



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 4.01 p.m. – 5.55 p.m.

Gibraltar, Friday, 29th November 2024

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 4.01 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Judge K Ramagge GMH *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: J B Reyes Esq *in attendance*]

Standing Order 7(1) suspended to proceed with Government Motions

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Friday, 29th November 2024.
Suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

5 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move, under Standing Order 7(3), to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with Government Motions.

Madam Speaker: Those in favour? (Members: Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Freedom of the City of Gibraltar conferred on Sir Bob Neill KC

Clerk: Government Motion. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

10

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

That THIS HOUSE:
RECOGNISES the outstanding contribution to Gibraltar by Sir Bob Neill KC during his time as a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom.
NOTES Sir Bob's involvement in the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gibraltar, in particular, as its Chairman for the past decade.
CONSIDERS that Gibraltar should rightly thank Sir Bob Neill KC for his continuous lobbying in the United Kingdom on all matters related to Gibraltar.
AND HEREBY DECLARES that the Freedom of the City of Gibraltar be conferred on Sir Bob Neill KC.

15

I understand that this is a motion that will enjoy support from both sides of the House. I consulted with the Leader of the Opposition before I put the motion, and indeed I understand that that support was also confirmed in public statements that the hon. Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, made at the time that the motion was to be moved. I could not be happier, because Sir Bob Neill deserves the support of the whole House for the work that he has done for Gibraltar, treating us all as if we were his constituents, too, and as if Gibraltar had become an extension of Chislehurst, where he was the Member of Parliament for so long.

20

Madam Speaker, the knighthood that was bestowed on Sir Bob Neill was not for matters related to Gibraltar; he was made a Knight Bachelor of the Order of the British Empire in 2020 in the Queen's New Years Honours List for his services to politics generally, and he was appointed King's Counsel this year. So, the honours that Sir Bob has already are not honours that the people of Gibraltar have directly influenced, although his political service of course includes the service

25 that he has provided in Parliament in the United Kingdom for the people of Gibraltar and I know
from Lord Cameron that he greatly appreciated the influence that Sir Bob was able to bring to
bear on his colleagues in the Conservative Party and the information that he could provide to him
directly in relation to matters related to Gibraltar when Lord Cameron was Prime Minister. I know
that because Lord Cameron and I have had opportunities to refer together to the excellent work
30 that Sir Bob has done in Parliament generally, and in particular in relation to Gibraltar as the
interface with the British government and other parliamentarians, as the head of the Gibraltar
APPG.

And so, this Knight Bachelor really was Gibraltar's knight in shining armour just after the
referendum and when he took up the chairmanship of the All-Party Group, not least from the
35 moment that the Deputy Chief Minister and I and every other Gibraltarian and Member of this
House were reeling from the Brexit result. We needed to engage directly with Downing Street,
and Downing Street was ready to engage with us. The then Prime Minister, now Lord Cameron,
was very clear that he was going to do everything he could in the short interregnum between the
result of the referendum being declared and his resignation on the steps of Downing Street and
40 him leaving Downing Street when a new leader of the Conservative Party had been elected – the
Rt Hon. Theresa May. Bob was able, in that short time, assist us in ensuring that the Prime Minister
could help us, as he wanted to help us, as much as possible.

The Deputy Chief Minister will remember, as I remember, quickly telling Sir Bob what we
needed in terms of the continuation of the single market in services between Gibraltar and the
45 United Kingdom, a single market which had existed between us since 1972 when we became
Members of the European Union, as that developed through the Single European Act etc. and how
that was fundamental for us. There is an interesting synergy in the numbers: 96% of the people of
Gibraltar voted to remain in the European Union; 96% of the work that our financial services firms
did outside of Gibraltar in the single market was done in the United Kingdom. So, that single
50 market access that was so fundamental to us was actually access to the United Kingdom market.
When I explained that to the Prime Minister, with Bob there, he said, 'Through Bob, get that to
me in a way that I can help you,' and so very quickly the Deputy Chief Minister, the Attorney
General and I set out to Bob Neill, literally in a conversation, in London, what we needed. In his
usual affable way, Bob was smiling at us, Bob was listening, but he was not taking a note, and
55 when the Deputy Chief Minister and I walked out of the room with the Attorney General I
remember saying to them, 'Bob's a clever man; I think he's got it, but' – I did wonder – 'he hasn't
made a note.' If he is watching, he will be surprised to hear that I was left with one of those feelings
that you are left with when you go to a good restaurant and there is an excellent waiter who does
not make one note, and there are 10 of you, you all order and you think he is really going to not
60 be able to bring you everything you have asked for. The letter that Bob Neill produced within an
hour set out better than I had explained to him exactly what it was that the thing that we now call
GAR – the single market in services between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom – should be, so
that the Prime Minister could quickly approve it and get the Treasury on board. As a result of that,
we now have that preservation of a single market, which secured the financial services business
65 that we have in Gibraltar and the online gaming business that we have in Gibraltar, and enabled
us to develop further strands, and indeed put us in the position where we were able to go to the
negotiation with the European Union without having to give anything up in exchange for access
to the single market in services in the EU, because we had preserved the access to the market that
we needed to preserve, thanks to Bob. That is just one of the strands of what he put in his letter;
70 there were other issues also which were of importance, like, of course, the ability of Gibraltar to
form part of the international trade deals that the United Kingdom was going to do. With his
disarming charm and ability, Bob very quickly turned the complex issues that we were putting to
him into a succinct explanation, put it to the Prime Minister and secured it.

That was probably the most important moment in which we have had to deal with Bob, but
75 not the only important moment. The past 13 years that we have been in government, the past 10
years that Bob was in the All-Party Group and the period of his chairmanship were complex years

for Gibraltar. I do not need to remind the people of Gibraltar what the past 10 years have entailed. And yet Bob has always been there, ready to support Gibraltar, ready to go out of his way to support Gibraltar, ready to persuade, ready to use his wisdom, his prudence and his charm as much for our benefit as he displayed it for the people of Chislehurst. And he does that, when we need him to, in his usual very balanced way. So, when Bob Neill appears on television, when he is persuading someone, when he used to be on the floor of the House, this was not a pugilist that would go out simply to score party-political points, and not for him the gladiatorial arena of politics in the style of some that might be so loud but might achieve so little; more, for him, the gentle persuasion, the ability to charm his way through with detailed and careful argument. We have also seen him on the floor of the House dealing with matters relating to justice in the United Kingdom, which sometimes have also been relevant to Gibraltar, but it is quite something that he was the Chairman of the Select Committee on Justice, because that shows you who Bob Neill was. He was trusted on those issues. He is a man of justice. He understands how the arc of the universe must always bend in the right direction in the end. This calm, softly spoken, eloquent but understated Knight of the Realm has very often come to our assistance, to such an extent that I was once told by a senior British politician who shall remain nameless that he had had his arm twisted by Bob on a matter related to Gibraltar but he had not felt it, but that he was, of course, prepared to agree what Bob had asked him to do.

Madam Speaker, given all that I have said, you would be forgiven for thinking that Bob was already 96% Gibraltarian and that making him a freeman just pushes him that final 4% to the full, 100% full monty of being one of us. His political career in the United Kingdom is well known to those who have followed his trajectory as a member of the all-party parliamentary group. I have said a little about the Select Committees that he has chaired. He has chaired others, and in every instance I think he has discharged all of the responsibilities he has had with distinction and without scandal, and these days that is saying something for a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament. And indeed, quite the opposite, in the context of Gibraltar he is one of what I would say are the minority of the friends of Gibraltar who was also a remainer and therefore had no apology to make when he came to Gibraltar after the Brexit referendum, like others did.

A man of deep friendship, a man who has banged on doors during election campaigns and has banged on doors for Gibraltar, I think that everybody in this House will recognise that it is the loss of the Westminster Parliament that he is no longer a Member of Parliament, not because he was not chosen in the General Election by the people of Chislehurst but because he chose not to stand at this election for personal reasons.

Anne Louise, who is Bob's wife and partner, will have seen up close the many instances of Bob fighting for his constituents and fighting for Gibraltar, and will have had to wait on him as he did those things, on occasion, and accompany him as he did those things, on occasion, and follow him to Gibraltar, where we were always very pleased and will be very pleased to see both Bob and Anne Louise in the future. I want to thank her also for her contribution to his ability to defend Gibraltar as the very model of a modern major general, because given that their particular love is opera, I know they will have seen themselves in that way on certain occasions.

