done more quickly, but I am not going to rush it. It is not a job that can be rushed. If we rush it, then it is likely that we will get something wrong. These are historic walls that have been there for hundreds of years and they deserve the respect and the time that restoration requires.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q514/2023
Parson's Lodge –
Cost of development

1715 **Clerk:** Question 514/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please state what the cost of the recently announced development of Parson's Lodge will amount to.

1720 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, works are currently in progress and will be partly done in house, so the total cost is not yet available. The works are being paid for by the contractor as the normal part of the development of the Museum, one of their contractual obligations. The only difference is that a new venue is being used as an extension to the Museum. There is no additional funding being paid to the contractor for these works.

1730 **Hon. D J Bossino:** By 'the contractor' I assume he is referring to Knightsfield Holdings Ltd. He is nodding.

Can I ask him to explain what he means by 'in house'? This is, presumably, Gibraltar Government? Is that what he is referring to?

1735 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Mr Speaker, I mean the Museum staff. They have a conservator and they have staff in house who are able to develop the displays. It will not just be restoration works on the monument, it will be the preparation of displays, interpretation material and so on, and that is going to be done in house within the budget of the Museum and is not being charged in addition to the budget of the Museum.

1740 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think he has answered the question at the tail end of his reply. So just so I have it clear in my mind, what he is saying is that these works will not result in extra cost to the Government because it is going to be paid for by the fund that the company currently receives. The hon. Member can confirm that my understanding is correct.

Is the hon. Member able to state when this project is likely to complete?

1745 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** It is a phased project, so the answer is probably never. I have recollections of when I took on the Alameda Gardens – I knew I would never finish it; this kind of project is never complete. We will have a phase that is due to open right after the summer, and I suppose that the plans as announced in the recent launch will probably take, I would say, a year as a whole, but that is just a guess. I have not consulted the Director of the Museum for a date as specific as this.

1755 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, does he have an explanation as to why it is the case that this particular company has been at the receiving end of a substantial amount of money from the Gibraltar Government, in excess of £1 million – he provided us with the details at the last session of the House – since at least 2014 when this Government entered into the current contractual relations with that particular company, and it is only now, a few months before a general election, that the company decides, lo and behold, to refurbish Parson's Lodge when it has been in a state of dereliction for so long?

1760 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I take issue with the definition of dereliction. I think the hon. Member may define dereliction as including the growth of wild species of plants, and I would call

that beauty. Therefore, I do not concur with the hon. Member's assessment of dereliction. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Rewilding.) Rewilding either. The Hon. Chief Minister is up to date completely with all these terms, as you would imagine from such a progressive Government. Thank you, Chief Minister. I do not think it was in a state of dereliction.

These plans have been in the making for a considerable period of time. They have been doing a lot of other work within the Museum. They have done things like the reconstruction of the Neolithic remains. They have opened new galleries, the new Medusa Gallery, the Pillars of Hercules. They have done work on the World Heritage Site, and there is more, actually, which will be announced quite soon, another initiative at the World Heritage Site. So no, I do not see there is anything untoward in this at all, and I am very pleased that this is happening.

Mr Speaker: One final supplementary.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am grateful, Mr Speaker, for that. Let him just answer this question: how long has this company been thinking about the refurbishment at this particular place? I think he has said, using his words, a considerable amount of time. They have had the current contract for almost 10 years. At a very rough calculation, the company would have received almost, if not in excess of, £10 million from the Gibraltar taxpayer. How is it that now, three or four months before a general election, the company decides to announce, but not do anything in relation to it, its development of Parson's Lodge?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, that question is out of order. It is a question about –

Mr Speaker: Excuse me. It is digressing. The supplementary you have put is digressing from the original question. There was a reference to Knightsfield Holdings and now you are moving away and following supplementaries into the amount of Knightsfield – Yes?

Hon. Chief Minister: Knightsfield Holdings is not here. The hon. Gentleman asked the question 'When did Knightsfield Holdings think of ...?' Knightsfield Holdings is not here. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to write to Knightsfield Holdings and ask him that question, but he cannot ask the Minister what Knightsfield Holdings think.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I am asking a supplementary on the premise of the answer the hon. Gentleman has given. Knightsfield is not here, but he has said that Knightsfield ... presumably ... because quite properly, the Gibraltar Government knocks on Knightsfield Holdings' door because it receives more than £1 million a year from it. I want to find out what it does. He knew that Knightsfield Holdings had been considering this project for a considerable period of time and I am asking for more specificity in relation to that. He cannot now say he cannot answer the question because the company is not here.

Hon. Chief Minister: No, because the question that he asked, Mr Speaker, is when did the company think of this. The company is not here to answer that question. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) No, he did not. The Hon. Minister said Knightsfield had been meaning to do this for some time. That is what they have told him. But you then asked a question of Knightsfield, and Knightsfield is not here to answer it. It is that simple.

But having said that, the hon. Gentleman is right. Knightsfield receive an amount of money from the Government every year, in excess or in the region of £1 million, from the Gibraltar taxpayer, and the Gibraltar taxpayer has had a Gibraltar heritage site recognised by UNESCO as one of the most important sites, in respect of Neanderthals, in the world. We have made the front page of the *New York Times Magazine* for Gibraltar as a result of Knightsfield Holdings, so if the

1815 hon. Gentleman wants to ask questions about value for money and Knightsfield Holdings, there he has it – although he does not like it because all he wants to do is attack, attack, attack.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, a point of order.

1820 **Mr Speaker:** What is your point of order?

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker has called me to order because I have asked a question which the Speaker has said is not relevant to my first question. The hon. Member has gone off on a complete and utter tangent and he ... If I am called to order and Members of this House are called to order, then he must be subjected to the exact same treatment. That is why I am raising a point of order and I am quite relaxed at –

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Mr Speaker: Right.

Hon. Chief Minister: And, Mr Speaker, that point of order deserves a reply. (*Interjection*) Sorry, Mr Speaker, he has raised a point of order and you must hear both sides in respect of a point of order. He has raised an issue in respect ... It is called *audi alteram partem*, he might care to remember. He has raised an issue about dates in respect of which Knightsfield, who are not here, have decided to do something, the answer to which is that Knightsfield is not here. You have rightly raised with him, Mr Speaker, that he was digressing, but he, in all of the aspects of the supplementary that he put, raised issues as to value for money in respect of Knightsfield. What he does not like, and why he has raised a point which is not a point of order, which is to attempt to tell the Speaker what to do, is because – (**Hon. D J Bossino:** No.) He should have the decency of hearing my response to his point of order in silence, Mr Speaker. The point is that he has not liked the riposte to all the preambles that he has put in respect of his – rightly, in your view – irrelevant supplementary.

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Mr Speaker: I think, with respect to the hon. Member and the Hon. Chief Minister, it is very discourteous and disrespectful to suggest that somehow I am curtailing your ability to ask supplementaries and to allow the Chief Minister the opposite. It is disturbing and it is not something that I am going to tolerate from you. (*Interjection*) When I intervened, I said it was because you were digressing from the original question and the question in the supplementary. You were digressing and I wanted to point this out to you in order for you to understand what I was getting at. The fact was that I wanted you to complete your supplementaries and move on. That was the only reason for my intervention, and I think my intervention was absolutely correct.

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1850 If the hon. Member has an issue with the Chief Minister, he can call or he can bring a motion to the House to debate Knightsfield Holdings, if that is his desire, but what I am not going to permit is the Speaker (*Interjection*) being subjected to disrespect and discourteous allegations. (*Interjection*)

We now move on to the next – (*Interjection*) We are now moving on to the next question. (*Interjection*) No, the person who presides over this Parliament is the Speaker. (*Interjection*) With respect, you do not. We are now going to move to the next question on the Order Paper.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker is absolutely correct.

1860 **Mr Speaker:** We are not talking about something – (*Interjection*) We are not going to continue this line of questioning and we are not going to be having any supplementaries. We are now going to proceed to the next question on the Order Paper.

Q515/2023
Moorish Castle –
Details of restoration and cost

Clerk: Question 515/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1865 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide details of the restoration which the Government states was conducted at Moorish Castle with details of the cost.

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

1870 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the restoration works at the Moorish Castle are the Almond Tower, completed in 2018; the walls by the arch on Upper Castle Road, completed in 2019; and the Tower of Homage, completed in 2022. The Almond Tower and the walls involved a restoration of the fabric. The works to the Tower of Homage involved the removal of trees and shrubs on the façade,
1875 including roots, which were causing damage to the structure. There are works proposed at the Gatehouse, which will include removal of trees and shrubs and their roots and subsequent consolidation of the structure. The cost of this is still not known.