Bob was also the Chair of the Select Committee on Opera, not just on Gibraltar, the Chair of the Select Committees on London, on the Rule of Law, on Miscarriages of Justice, and on Strokes; the Secretary of the Financial Markets and Services Select Committee; and the President of the French Select Committee. But this unassuming man who did so much for Gibraltar was also Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party between 2008 and 2010 and Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party from 2012. He was the Chairman of the Greater London Conservatives from 1996 to 1999, and the founding member of the Conservatives for Reform in Europe in 2016. What a pity that more did not listen to Bob and listened to other louder mouths. He was also a member of the EU Committee of the Regions and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, so he understands Europe from inside out and understood the need more for reform than for withdrawal from Europe for the United Kingdom. He was also a member of the Joint Committee

on National Security Strategy on Liaison, and as I mentioned before, most importantly, the Chair of the Select Committee on Justice.

130 Madam Speaker, all I can say, apart from everything that I have said to date, is that I think it is fair to say that the Deputy Chief Minister, the Father of the House, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition as well, and those who have been longer in this Parliament – the putative Leader of the Opposition as much as the Leader of the Opposition, if I may be permitted a short gladiatorial moment – will happily also say that we can call Bob Neill a personal friend too. That is the beauty
135 of doing politics for all the right reasons. This is, as Tony Blair said, not just the arena of low skulduggery; it can also be a place to make enduring friendships, and I am delighted to call Bob a friend too.

I commend the motion to the House. *(Banging on desks)*

140 **Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question in terms of the motion moved by the Hon. the Chief Minister. Would any hon. Member like to speak? The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I wish to associate us with the remarks of the Hon. the Chief Minister, except the ones about the putative Leader of the Opposition, of course, which I do
145 not recognise at all, but I do wish to associate myself with those remarks because Bob Neill is a friend of Gibraltar and a friend who deserves this just award by this House, by consensus, speaking with one voice.

A Minister once told me that you know who your friends are when you stop being a Minister, but it is also true that you know who your friends are when your friends stop being a Minister. On
150 National Day, wearing the red and white, when I spoke to Bob Neill, no longer a Member of Parliament, one of the first things he said to me was, 'How can I carry on helping Gibraltar?' That is the mark of the man, who, after being in Parliament, still wants to help Gibraltar.

As the Chief Minister has said, he's had a long and distinguished career well before his contribution to Gibraltar. The Chief Minister has remarked on his notable career as a member of
155 the Conservative Party, working through the grass roots of the party. For many years he was in the London Assembly as the leader of the Conservative Group in the London Assembly, and a well-known pro-European supporter of Ken Clarke during his leadership campaigns, a shadow Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Party, rising to very senior ranks in the Conservative Party. So, this was not just someone who became a friend of the Party but someone who came from the very
160 senior ranks of the Conservative Party, and testimony to that was his long and distinguished, illustrious career, as the Chief Minister has said, as Chairman involved in a number of Select Committees.

Madam Speaker, he was, of course, a very well-known friend of Gibraltar who did that sterling work in the post-Brexit era in particular, during which Members on that side of the House would
165 have worked very closely with him. I can do no better than simply endorse the remarks of the Chief Minister, who would have worked alongside Sir Bob on those matters, and he explained his contribution on obtaining UK market access in the post-Brexit era. That is a massive contribution to Gibraltar because it complements our economy and our ability to continue doing work in that area.

170 It is right to say that Sir Bob not just understood Gibraltar but I think also had synergy with Gibraltar, not to forget, of course, that he defied the Party whip over the issue of Brexit, as a remainer, as has been said before, and, because of that, has had that synergy with our European interests, with the fact that we voted remain, with the fact that our wishes and interests are different to those of the people of mainland UK, at least in relation to the type of arrangements
175 we want in a post-Brexit era. He has been very quick to listen to those issues, to understand them, to work with the people of Gibraltar and make a huge contribution to Gibraltar and its sustainability going forward, as Chairman of the All-Party Gibraltar Group, but also specifically on this issue of UK market access, and I confirm and commend the motion going forward, which will

enjoy the full support of the Members on this side of the House. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.)
180 (*Banging on desks*)

Madam Speaker: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak? The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

185 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am delighted to support the motion moved by my hon. Friend the Chief Minister. As the House knows, the Freedom of the City is the highest honour that this Parliament can bestow. There is no doubt in my mind that Sir Bob is a worthy recipient of this award. His time as a member of the All-Party Group on Gibraltar straddles two GSD administrations and four GSLP Liberal administrations, a
190 record which speaks for itself. He has, therefore, been there regardless of who has been in power in Gibraltar.

Sir Bob was first elected to the Commons in 2006, and soon after that election he joined the Gibraltar APPG. The All-Party Group had already been bestowed the Freedom of the City in 1982, the House will recall. Members of the UK Parliament, as my hon. Friend the Chief Minister has
195 said, are under no obligation to keep an eye on the affairs of Gibraltar, still less to stand up for us, but many choose to do so, and this House is grateful for their interest. They do so because they believe in the justice of our cause, in our right to remain a part of the British family, and in our right to self-determination.

Sir Bob served as a Minister in the Department of Communities and Local Government during
200 the UK coalition government, in addition to everything else that has been said. After the 2017 general election, he took on the Chair of the Gibraltar Group, and this is not often an easy task. That role has sometimes led the incumbent over the years to clash with the leadership of their own party. Like Gibraltar, as has already been said, Sir Bob was a remainer who was strongly opposed to Brexit and he defied the Conservative whip, as the hon. Member said, on a number of
205 occasions on this specific issue. The Chief Minister has quite rightly highlighted the role Sir Bob played in securing a written assurance from the Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron, in respect of our continued market access to the UK in financial services and online gaming. In his time in Parliament, he was a serious and respected MP. That meant, in turn, that he was taken seriously and respected when he rose to highlight the concerns of Gibraltar and its people.

210 Together with the Chief Minister, I have had the opportunity to work with Sir Bob during our many lobbying campaigns in Westminster over the years. When the pandemic and travel restrictions complicated in-person meetings with the APPG, he was quick to organise these virtually, instead, so Gibraltar and the views of Gibraltar continued to be heard throughout. Sir Bob Neill is and has been a passionate defender of Gibraltar and its people, so, Madam Speaker, I
215 am delighted to support the motion. (*Banging on desks*)

Madam Speaker: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak?

220 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if I may just add a very few words to everything that has already been said, I have known Bob Neill for practically as long as I have had the honour to be in this House. I saw Sir Bob just a couple of weeks ago in London, and what never fails to strike me is not only how well connected he is across all the parties in Parliament and beyond, but how well versed he is in all things Gibraltar and how willing he is to continue to work for Gibraltar, as I am sure he is doing even now, as hopefully he is watching this debate. So, with those very few
225 words and with very fresh memories of him just a couple of weeks ago, in London, still wanting to do the best he could for Gibraltar, I obviously support this motion as well. (*Banging on desks*)

Madam Speaker: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak?

230 Before I call on the mover to reply, I wonder whether I may break with procedure and, with the leave of the Hon. the Chief Minister, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and Members

generally, be permitted to say a very few words on this honour that is proposed to be endowed on Sir Bob.

I have known Sir Bob for some years now. He is one of a dying breed of traditional, charming gentlemen. Often during his visits to Gibraltar he called on the judiciary, and over the years, over a sip and a nibble, he has become a friend. He has fought tirelessly, bravely and vociferously for Gibraltar. This is a well-deserved, well-earned honour, and I hope to congratulate Sir Bob in person when we next meet.

I now call upon the mover to reply.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, it is not often one is called to reply to you, but I commend you for having impeccably addressed us without failing to refer to us as ‘hon. Members’ – the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the House; I am sure we all had our notebooks out, just in case we might have had a chance to win one back.

Madam Speaker, may I thank you for those very kind words about Sir Bob, because I was, in my response, going to also refer to Sir Bob’s time in the law, and because your references are to his time engaging with the judiciary, that very helpfully opens the door for me to do that and to remind the House that he is also a member of the Middle Temple, which I know you are, and I am too, and I think other Members of the House are also. So, he shares with the, I think, vast majority of the Members of the Bar in Gibraltar that membership, and he and I are always keen to remember the old adage, ‘Inner for the rich, Middle for the poor, Lincoln’s Inn for Chancery and Grey’s Inn for everybody else,’ *que se de por aludido el que se tenga que dar por aludido* whoever that may best refer to.

May I also thank the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition for reminding the House of the words of Sir Bob this National Day, when he was no longer a Member of the House of Commons. His reference was – to him and to me, and I think on television also in Gibraltar – ‘How can I carry on helping Gibraltar now?’ People will be delighted to know that he continues to work with us through Gibraltar House, because, as the Minister for the Environment has said, Bob Neill is really well known in the United Kingdom across the floor of the House, but he is also, perhaps more importantly, really well liked across the floor of the House, and that is the key. The key is not just to be known – hence why just being the pugilist is never going to get you anywhere – it is also about being well liked. If anything, Sir Bob is truly well liked. He is – if I can say so with respect to the other very well-liked Freeman of Gibraltar, Sir Andrew McKinley – the young Andrew McKinley. Both of them, I think, have demonstrated that they have Gibraltar in their hearts and they have used that love that people have for them always to further the cause of Gibraltar.

Madam Speaker, I always forget the terminology: it is the Gibraltar Authorisation Regime. It is shorthand GAR, and that is what we now call the mechanism, the paradigm for this single market between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. I would say that that is the cherry on the cake of the contribution that Sir Bob Neill has made for Gibraltar, but it is just the cherry on a huge cake of contribution. To quote Boris Johnson, a politician who I think I quote less than I quote Margaret Thatcher, I would say with Bob Neill we really are going to be able to have our cake and eat it, in terms of someone who has given the best that he could for Gibraltar.

I have one anecdote that I have not told the House, which I should remind everyone of. I was, with Bob Neill, taken to see another great friend of Gibraltar, Robert Goodwill, who was the Transport Minister of the United Kingdom Government who did himself, the United Kingdom and us proud when he got up and walked out of a meeting of the European Commission in relation to matters to transport Snr Margallo, not so good a friend of Gibraltar, was rescinding the terminology of the Cordoba Agreements that had been agreed going into directives. Robert got up and left and that always, in my view, covers him in glory and demonstrates how much of a staunch supporter of Gibraltar he was, too. So, I was, with Sir Bob, going to see the Rt Hon. Robert Goodwill in the Commons when it was announced that Mrs May had become leader of the Conservative Party. It was confirmed that she was arriving in the House of Commons, and both Bobs said to this socialist, who was wearing a red tie – the Deputy Chief Minister was not with me

at that moment – ‘Come with us to St Stephen’s Gate,’ which is where, traditionally, Conservative Members of Parliament clap in their new leader; it sounded like a good idea. And there, amongst a sea of Conservatives was the leader of the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party and Chief Minister of Gibraltar clapping in Mrs May, who was to become also a staunch supporter of Gibraltar as Prime Minister; she had been as Home Secretary. I felt as out of place as if I was having tea behind your Chair with all the Members of the Government here and all the Members of the Opposition there. But in my view it was good for Gibraltar that I was there because I was immediately able to greet Mrs May again. The Deputy Chief Minister and I would see her the following day when she was to take her first moment after David Cameron had done his last Prime Minister’s Questions and was on the way to the palace and she was getting ready to go to the palace. But all of that, also thanks to Bob Neill.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted that the whole House will support this motion. I am delighted that Sir Bob Neill KC is now going to become also a Freeman of the City and Garrison of Gibraltar, and I will be delighted when he joins us in Gibraltar for the ceremony of the bestowment of the Freedom on him as a result of the unanimous vote of this Parliament. I shall very much look forward to seeing him march his sheep up Main Street whenever he wishes.

I commend the motion to the House. (*Banging on desks*)

Madam Speaker: I now put the question in terms of the motion proposed by the Hon. the Chief Minister. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Questions for Oral Answer

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q972/2024

Motoring offences –

**FPNs issued for mobile phone use and failure to stop at red light –
Supplementary information**

Q973/2024

National Theatre –

Progress and completion date

Clerk: Answers to Oral Questions continued. Question 973. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, is Government satisfied with the progress made to date in respect of providing a new Gibraltar National Theatre, and does it have any indication of possible completion dates?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, before I do that, with your indulgence, if I may very quickly refer to Question 972, the Hon. Lady asked for the full-year effect on the question of penalties. I have now been able to obtain that information, so if I may, I am going to give it now.

For the period 11th November 2023 to 31st December 2023, there were 16 FPNs for mobile phone offences and one for traffic light offences, bringing the figures to a total of 352 and 44 for

those 12 months. I think the hon. Member now has that information and I apologise that it was not made available to me beforehand. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

320 **Madam Speaker:** think the hon. Lady is asking to ask a supplementary on that, and although we have finished that question I am going to allow it because the information has been given.

Hon. J Ladislaus: I am very grateful to be allowed. Just one simple question: could the Hon. the Minister perhaps confirm whether any of the traffic lights – and I think I know the answer – in
325 Gibraltar actually have cameras?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would need to obtain that information; I do not have it here.

330 **Madam Speaker:** Perhaps the Hon. the Minister would like to turn his mind now to Question 973.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker. As I have clarified several times in this House, the Gibraltar National Theatre project is being run by the National Theatre Foundation. I am aware
335 that the design phase is complete to RIBA Stage 3, prepared at no cost to Government thanks to philanthropic donations. The Government is aware of advanced discussions between the foundation and potential funders for the construction phase and is, of course, keen that these should be successfully concluded so that the project can be breaking ground soonest.

340 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, the Minister has reminded us of what he said in previous answers. The latter part of my question: is Government aware – and is it able to enlighten us – of possible completion dates for this project?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, it all depends on the foundation's discussions with
345 the funders. It should take about 18 to 24 months to complete, but I have no further information that I can share.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q974/2024
School suspensions –
Numbers since September 2024

350 **Clerk:** Question 974. The Hon. E J Reyes.

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 September 2024, indicating the school sector where the pupil is or was enrolled and duration of suspension?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, nine pupils have been suspended, all from the secondary sector. The generic reasons are serious behaviour and damage to property, and the suspensions have ranged from two to five
360 days.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I do not quite know how to analyse it. If the school year starts in September and we are almost at the end of November – and the Minister was probably provided with these figures last week – in less than a 10-week period we have had nine pupil suspensions. Given that figure – and the Minister has the statistics to compare it perhaps to previous academic years – is there some concern being expressed amongst the teaching profession? I know the Minister, in respect of other questions, has answered that he was in discussions with the teachers’ representatives, looking into the wider picture of disciplinary matters and so on. Is there anything else that the Minister can say to calm down fears that some parents might feel that nine pupils is too many? I would like to hear the Minister’s updated views on that.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, that is not a question, it is asking me for a view, but I will try to assist, as I normally try to do. Suspensions can be for many reasons, and the threshold for suspension will vary depending on the student, how repetitive a particular behaviour is and depending on the school. Therefore, from such a small sample over such a small period, I do not think we can reach any final conclusions. Nine pupils suspended. Are nine pupils too many? There is the point of view that I would rather there were not any behaviour that teachers consider requires suspension. We continue reviewing the issues of behaviour in the schools. There was a press release, I think just issued now, not directly related to this but showing how we are engaging with specialists from outside in order to look at how we can support young people and children who have behavioural issues. I do not think we can read much into this particular statistic that I have presented today.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q975/2024
Teaching complement –
Numbers by establishment

Clerk: Question 975. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of the current number of teachers forming part of the teaching complement, showing who is employed on a substantive or supply basis as of today’s date and indicating what establishment they are assigned to?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, there is a schedule on its way to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Answer to Q975/2024

School/Establishment	Permanent Staff	Supply Staff
GMLP	25	0
NDLP	29	3
SPLP	24	3
SBLP	14	0

SJLP	25	5
SMLP	13	1
SMS	21	13
SJUP	27	2
SBUP	20	5
SAUP	31	6
BFUP	34	4
GC	26	4
BS	85	27
WS	92	23
TLC	0	4
LMT	4	0
EAL	2	1

Madam Speaker: We will carry on with the next question and revert to this for any supplementaries there may be later.

Next question.

Q976/2024

Teaching TLR posts – Vacancies

Clerk: Question 976. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of how many teaching TLR posts are still pending to be filled on a substantive basis, indicating how many are currently being covered in an acting capacity?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, there are 30 vacant teaching TLR posts, 29 of which are currently being covered on an acting basis.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, mathematics is certainly not my forte. If there are 13 posts to be filled but 29 are being covered in acting posts, that difference of 16 is accounted for how?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, 30 vacant, of which 29 are covered on an acting basis.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, it makes a big difference. Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, it is just one post that is not being covered, for practical reasons or whatever, not something of great concern.