The total cost of these works was Tower of Homage restoration, £8,138.85; Almond Tower and Moorish Castle wall restoration, £69,049.99; Moorish Castle arch restoration, £33,324.60

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, has the hon. Member not visited the site himself or seen the photographic evidence which suggests that none of the things he has said have been done to the Moorish Castle, by way of refurbishment and improvements of the site, have had the desired effect? The state of that particular historical monument is ... I am sorry I am going to disappoint
1885 him when I use the word again, but it is in a state of dereliction and it is actually shameful that it is in that state. Can I ask him, does he not agree with me that much more needs to be done?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I do not agree with everything that the hon. Member has said. Of course I have been to the site and I have seen that the works that I have specified have
1890 tremendously improved the areas which have been improved. This is a huge area. It would be a multi-million-pound project to do it all and it has to be done step by step. The hon. Member will be very pleased to hear that only last week I received a proposal for a considerable refurbishment and reutilisation of a sizeable part of it, which will have to be costed and perhaps may be paid for in other ways. So it is work in progress, there is a lot to be done, but it is a multi-million-pound
1895 project to completely maximise the full potential of the Moorish Castle complex, and that is something that over the last few years we have not been able to undertake for reasons well known to him and to the remainder of this House.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can I ask him what those reasons are? Presumably it is COVID. Is that what the hon. Member –? *(Interjection)* Ah, okay. Let's leave it there. *(Interjection)* No, let's leave it there. *(Interjection)*

Mr Speaker, is he able to state that the figures that he provided this House a few minutes ago in relation to the cost and the information that he currently has, are cost to the Government? In other words, it is not a cost which is being borne by the company mentioned earlier, Knightsfield Holdings Ltd, which has charge of this particular site?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I would have to confirm that, but I believe that it is additional to and I believe it has come from moneys voted in this House for refurbishment of heritage.

Mr Speaker, if I may, I think the hon. Member seems to have forgotten that we did go through COVID and that the economy did take a big hit, but that conveniently is forgotten by some.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, the economy may have taken a big hit and the public finances, but the reality is that this particular company did not take a big hit. This particular company continued to receive the same amount of money – I know he does not like to hear it – in excess of £1 million a year. So these questions are legitimately posed. The hon. Member does not have the information in this House today. Fair enough, we can always ask the question again. But can I ask him this? As he describes it, the multi-million-pound project that he talks about, is this a project which is to be paid for by the Gibraltar taxpayer, or is it going to be paid for by the company mentioned a few moments ago?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, as the hon. Gentleman will know, with the agreement of the Opposition the Government continued to pay all public sector salaries and indeed the salaries of all entities connected to the Government. That is to say, all companies that had contracts with the Government continued to have their contracts paid for during the COVID period even when they were not operating, for the simple reason that the vast majority of the amounts paid by the Government to these contractors, including under the contract with Knightsfield Holdings, which comes from a time before the GSD administration and before this administration ... the vast majority of that money goes to pay the salaries of the individuals who work in those companies. And not only did we, with their agreement, continue to pay public sector salaries and BEAT payments and salaries to members of the public in the private sector who were not able to go to work during the lockdown, we continued to pay these contracts. So the hon. Gentleman needs to remember that it was with their agreement that Knightsfield Holdings was paid the in excess of £1 million that they are paid, and the vast majority of that goes to the salaries of the good people who work for Knightsfield Holdings and all the other companies who provide services to the Government, many of which we inherited from them.

And finally, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman should recall that all of the heritage assets of Gibraltar, including the Moorish Castle, which was one of the jewels in the crown of the heritage of Gibraltar, continue to belong and be the responsibility of the Government of Gibraltar and, therefore, the taxpayer.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I think it calls for another question in this House, but it is shocking to learn that the vast majority of the excess of £1 million goes towards salaries. How many people do these people employ? What are the salaries, for goodness' sake? *(Interjection)* Well, let's see about that, what the hon. Member has just said. The Hon. the Chief Minister and indeed the Hon. the Minister responsible for this have failed to answer the question in relation to the multi-million-pound project. Is the expectation –? *(Interjection)* I ask the question: is the expectation that this amount will be paid for by the good Gibraltar taxpayer or by the company?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I have not said anything like that. I have said that I had a presentation recently – in fact, I think it was Wednesday of last week – about a potential use and development of a significant section of the Moorish Castle complex. I have not said that it is going to deal with all of it. I have not said whether it is a government project or not a government project, because we do not know yet. It is a proposal that was put to me that I am extremely interested in, but it is in its early stages.

I have to add one thing, Mr Speaker. The complete restoration or reuse of the whole of the Moorish Castle complex will cost a lot more than £1 million a year – that has to be clear – and you cannot expect that to come from an operational budget. I think the important thing is that we are attacking those elements of the Moorish Castle which our archaeologists and the team from the National Museum feel are most in need of restoration. Hence, we did the Tower of Homage, which needed the work, the Almond Tower and the arch restoration, and this can continue. What we cannot do is, overnight, fork out millions of pounds just to keep the hon. Member happy.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q516/2023
Landscaping contracts –
Contract details

Clerk: Question 516/2023. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1965 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide details of the contracts that each landscape contractor has with the Government or a government-owned company, to include the cost to the Government or government-owned company, duration and which areas the contractor is responsible for.

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

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, there are three horticultural contractors that have contracts with the Government. I am not going to name them specifically because obviously they are contractors that work in this industry and I believe we should not disclose the actual names company by company. Contractor A has contracts worth £773,950.20 per annum. Contractor B has contracts worth £113,112.36 per annum. Contractor C has contracts worth £9,684 per annum. These are ongoing contracts with no set expiry date.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, starting with the beginning, why on earth is the hon. Member unwilling to provide details which he should be providing in answer to a question by a Member on this side of the House? This money which these three companies, one of them to the tune of – I think I have got it right ... almost £800,000 is received from the taxpayer.

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Mr Speaker, I would ask for your intervention in relation to this. I would have thought that this information is in the public interest and there is absolutely no reason why it should not be provided.

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Will he give way? We have absolutely no problem in giving the details in respect of those three companies and naming them, in particular the one that they gave the contract to, which is the one that gets the eight hundred-odd thousand pounds.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker –

Hon D J Bossino: Ah... you were doing this to protect us were you?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Yes to protect... not to protect you, to protect the innocent...

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, these were all inherited – well, the majority of them. They have been tweaked since then, but the bulk is there. The three companies are Greenock, Gibralflores and Eden Botanics.

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Hon. Chief Minister: I do not want to mislead the House. The Eden Botanics contract is not inherited because they could not get a contract to do anything under the previous administration, who refused to allow them to work in this area because of the first contract that they had given, but we insisted that everybody should have an opportunity, and that is why that company also now provides services.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, is he able to provide answers to the other elements of the question that I asked for? I asked for the duration and which areas the contractor is responsible for. I do not think that information has been provided.

2010 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I said that they do not have a specific end, they are ongoing contracts with no expiry dates. Again, that arrangement is inherited.

The areas referred to are, in relation to Contractor A, North Front Cemetery, various government sites, Little Bay promenade, Moorish Castle estate planted areas, the Nun's Well area. By various government sites I mean a large number of the beds that we can see around town.
2015 Contractor B again covers a large number, although a smaller number of planted areas and also the area around Catalan Bay. Contractor C manages the areas around the Anchorage and the 100 Ton Gun, Varyl Begg Estate, Governor's Parade and a number of assorted areas around town.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

2020

Clerk: Question 517 –

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, can I ask the hon. –? If I may, Mr Speaker?

2025 **Mr Speaker:** You have to ask permission. You cannot get up and continue as if nothing happened. You ask permission to speak and I will grant you permission to speak.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I said if I may, albeit I said it once I stood and pressed the button, whilst maybe others have a different style. But I did ask permission.

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Mr Speaker: You may proceed with the supplementary.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the hon. Member able to state with any form of precision whether the answer that he has provided includes the parks? In the last session he did say, in relation to my
2035 specific question in relation to Campion Park, that Wildlife Gibraltar Ltd is the company which was a beneficiary of that particular contract, as indeed that company is a beneficiary of Commonwealth Park. Is he able to provide information in relation to that?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the three horticultural contractors are the ones that I have
2040 mentioned. The company that he has mentioned are environmental managers and they manage land. It is not considered the same as the horticultural contractors that manage horticulture in assorted areas.