We spoke about this in the last academic year, and the Minister had indicated some hope that if not in time for the start of the 2024-25 year, which would have been September, very shortly thereafter he hoped to have all this settled. I think in his answer, if I recall correctly, he said that

on a couple of posts he was actually in discussion with the Unions to see whether the nomenclature or the duties could be changed. Can the Minister shed any light on that? Why are there still some posts that have not been settled on a permanent basis?

425 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is a dynamic situation. The posts that are vacant now are not the same ones that were vacant last academic year. A lot of those have been filled and others have become vacant through retirement or promotion and so on, so they are not the same posts. At the moment, I know that 9 are in the process of being recruited in the sense that the adverts have gone out and the recruitment process is progressing. There are another 21 posts
430 that are pending, and many of these are due to more recent promotions. There is still a small nucleus of posts which I am told by the Department they are now tweaking. Hopefully by the end of this term, just a couple of weeks to go, we will be in a position to discuss them in detail with the Union, with a view to filling them, but I repeat that they are not the same posts that were vacant last year. There have been some filled and others have fallen vacant.

435 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker; it does shed a lot of useful information on that. May I take a bit of tongue in cheek, because neither the Minister for Education nor I are not members of the legal profession; therefore, we can sometimes be a bit more liberal with the language. Is the Minister able to at least give an indication by what date he would ideally like to
440 have this settled? I know quite often as a Minister you say, 'I want it done, and done as soon as possible,' sometimes when one asserts a bit of authority on the Director of Education ... This autumn term is nearly over and spring term will be over before we know it. Does the Minister have a particular target that he is asking his officials to aim for, to settle this?

445 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Clearly, I know that that is not the question that I have been asked. I suspect that we will never come to a situation when, in asking that question, I will say there are none vacant, because of the dynamic nature, but in respect of the post that we are trying to readjust, I have asked the Director of Education to have the recommendations by the end of this term. I am expecting it will be by the end of this term, and therefore there will be a
450 small period of discussion with the Union to tweak it, if necessary, and then I expect that this should be advertised and filled next term.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

455 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask a supplementary on ...? Oh, this is the question that we are going to go back to eventually, the one where we have received the schedule in reply.

Q977/2024

Teachers with diverse family needs – Availability of part-time employment

Clerk: Question 977. The Hon. E J Reyes.

460 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government confirm if part-time employment is available for teachers in order to cater for diverse family needs?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, yes. While it can be difficult to accommodate, depending on the teacher's specific role, if possible and there are justifiable circumstances, consideration will be given.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q978/2024

**DoE staff accessing well-being support –
Numbers**

Clerk: Question 978. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many LSAs and staff employed at the Department of Education have accessed the well-being support team during the academic year 2023-24 and, so far, this academic year 2024-25?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, in total, 46 members of Education staff, inclusive of SNLSAs, accessed support from the Government's well-being team in the academic year 2023-24. So far in academic year 2024-25, 28 members of Education staff, inclusive of SNLSAs, have accessed well-being support from the Government's well-being team.

Hon. E J Reyes: The Minister has not broken it down by those who are LSAs or otherwise. When he is talking about the non-LSAs, are they all members of the teaching grades, or in that figure are there certain administrative grades who are not necessarily qualified teachers in their own right? I do not know if the Minister has that statistic with him.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I will give the LSA figures; I have them here. I do not have it specifically, but I would have thought that the majority are teachers, if only because they are the majority of the staff and by chance alone you would expect it to be more teachers. For those two years we are talking about 23 and 15 who are specifically LSAs.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q979/2024

**Gibraltar College –
Relocation cost and expected completion date**

Clerk: Question 979. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government update this House in respect of progress made to relocate the Gibraltar College, together with details of costs and expected completion dates?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the College has been relocated to the Cross of Sacrifice site. The design details are currently being discussed with the full participation of the College team. A detailed timeframe and costs have not yet been finalised, but the plan is to open at the new site in September 2027.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, two things arise from that. The Minister says the plans and so on are being discussed. With exactly whom is it being discussed: with all members of staff of the College or with the managerial team of the College? And although at this stage, because of its design and so on, he may have little idea to be able to commit himself to costs, may I ask, additionally, will this eventually be a cost, the bill for which will be footed by Government, or will it be like other projects, for example, in respect of other developments that the Deputy Chief Minister alluded yesterday, where the developer had to provide those premises? Does the Minister have any indication of who is going to pay for this?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, at this point in time – (*Interjections*)

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Minister was talking.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: At this point in time, Madam Speaker, this is part of a larger project for the area. The exact details and costings and division of the plot, so to speak, are part of the discussion that I have described.

In relation the participation of the College, I meet regularly, about once a month, with the senior College team, the architects and the team from the Department, and they are cascading that down to the rest of the staff to get feedback. I will be doing a visit to the College very shortly, when I hope to speak directly to the staff about their expectations and requirements.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that. The reason why I asked, and perhaps the Minister can confirm ... My interest in involving in these discussions and planning the lower grades or the ordinary classroom lecturer is ... Can the Minister confirm: are we talking about not only the reprovision in new premises of existing subject areas, but is the Minister exploring, as well, the possibilities of extending the wider curriculum and range of subjects that the College could offer if moving to new premises and cater for certain specialist rooms, as an example?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would not choose the descriptive 'lower grades', but I know what the hon. Member means. The College, to my mind, is the biggest untapped potential in education in Gibraltar. It has huge potential. The opportunity will be taken now to see how we can expand, not just on site but also using other sites around Gibraltar. I work very closely with my hon. Friend the Minister for Employment, who runs training and the Training Centre, in developing schemes together, and we will continue to work that within the new premises as well.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q980/2024

Non-F-gases –

Reports of importation by non-local companies

Clerk: Question 980. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: We have received reports from local companies of the illegal importation of non-F-gas certified gases as refrigerants for air-conditioning units by cross-border companies, despite it being in contravention of EU directives due to the harming effects it has on the ozone layer. Is the Government committed to stamping out this malpractice?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, there is a regime in Gibraltar, legislated under the Environmental Protection (Controls on Ozone-Depleting substances) Act 2014 which transposed the EU's F-gas Regulation with the overarching aim of eliminating the sale of HFCs in the EU by 2050. The regulations introduced a quota system to local producers and importers to phase down the importation and production of the most common F-gases and to encourage the switch to climate-friendly alternative substances with lower global warming potential or non-F gas alternatives such as ammonia, hydrocarbons and carbon dioxide.

The Environmental Agency works closely with HM Customs to control these and other imports such as food stuffs. However, neither department has received any reports of these controlled gases being imported by non-local companies. Both departments welcome any information from the public, or indeed from the hon. Member, as to how these alleged importations are happening, so that both organisations can come together to investigate and take any necessary action.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the Hon. Minister for his explanation and for assuring that this would be tackled with immediate concern. This, of course, is something which is prejudicial to the environment, and not just us but obviously – the ozone layer – everyone else on the planet, and I think we should be doing everything possible to kerb this malpractice. The information did come from a very reliable source, a person of great standing within the community, and I have no reason to doubt his word. In fact, post this –

Madam Speaker: Question.

Hon. C Sacarello: – if the Minister is happy, I will liaise with him to help kerb this practice.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the question is am I happy for him to liaise with me and provide me with the information. The answer is absolutely, we would take it up very seriously.

Q975/2024

Teaching complement – Numbers by establishment – Supplementary questions

Madam Speaker: Before moving on to the Hon. D J Bossino's questions, we will take any supplementaries on Question 975.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have had the opportunity to look at the chart and I have a couple of very minor queries.

The abbreviation 'SMS': am I interpreting that rightly to be St Martin's Special School; and if that is the case, can the Minister enlighten us on why there are so many members of staff on a supply basis?

590 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, it is St Martin's School and what I can say is that this is because of the specific needs of the children. Sometimes we have to bring in additional supply staff in order to deal with those specific needs.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful for that clarification, Madam Speaker.

595 Within the nomenclature 'BS' and 'WS', which one can deduce are Bayside School and Westside School, it seems that almost a quarter of the teaching staff in each school are on a supply basis. I know we will always have an element of supply because some are covering long-term maternity, as the first example that comes to mind, but as high as figures as those on the table? Is there something there that can explain the situation?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, a lot of these supplies are due to maternity and some of them are due to career breaks. Clearly, the larger the school, the more likely it is that there will be teachers on those kinds of breaks. Remember that this is a snapshot at any given time, so it may be that the teachers are supplying for a brief period of time, perhaps with a particular speciality, perhaps with children with particular needs, but you would expect the larger schools to have more absences that have to be covered by supply teachers.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful that at least the Minister has enlightened us and we have on the record why that should be the case.

610 In respect of – I want to make sure I do not have the wrong interpretation – the last three sets of abbreviations – TLC, LMT and EAL, the TLC has four supply members of staff and no one on a permanent basis, but I am not 100% certain on what those abbreviations mean. Can the Minister clarify that?

615 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I believe that there must be an error in the abbreviations because I am struggling to recall at least one of them, so I would need to check because they are not the ones that I recognise. EAL, I believe, is Early Access Learning. TLC is the correct abbreviation and this is the unit which is based at the old St Bernard's Nursery which deals with particular special needs of children who cannot be taught within the school environment all the time and spend time at that centre. There the figures will be flexible because it will respond to whether there are any particular children accessing those facilities. On LMT I think there must be an error. I will check, hopefully during the course of this session, and I will clarify as soon as I have it.

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625 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must say, for the record and for your information, although you may have got a copy, in the previous session of Parliament, when the Minister said that he was missing some figures and he would find them out he did actually write to us, so at least there was a parliamentary record. So, I am grateful if the Minister has committed himself to do that for us. Likewise – Madam Speaker, I think you would probably guide me in the right direction – I can ask him in the future on the question of the TLC, for which he has explained the setup, if I am interested in finding out the future, more long – term basis for that. Am I correct in saying I had better pose it as a separate question in the next term? I do not think I would then infringe any rules because –

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635 **Madam Speaker:** At the risk of catching my fingers now, I will rule on the admissibility of a question once I have it before me. I cannot give you an indication until I see the question. In principle, what you are suggesting appears to be all right, but I will have to look at the question first.

640 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to ask a separate set of information which I do not think it would be reasonable for me to expect the Minister – otherwise, he would carry a file as big as a cabinet – to provide. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. D J Bossino.

645 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am very grateful and I am going to try to be as non-pugilistic as possible this afternoon. That is my undertaking; let's see if I am able to live up to it.

May I ask the Hon. the Minister specifically in relation to Bayside School and Westside School? As my hon. Friend Mr Reyes rightly pointed out, it is the highest number, and the hon. Member has explained why that may be the case, but may I ask him whether he is able to establish and provide a breakdown in respect of those 27 and 23 individuals who are on the supply list? Whilst he has put it in terms that they are there to fill gaps because of breaks in careers for whatever reason, and they are there for a short period of time and it is a bigger school, the information that we are receiving is that there is a number – I do not know how big that number is, but I understand it is a big issue, certainly a big issue for the individuals concerned – who are there almost on, and I know it is a bit of a contradiction, permanent supply, and then that has an impact on their livelihoods and the ability to obtain mortgages and all the rest of it. I am pretty certain that the hon. Member does not have that information here with him, but I would ask him whether he would be able to provide us with that answer should we ask that question, and secondly, whether he has any comment in relation to what I have just said.

655 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, also, some of the supply staff will be covering vacancies. If there have been promotions and people have been promoted to TLR, for example, there will be current vacancies. I omitted to say that some of these are likely covering vacancies, and the recruitment of teachers from outside the service is done usually once a year, so there will be periods during which we will be covering with supply staff, but certainly that information can be obtained and made available.

670 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Do I take it that my request for a comment was the first part of his answer in relation to those who are, on a more permanent basis, on the supply list?

675 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, but without my having an analysis of exactly who we are talking about and how long they have been on supply ... This is a snapshot. They could have been called in the week before or they could have been there a term or two. The circumstances will all be different. We could have somebody on maternity leave who may then take an extended maternity leave or a career break, and obviously we have to cover and we cannot replace them. So, it is a very dynamic situation but I do not have that intimate detail here.

680 **Hon. D J Bossino:** One final question, simply to encourage him to re-look into this, because again he puts it in terms of a short period of time, and in his response he has offered a term or two. Actually, we are talking about more than one or two academic years' worth of individuals who are on the supply list and see no end to circumstances for them, given that there is a clear need for them, to be given permanent employment as teachers.

685 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, no two cases will be the same and there will be particular circumstances appertaining to each one, and I do not have that information here.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q981-83/2024

**Award of Northern Defences contract to Fortress Attractions Ltd –
Panel members; consultation with Antiquities Advisory Council and Gibraltar Heritage Trust;
authorisation by Minister for Heritage**

Clerk: Question 981. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Who formed part of the panel of experts consulted in relation to the recent award to Fortress Attractions Ltd of the Northern Defences contract?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 982 and 983.

Clerk: Question 982. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When were the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council and the Gibraltar Heritage Trust consulted in respect of the recent award to Fortress Attractions Ltd of the Northern Defences contract?

Clerk: Question 983. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When was the recent award to Fortress Attractions Ltd of the Northern Defences contract authorised by the Minister for Heritage under the Heritage and Antiquities Act?

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

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the panel that initially considered the entities that responded to the call for expressions of interest included the Deputy Chief Minister as Chair, the Minister for Tourism, my colleague sitting here to my right, and me, as well as Kevin de los Santos of Land Property Services, Town Planner Paul Naughton-Rumbo, CEO of Technical Services Emil Hermida, and Carl Viagas, whose expertise in heritage projects is well known and who has been directing the Northern Defences works for many years. Prior to finalising the agreement, Government Archaeologist Dominic Lopez as well as the Heritage Trust and the Heritage and Antiquities Council were involved in discussions.

This was a long process. There had been an earlier call for expressions of interest in 2018 which did not progress. This latest call for expressions of interest was published on 14th and 18th December 2023. There were three applicants who were called to present to the panel. Following these presentations, the panel unanimously agreed that the best project was offered by Fortress Attractions Ltd, who were informed that they were preferred bidders on 27th March 2024. There were then extensive discussions on the details, with the contract finally signed on 15th October 2024. The Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council discussed the project on 9th August 2024 and approved the issuing of the heritage licence. The licence was signed by me on 15th October 2024, once the agreement had been signed.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister has, as he is, of course, entitled to do, bunched those three questions together. If I may unpack them as best I can, because in his reply he has not then cross-referred to the question that I posed, which of course he is also entitled to do, but in respect of the last bit of the answer that the Hon. Gentleman has given, I think that that actually does accord – The Hon. Gentleman rises. He cannot wait until finish and is very eager to answer the question.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I will sit but I will remove the lectern because we are directly opposite and I cannot see the hon. Member as he is addressing me. So, I will sit, but I will remove this; otherwise, I will have to stand if I am going to be able to see the hon. Member. I do apologise if that caused any inconvenience.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Am I that seriously vertically challenged that the hon. Member cannot see me? I did not realise the lectern was that high.

In relation to those two last answers, I think I can deal with those swiftly and, I think, in a co-operative way, if I may say. Would he agree with me that in terms of the chronology that the Hon. Gentleman has provided, the proper process has been adhered to under the relevant Act, so that there has been a process of consultation with the relevant parties under the Act? I can refer the hon. Member to section 15(4), which requires him, as the Minister, to consult, and the various entities of the Council, which is set out in its full name there – it is abbreviated in the Act and indeed the Gibraltar Heritage Act – and that is done before the Minister then authorises the works to be carried out. I would ask him to confirm that that is, in fact, the case, that I have understood it correctly.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, before I sign the licence, which is *de facto* the permission to carry out the works, based on the heritage aspects, there are separate processes here. There is also the planning process and the selection process, which the Deputy Chief Minister has chaired, but in order for the works to commence several boxes have to be ticked. One of those is the heritage licence. There, I need to consult the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council. Following their recommendations – I may agree or disagree; I usually agree with the recommendation – I sign the licence if I am satisfied that it is consistent with the aims of the Act. So yes, I consult the Heritage and Antiquities Council before I sign the licence, and that is the case with every heritage licence that I sign.