Hon. D J Bossino: It is possible that I have used the wrong nomenclature, but I talked about a
2045 landscape contractor, so in the next session, Mr Speaker, I will ask the question, with your permission, in relation to the definition that he has used in respect of that particular company.
(Interjection)

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has told us that he had the answer in
2050 respect of wildlife in the last session, so he has had the answer in respect of wildlife. He has now had the answer in respect of horticultural contractors. He cannot ask the question about wildlife again because he asked it at the last session. If the hon. Gentleman is telling us that he wants to ask a question about a definition, Mr Speaker, of course he can, subject to your approving that question, but that is to get up and make a statement, not to ask a question. I think that would be
2055 out of order.

Mr Speaker: What is it that the hon. Member is saying and what does he wish to do following this exchange?

2060 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, I asked a question. I asked it from a layman's perspective.
(Interjection) No. The hon. Gentleman answered the question using ... I will need to check what

he says. He talks about horticultural I do not know what, and I am talking about landscape contractors. I thought that it would include – (**Hon. S E Linares:** Wrongly.) Perhaps wrongly, but the Hon. Mr Linares is an expert, I am sure, about these things. (*Interjection*) Yes. I thought that it included our parks in Gibraltar. But the hon. Gentleman has volunteered to me a way of putting the question. All I am saying is I will put the question in the way that he wants me to put it in order to get the answer. (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker: No, hold on –

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member –

Mr Speaker: No – (*Interjections*) No, okay, hold on. The question that the hon. Member is referring to was put to the Hon. Minister Cortes at the last session of the House, and as far as I can recall the question was answered, so I do not think the hon. Member will be permitted to ask a further supplementary on that question because it has already been answered. So right now what we have before us are answers which have been clarified in terms of the entities to which these amounts have been referred to, and if he wishes to continue asking along those lines, fine. One final one, and then we move on.

Hon. D J Bossino: Simply by way of clarification, I accept what Mr Speaker is saying, that I would not be able to ask a question at the next session of the House in relation to Campion Park. I accept that, but from this exchange I will be able to ask, in my view, a wider question based on the definition the hon. Member has used when applying it to Wildlife Gibraltar Ltd.

Mr Speaker: I do not think really it is a valid suggestion. The object of the hon. Gentleman's questioning is to dig down and hold the Government to account for its policies and the rest of it. The answer has been given, so why do you need to ask questions about a definition? The information is here. It has been given to you.

Hon. D J Bossino: I can if [*inaudible*]

Mr Speaker: By the same process I can deny that question. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) We now move on to the next question, so, please, will he ...? Please? He is not helping; let's put it this way.

Q517/2023
Main Street and Irish Town –
Frequency of wet cleaning

Clerk: Question 517/2023. (*Interjection*) The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Several Members: Hear, hear. (*Interjections*)

Hon. D J Bossino: Common sense.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am not rising to it, Mr Speaker.
How often are Main Street and Irish Town wet cleaned?

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, Main street is done weekly in sections, and other cleaning, such as cleaning of stains, is done daily. Irish Town is also done weekly.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I guess that may be the contractual frequency, but I was wondering whether in his information and his dealings with the department and his officials ... What is the mechanism for review of those arrangements and supervision of the arrangements? The information coming to us, and hence the question that I put, was that even though theoretically there was supposed to be frequent wet cleaning, people are not seeing it on the ground. So I wonder whether in his discussions with officials ... Can I invite him? Would he be willing to do that, to discuss that with those in his department that are tasked with supervising these arrangements, to make sure that they are happening and, if they are happening, that they are doing it properly? The people coming to us are saying that they are just not seeing it and not seeing it being done to an efficient manner.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, sadly, I no longer live in Irish Town. I have not done for decades, but I have fond memories of living there as a child.

Absolutely. I am told that it is done weekly. There is a suggestion here that this not, in fact, happening. I have no indication that it is not happening. I do know that when there are specific problems the contractors are called in and they do clean in addition to the contractual ... Obviously I will check with my team and I will make sure that if it is not done, it is done, but I suspect it is being done; I have no indication that it is not. We have environmental monitors who oversee this and I suspect I would have known, but clearly there is no problem in my confirming this. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* Yes, Mr Speaker, as the Hon. Chief Minister has very kindly pointed out, this is done around 5 a.m., so many people may not see it. I have no indication that it is not being done, but having not seen it for myself, I would obviously take advice.