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Hon. D J Bossino: In relation to the first question I posed, Question 981, which relates to the panel of experts, I think his answer, with the greatest of respect to him, was slightly confusing in the sense that he was bundling together and setting out the history, which I am fully aware of in respect of the first salvo, if I may put it in those terms, in relation to this site, which the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister was heavily engaged in, and I think so were other individuals that he has referred to, and then it did not come to fruition, and now we have this. I am asking specifically, as he knows, in relation to the one in respect of Fortress Attractions Ltd, which has been the subject of debate outside of this House between him and I. In respect of that, he very specifically said in a GBC interview that the Heritage Trust formed part of the panel of experts. He knows that I raised it in one of my responses and I do not think he responded to that point. This is why I thought it was appropriate to raise it across the floor of the House. He said that they had been consulted, albeit under the umbrella of a panel of experts, yet the Heritage Trust, whilst broadly supportive of the project – and I am getting to the question, Madam Speaker – did say that that the Trust was not on the tender panel. I think he is eager to explain and I am sure that the distinction is something which he can address the Parliament on.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to clarify. The Trust was not on the panel at the interview. When it was recorded, I was under the impression that it had been, and I will explain the sequence. I had been asked by GBC to provide an interview on this. Because there had been several similar panels, I was trying to recollect who the members were, and I received a draft press release, which had been prepared by the Press Office, which actually said that the Heritage Trust was on the panel, and therefore I said, 'Oh, so they were on the panel. Shortly after, like half an hour, I gave the interview, referring to what the press release has said. Subsequently, the Deputy Chief Minister spotted and then recalled that they had not been, and he advised me. I immediately called the Heritage Trust and told them. I called Ian

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790 Balestrino, the Chairman, and said, 'Look, I have just said this. I was wrong. I do apologise, it was a genuine error.' I say this quite openly: it was an error. The interview had already gone out and it was not possible to withdraw it in time. It was a legitimate, genuine error for which I apologise particularly to the Heritage Trust, because they were not there and I said, in error, that they had been.

795 **Hon. D J Bossino:** One needs to acknowledge that the Hon. the Minister has accepted that he spoke in error, and I am glad that he has done so publicly, because it was an issue which did cause me concern. He will recall that the focus of the interview was not that. The focus of the interview was the criticism that we had about the individuals who are behind this company, who we say are very closely connected –

800 **Madam Speaker:** Question.

Hon. D J Bossino: The question, as I am asked by the Speaker to set out to him is this. How is it possible, unless I have misunderstood the initial response that he gave, that he fell into that error? I thought that he was fully involved and engaged in the process. Was he relying on
805 somebody else, which is the way I understood it? He relied on the press release, but surely the Hon. Minister must have been so involved in the process that it is an error that should surely should not have been made.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No errors should ever be made.
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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member opposite may not have realised that I am actually human and I may have made one mistake in my political career – that was not even a mistake.

815 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Going into politics.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Thanks to the Hon. Chief Minister. I have him to thank for that particular error.

820 Madam Speaker, I just have to clarify that the press release that ultimately went out did not say the Heritage Trust had been a part of it. I think I can defend that error in the sense that – and the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister will bear me out – we have had many similar panels of very similar composition dealing with very similar projects over the last year or two, and therefore my recollection of that particular panel made me doubt: 'Is it this one or is it the one before, and who exactly was there?' In that moment of doubt, seeing the press release which said they had been
825 there, I said, 'Ah, that is one at which the Trust was present.' That was an assumption that I made based on what I had read, but obviously my memory then clicked on to an earlier panel where they had been present. We have done several of the Northern Defences, we have done Fortress Headquarters, we have done very similar panels, and this is how it happened.

830 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Once again, I am grateful to him. Just one very small point, and in fact it may even assist him. I think the position then is that at one point, i.e. on 9th August, he, as the Minister, would have consulted the Heritage Trust as part of the statutory process. Is that correct?

835 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I am not worried about the fact that they were not there on the panel, because subsequently, and before I signed the permit, the Heritage Trust was consulted at a number of meetings, including separately and as part of the Heritage Antiquities Advisory Council, and then subsequently they came out with the press release which supported the project.

840 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q984-87/2024

Moorish Castle prison block –

Consultation with Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council and Gibraltar Heritage Trust; authorisation by Minister for Heritage; identify of company commissioned to carry out works; whether works were subject to tender process

Clerk: Question 984. The Hon. D J Bossino.

845 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When were the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council and the Gibraltar Heritage Trust consulted in respect of the works to be carried out at the Moorish Castle prison block?

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

850 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 985 to 987.

Clerk: Question 985. The Hon. D J Bossino.

855 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When were the works to the Moorish Castle prison block authorised by the Minister for Heritage?

Clerk: Question 986. The Hon. D J Bossino.

860 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Which company has been commissioned to carry out the works to the Moorish Castle prison block?

Clerk: Question 987. The Hon. D J Bossino.

865 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Were the works to the Moorish Castle prison block the subject of a tender process?

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

870 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I gave a history earlier in order to be helpful; I am going to give a history again now, trying to be helpful as well. I hope it is not too confusing.

875 The Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council, of which the Heritage Trust is a part, was first informed of the proposed and long-awaited plans to improve the Moorish Castle Tower of Homage and Inner Keep – not the more recently used prison area – on 9th August 2024 as the plans were being developed; the same meeting as I referred to earlier. They had been worked on by the team at the National Museum for some months. There was a requirement for a heritage
880 licence and the application for this was circulated by the Government Archaeologist via round robin on 13th September and approved. This was subsequently signed by me as Minister responsible under the Act. Several additional meetings were held with the Government Archaeologist to ensure that the works were consistent with the heritage of the sites. The project was also discussed, together with many other matters, at my monthly meetings with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, including on 20th September and 24th October. The project was again discussed at length at the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council on 5th November, a meeting which

included a presentation by the architects. This presentation was also given to the Gibraltar Heritage Trustees on the 7th November, with a site visit taking place on 8th November. The Heritage Trust did not object to the granting of a demolition licence of a more recent dilapidated structure – a 20th-century prison block – by the Development and Planning Commission, which was granted on 14th November. There will be monthly progress and review meetings, which I will Chair and which will include all the relevant stakeholders. The project team includes heritage experts, project managers and engineers.

The actual works will be carried out by Koala Construction, chosen for their extensive experience with heritage sites across the Upper Rock and the Northern Defences.

The Moorish Castle is contracted to the Gibraltar National Museum's management, and so the restoration works have been subcontracted by them as yet another Museum project. Therefore, there was no requirement for a Government tender.

Hon. D J Bossino: His hope not to confuse, I am afraid, has not been achieved because there is a lot of information and lots of dates there.

In respect of the first point – and I ask him more or less in a similar vein to the questions in relation to Fortress Attractions Ltd – in the whole list that the Hon. Minister has given us, can he particularise ...? As I would see it, but the hon. Member may have a different position to express by way of an answer – there would be one meeting, and I imagine it was 9th August, where this was discussed, the Heritage Trust consulted, and they gave the green light to it. They do not necessarily need to, the only thing that the Hon. Minister needs to do is consult them, but that happened before the Hon. Minister authorised the works, as he has to do from a statutory perspective. My question is: on which date did he consult and then on which date did the Hon. Minister give the green light in respect of these works?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the consultation with the Heritage Trust will have been twofold. It will have been directly with them, and it will have been as a result of the round robin of 13th September. So, the official consultation with the Heritage and Antiquities Council was on 13th September by round robin. Subsequent to that, the heritage licence was signed. Those aspects which needed a heritage licence included the demolition of a structure, which was granted by the Development Plan Commission – a separate process but also with the support of the Heritage Trust – on 14th November.

Hon. D J Bossino: In all of that, has the Minister answered my question in respect of when he granted what termed the scheduled monument or building consent under the Act? When did that happen?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Member repeat? I did not quite catch the end of that.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, of course. I will just rise so the hon. Member can see me as well. On what date is the Hon. Minister saying that he gave, under the Act, the scheduled monument or building consent?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: It was probably around 13th September because I normally like to deal with these things quickly. I do not have the date of signature, but I suspect it will have been around that date.

Hon. D J Bossino: We have a bit of a difficulty here. This is not the type of supplementary question to which I think the Hon. Minister can safely say, 'I do not have the information in front of me.' This is a very specific question on the Order Paper: when did he authorise it? I am not sure whether I also need to spell out to the hon. Member that the authorisation from the Minister as

935 a Minister for the Crown in respect of these type of works, in respect of a very important
scheduled structure, has emanated from the Act. So, I ask him once again. The way I am
understanding it is that the Hon. Minister has not been able to provide an answer in relation to
the question on the Order Paper, not by way of supplementary. I am not getting it. All I am getting
is a mumble-jumble – with the greatest of respect to him – of dates, and what I have tried to glean
940 from that is when did he consult and when did he give authorisation, specific statutory consent.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I said very clearly that there was a requirement for a
heritage licence under the Act. The application was circulated on 13th September and approved.
My recollection is that I did it right away, and therefore, subject to my getting a copy of the licence
945 and just checking that it was the 13th and not maybe the 14th because it was left on my desk
overnight, I would say it is 13th September. If I am incorrect, then I will very happily rectify that
and let the hon. Member and this House know.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, yes, I would appreciate that. This is wholly, if I may say so,
950 unsatisfactory because the question is very clear and the Hon. Minister should have had the
answer provided to me – not just available to him but actually provided to me when first asked –
in his prepared response. I am actually very surprised that we are here trying to get to the bottom
of this information. It is not satisfactory to rely on the Minister saying, ‘Probably I gave it when I
did the round robin’, which in itself I find slightly alarming that consultation should happen in this
955 way on something so serious. But putting that to one side, I would ask – I am not sure how this
can be resolved – that he answers my question.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, this is an issue that relates to parliamentary
procedure. The question is: when were the works of the Moorish Castle prison block authorised
960 by the Minister? The first answer tells him ‘the application for this was circulated by the
Government Archaeologist via round robin on 13th September and approved. This was
subsequently signed by me as Minister responsible under the Act.’ And he has now said that day
or the day after. What is the issue that the Hon. Gentleman is trying to make? Is it that he does
not know the minute, he does not know the exact date, he does not know the exact second? And
965 why is that relevant? Why is the 13th or the 14th relevant to the hon. Member’s analysis? Or is it
that he is trying to set us a trap of the sort that he thought I was setting for him yesterday, when
the question of when has been answered at the very least with the accuracy of the Minister saying
it was either 24 or 48 hours after that? That is absolute accuracy and answer, and so, therefore,
the government side will not accept that we are failing to answer the question in any material
970 respect whatsoever.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, if I may just add, because there were two parts to the
question, perhaps my error is in being absolutely honest and saying it could have been the 14th if
the paper was there overnight, but I go exactly with what the Hon. Chief Minister has said.

975 In relation to the round robin, round robin is a process which is regularly used and all the
information necessary is provided, all the documentation is provided and there is ample
opportunity for discussion. Furthermore, as I have also said later on in my answer, there have
been many subsequent discussions in order to expand, clarify and expand more on the detail of
the project to the total satisfaction of the Heritage Trust.

980 Madam Speaker, what really disappoints me, if I may express disappointment on my part, is
that instead of the Government being congratulated for finally being able to move on these gems
of heritage ... In fact, the Hon. Mr Origo only yesterday was saying the Government is not doing
enough to improve its tourist product, expand on the value of its heritage and restore it and so
on, and now we are clearly doing it and the hon. Member is concentrating on a matter of maybe
985 a 12-hour difference. Even if it was a day or two different, it was approved on 13th September
and subsequently signed by me. How long it took me to actually put my signature down on paper

I do not think has relevance and fades into insignificance against the magnitude of the project that we are doing here such important heritage for Gibraltar.

990 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The hon. Member now seeks to wax lyrical about something that he wanted to do from the very beginning of this exchange, which is to extol the virtues of everything he does, particularly in relation to this project. I am asking a very specific question and it is a serious point.

I do not think we are going to get very far this evening in relation to this point, but may I ask him this by way of clarification: is the Hon. Minister saying that he has signed the written consent under the Act and that he has the evidentiary proof to back that up? It is important to establish that the Hon. Minister consulted who he needed to consult under the Act before the consent was granted, and I am entitled to question and put the Government to proof in relation to that because that is what we are here to do. We are here to scrutinise what the Government does and take them to account.

1000 **Hon. Chief Minister:** We refer the Hon. Gentleman to the answers we gave a few moments ago, Madam Speaker.

1005 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask the Hon. Minister ...? When he states, in relation to my question dealing with the tender issue – and I know that he has used this in the past – that a tender is not relevant because in fact the Moorish Castle is already ... I am not sure if all of it or parts of it, the relevant parts, are under the management ... I cannot remember the full title, but under the Gibraltar Museum. I cannot remember the full title the hon. Member used. Is this the same entity, that is Knightsfield Holdings Ltd? Is that the legal position?

1010 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, that information is in the public domain.

1015 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I get what the hon. Members are doing: they are playing games, once again. It may or may not be in the public domain. I simply do not know that; one would need to check. As I have said many times in the past, I take everything the hon. Members, particularly the Chief Minister, say with a pinch of salt and I am *always* put on inquiry. But can I ask him this? He refers to an entity, describes it in a certain way, and all I am asking him to do is to confirm – and I think it is the position – that it is, in fact, Knightsfield Holdings Ltd that would have contracted Koala Construction to do the works.

1020 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, in the context of somebody who is telling us that we are playing games, all I would tell the hon. Gentleman is that we can see the game he is playing, and we are not going to play. In the context of somebody who says that he does not believe anything that we say, why ask us to confirm things which are in the public domain? In the context of someone who says that he checks everything that we say, why ask us to counter-confirm the things that he can check for himself? And given that the Rules of the House do not require us to provide information that is in the public domain, and the question that he asked last and the question he has asked now is about information that is in the public domain, Madam Speaker, we refer him to the public domain, where no doubt his diligence will have told him the answer to the question that he is asking. I cannot imagine that we are going to advance the cause of this Parliament much further by, being the people he does not trust, giving him answers that he can check for himself.

1035 **Madam Speaker:** Any other supplementaries?

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes.

Madam Speaker: I do not want to continue labouring this point. I do not want to have a discussion. Any other supplementary?

Hon. D J Bossino: Of course, Madam Speaker, and I take on board what you say. It was my intention in any event; I think one needs to move on. It is what it is.

The Hon. the Minister said that there was a site meeting on 8th November. May I ask the Hon. Minister to provide information as to who attended that meeting?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, it was attended by trustees of the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, by the Government Archaeologist and by at least the Director of the Gibraltar Museum and possibly other members of the Museum staff. I was not present, so I cannot confirm exactly who, but that broadly, I think, explains the people who went.

Hon. D J Bossino: If I may, Madam Speaker, go back to the round-robin issue – just one point of clarification. I think the Hon. the Minister said that that the Council was consulted. I think that is the way he put it. May I also ask him specifically – and this was on 13th September – whether the Gibraltar Heritage Trust was also separately consulted in that manner?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Heritage and Antiquities Council was consulted on 13th September, and I have just seen that the word in the next sentence says this was subsequently signed by me, as Minister. Clearly, I had already said that I had consulted them before I signed, so that answers that question, if it needed answering. The Gibraltar Heritage Trust was consulted as part of that collective, and then subsequently there were further discussions, explanations and expansions leading up to the site visit on 8th November, and in fact, even further, two nights ago at the annual general meeting of the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, where the Chairman spoke in great welcoming terms about the work that we are going to be doing at the Moorish Castle, so they are very happy with this.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question nine hundred –

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Could I?

Madam Speaker: Yes, one last question, from the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I was just trying to catch Madam Speaker's eye. May I just ask the Minister: in terms of the works themselves, what are or have been the cost of the works? Does he have that information?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the works are being done for the Museum. I do not have all the information. One of the things that I have mentioned, actually, is the demolition of an old 20th-century prison block, which is dilapidated and in fact is dangerous, and there has already been – I know because I have seen it – removal of vegetation from the Tower of Homage and a lot of clearing of debris. The full plans will shortly be made public, but I wanted to await this meeting of Parliament because it would not have been appropriate for us to launch the project when we had this question pending. So, within the next couple of weeks there will be a public presentation of the works that are planned.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I was not asking about any of that. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)*

1090 **Hon. Chief Minister:** He's told you he can't give you the numbers because it's not work done for us.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I did not think he had said that specifically.

1095 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think that is what you told him to say. *(Laughter)*

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am not sure that that is what he said.

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, it's what his first answer said.

1100

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Let me ask the question again, and if that is the answer, well then let it be said. What I was asking was not when the presentation was going to be but if the Minister was aware what the costs were.

1105 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Ah, the costs. Madam Speaker, I did not hear that. Unfortunately, I have kept my hearing aids in my pocket today, so I missed that. I do apologise. No, Madam Speaker, I do not have that information here.

Hon. D J Bossino: Just one more, if I may, as it relates to –

1110

Madam Speaker: One. This is the last question on this and a separate one. All right.

Hon. D J Bossino: No preamble.