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Hon. K Azopardi: I would be grateful if the Minister confirms it anyway. But if it is happening on a frequent and weekly basis, as he puts it, he may, on his own walks down Main Street and Irish Town, consider that perhaps the state of Irish Town and Main Street could do with some improvement. And to the extent that that is the case, and it is not just my opinion – there are plenty of people who would share that view – what steps could be taken in discussions with the contractor to make sure that the cleaning improves in that respect and whether it may have to do with the fact that the refurbishment is now dated? It may be all sorts of things, but I think a lot of people would say that the state of Main Street and Irish Town leaves a lot to be desired.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, it happens every year. We do have an enhanced flushing programme in the summer. The summer is just about commencing now. That does happen and the amount of flushing is stepped up. I will confirm exactly how frequent that is going to be this year. I have to go back and confirm, but there is a regular mechanism for increasing flushing of streets during the summer period.

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Q518/2023
St Joseph's area –
Noise nuisance from chickens

Clerk: Question 518/2023. *(Interjection)* The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what steps are being taken by Government to control the noise nuisance issues caused by chickens in the St Joseph's area? *(Interjections)*

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

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, chickens are a nuisance (*Interjections*) due to the noise that they create and the possibility of the harbouring and transmitting of diseases, including avian flu.

Removal of chickens in the St Joseph's area and elsewhere has been carried out but has been hampered by some people who object to this either by destroying the traps or harassing the operatives.

I can assure the hon. Member that any removal is done totally humanely, so that the chicken does not suffer.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon. Minister for the answer and acknowledge the issue that arises in the St Joseph's area because, as I said from a sedentary position, when this was first raised with me I tried to get information from those who were raising it with me because it sounded like an incredible story, but when they sent me videos and you see what were then 40 or 50 chickens and that it keeps people awake at night, it certainly is an issue that takes people to the borderline of what they think is acceptable.

I am glad to hear that they are taking steps, but when does the Government envisage that the issues will have been rectified completely, so that people will not face those nuisance issues?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, (*Interjection*) chickens ... I used to say the Barbary partridge is a secretive species. Chickens are not secretive, but they are not easy to catch, particularly when the attempts are hampered, and I must say that some of the operatives have been seriously harassed by neighbours who may well eat roast chicken on Sunday, but they do not want to see the removal of these chickens. So we have to be sensitive to that. And then obviously the chicks are really cute, and if a mother hen is there with chicks ... So there are all sorts of issues, as well as animal welfare issues, but it is done very humanely by people who know what they are doing. I can now only assume that I have the support of the Opposition in taking the programme forward, and we shall do so.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I was not going to ask another supplementary, but I will have to ask him what the programme is, because it sounded slightly Orwellian. I was assuming that the humane way is simply to get the chickens and move them somewhere else, perhaps to the Upper Rock where they can roam free and easy, and not to be served up on plates – unless the hon. Member is suggesting a slightly more macabre and dystopian solution.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member, I recall ... and he reminded me recently when he sent me a clip of a video on GBC when I escorted him through the Botanic Gardens and he held the job I currently hold as Minister for the Environment. But his credentials are somehow at risk if he suggests that we should release chickens on the Upper Rock, because somebody else who sat there as Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Jaime Netto, accused me of going to be the person who was responsible single-handedly for the extinction of the Barbary partridge in Gibraltar. If I were to follow his advice, he might be responsible because the chickens will introduce diseases and will outcompete Barbary partridge. They are bigger and more aggressive and therefore having them on the Upper Rock is not a good idea.

Moving them away is an option, clearly. Humanely putting them down is another option, which a lot of people will not agree to, but we do it with gulls, as people know, and I do not personally like it but sometimes it is the only option. I repeat, it is humane. Obviously we do not have a lot of places where chickens can be legally kept. The trouble with chickens is if they get away, they will spread and they will breed and the population will increase to the detriment of other wildlife and clearly of the neighbours of St Joseph's.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q519/2023

**Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor's Meadow Schools –
Expected cost**

2205 **Clerk:** Question 519/2023. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how much is the Government currently expecting to pay in respect of the works to the Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor's Meadow Schools?

2210 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, £8 million.

Adjournment

2215 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to Monday, 26th June at 3 p.m.

Mr Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Monday, 26th June at 3 p.m.

2220 I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Monday, 26th June at 3 p.m.
Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.
This House will now adjourn to Monday, 26th June at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.