1115 **Madam Speaker:** Let's see. I am listening.

Hon. D J Bossino: The reply that the Hon. Minister has provided to my hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition talks about costs and all the rest of it. Are we safe to understand on this side of the House that here will not be any further cost to the Government? Putting it in different terms, the Minister is confident that the Gibraltar Museum, whatever the entity is called, will be able to fund this from its own funds and the funds that it, the Government, provides to this entity?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the subcontractor is intending to access private funding in order to contribute to this as well, but I do not have the detail of that.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q988/2024

Ferry links with Morocco – Impact of potential treaty with EU

Clerk: Question 988. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1130 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is the Government willing to ensure that there is no ferry service from Gibraltar to Morocco in the event of a treaty on a new relationship for Gibraltar with the EU?

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

1135 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, no. The specific arrangements for links to Morocco will be considered at the right time, and their nature and the detail will depend on the outcome.

1140 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** The nature and the detail will depend on the outcome of what?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the outcome of the treaty. That is the question. The question is, more or less, put in other words, what will happen in the event of a treaty and a new relationship, and I have said that the detail will depend on the outcome of that.

1145 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am not asking about the detail but rather the principle of whether the Government is prepared to, in effect, put a stop to the ferry service as a result of an agreement with the EU.

1150 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Nobody has asked us to do that, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister may not be aware but there was an interview given to the Spanish press by the Mayor of La Linea, who, in part of the interview, talking about Brexit and the consequences and the issue of mobility on persons said this, and I quote him:

Hay una linea que sale de Gibraltar una vez en semana a Tanger. Esa linea – Fabian Picardo me dice que come puede generar un problema – desaparece

1155 Loosely speaking: 'There is a route that sails from Gibraltar once a week to Tangiers. That route – Fabian Picardo tells me it might cause a problem – will disappear.' Has there been a discussion in the context of the EU negotiations under which the Government has either said or is contemplating the possibility of taking steps to cancel that route to Tangiers as a consequence of an agreement?

1160 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I believe one of the rules of the House states very clearly that the Government is not to be asked about the accuracy of any report in the media.

1165 **Madam Speaker:** That is absolutely right. I was not of the impression that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition was asking about the accuracy of the statement, and certainly if he had been my ruling would have been that the Hon. the Ministers do not have to comment on the accuracy of that statement, but as I understood it, that was not the question.

1170 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker has heard me correctly. I was very careful in repeating what has been said in the media and not asking him whether it was accurate, but rather to ask the Chief Minister whether there has been a discussion within the context of the negotiations in the EU and whether the Government was contemplating the possibility of taking steps to cancel the route to Tangiers.

1175 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, it would seem to me that the Rules of the House can therefore be easily circumvented, because one can put the article, speculate about its accuracy and then just ask the question as if the article had not been put.

1180 I am very clear in all the answers I have given in this House and all of the answers I have given outside of this House, when things have been put to me which are accurate about things that are going on in the negotiation and things have been put to me which are inaccurate about things which are going on in the negotiation, that I am not going to confirm the accuracy or inaccuracy of anything, I am not going to going to discuss the detail of anything that has been discussed in the negotiation; I am going to preserve the integrity of the confidentiality of the negotiation, and

when the time comes we will make an announcement about the negotiation and what it has resulted in or not resulted in and I will not be drawn on anything.

I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition, who tells us that he has given us space to be able to successfully conclude the negotiation, would try to draw us on something and no doubt do so in the context of an attempt to try to draw us out, or create speculation or concern in respect of a particular part of this community. I am getting used to it, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: The Hon. Chief Minister sounds a tad too defensive. Of course, I am giving him space; he knows that. In his heart, he knows that. I put the question to him because it does cause concern to people, because people in this community have heard the interview. I gave him the context of the interview; I am certainly not asking him to comment on the interview. I put a straight question to him. I could have put the question to him without the context, but I want him to understand what the context is because the context has caused concern to people. So, I am putting a very straight question to him, and he could give a very straight answer rather than dance around the edges and say he is not going to comment on it. If the Government is not contemplating it, has not reached an agreement, has not discussed it, well then it can be said in those terms, so I give him the opportunity again: has there been a discussion about this in the context of the negotiations with the EU?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I am neither defensive nor dancing; I am just determined not to give any detail of the negotiation, because if I start to rule out the things that he puts to me today, how do I not rule out something else tomorrow? I am going to do what I have to do to ensure that I defend the people of Gibraltar at that negotiating table, even if I have to suffer the wounds on my back of people trying to tarnish the Government and me in the process, or those who might wish to raise levels of concern in our community for their own party-political purposes.

If there were concerns about this matter – and that interview, I understand, appeared approximately 30 or more days ago – those concerns would have reached me already. If there were concerns about this matter, they would have been raised with other members of the Government. If there were concerns about that matter, they would have been raised with me, for example by the people who represent the collective that most relies on the link that the Hon. Gentleman is referring to. They have not been. So, this is not to raise concerns that have been potentially raised at a level of the community; this is to raise an issue to say that he has raised the issue, in order to be relevant, and to do so despite the fact that that delves into the negotiation.

So, not defensive, not dancing and not determined, because this ain't *Strictly Come Dancing*, this is a Parliament, and we have to be very careful and very serious about what we do here, in particular when we are dealing with the negotiation. He knows that, and in his heart he will know that today he has failed his own standard and test.

Madam Speaker: All right. Is that the end of –?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, one –

Madam Speaker: I am not going to allow comment. (**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Of course.) If there is a specific question then I will allow the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition to put it, but I am not going to have a discussion across the floor.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I think Madam Speaker understands, having heard me, that my preambles are quite short and I rarely comment, so –

Madam Speaker: My direction was simply: is there a question as opposed to a statement?

1235 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, there is a question. The hon. Member does not need to cast aspersions on my motivations. When I come to this House, I ask him specific questions because he may not have received comments and concerns but I have.

Does he understand and is the Government seized of the importance of this link to Morocco to some people in this community?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Gentleman does not need to call me evasive and question my motivations for not giving him an answer which is either yes or no, (*Interjection by Hon. Dr K Azopardi*) and accuse me of dancing if he does not want to have his own motivations questioned. What is good for the goose is good for the gander, and he and I are one and the other in that respect. The Hon. Gentleman will understand that this is far too important for two politicians to try to score a point off each other, because this is about the future of our children.

1245

Of course I understand the importance of the link, and of course I understand the commercial nature of operations that require those links to be profitable, or at least not loss making. Perhaps with that he might go away and give a thought to what the prospects of that link might be in certain circumstances and in others, and that might enable him to dance a little less and work it out for himself a little more.

1250

Madam Speaker: Is that the end of the questions?

1255

Q975/2024
Teaching complement –
Numbers by establishment –
Further information

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I have an answer to a question that I was asked earlier on the abbreviations. Shall I share those?

1260

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: My apologies again. In relation to the question as to what the abbreviations meant, EAL is English as an Additional Language, so we have to bring in specific teachers for children who do not understand English; LMT – and this is where I was confused because it used to be known as BEST – is now the Learning Mentoring Team; and TLC is the Teaching and Learning Centre. I think that covers all those abbreviations.

1265

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions for Written Answer

Clerk: Answers to Written Questions.

1270

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions W143/2024 to W160/2024 inclusive.

Adjournment

Clerk: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

1275 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn
sine die. In doing so, I would just like to inform the Parliament and the community that on behalf
of the Government of Gibraltar, and therefore on behalf of all of the people of Gibraltar, the
Government and the people have donated to the GBC Open Day today ... that we have opened
private number plates for registration, the registration mark G1B, which reads GIB from a distance,
so that it can be auctioned by GBC, and that all the proceeds of that auction should go to the GBC
1280 Open Day, which I am sure all Members of this House will agree do an excellent job.

Madam Speaker, additionally, today I have heard the lion's share of a careful, sensitive,
considered and edifying debate in Westminster on the principle of assisted dying. Very often we
complain about politics being a bear pit, a gladiatorial exchange arena etc., but this morning the
Mother of all Parliaments was a place of considered, careful and sensitive debate. That Bill has
1285 passed. It is a Private Member's Bill. It has passed by a considerable majority and I think it is
important that we, as parliamentarians ... Certainly we as the Government, will be keeping a
careful eye on how that Bill progresses through its stages now as a Private Member's Bill.

Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn *sine die*.

1290 **Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn *sine*
die.

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

This House will now adjourn *sine die*.

The House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.